Healthy Aging

1. Live an active life
Regular exercise is one of the greatest keys to physical and mental wellbeing. Living an active life will help you stay fit enough to maintain your independence to go where you want to and perform your own activities. Regular exercise may prevent or even provide relief from many common chronic conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, depression, and arthritis, to name a few.

2. Eat healthy foods
The majority of adults in the US consume more than double the recommended daily allowance of sodium, which can lead to hypertension and cardiovascular disease; most of this high sodium intake comes from pre-packaged foods and restaurants.

3. Maintain your brain
One in eight older adults (aged 65+) in the United States has Alzheimer's disease, and some cognitive decline is a normal part of aging. Studies have shown that a lifestyle that includes cognitive stimulation through active learning slows cognitive decline.

4. Cultivate your relationships
Twenty-eight percent of older adults live alone, and living alone is the strongest risk factor for loneliness. Common life changes in older adulthood, such as retirement, health issues, or the loss of a spouse, may lead to social isolation.

5. Get enough sleep
Humans can go longer without food than without sleep. Older adults need just as much sleep as younger adults – seven to nine hours per night – but often get much less. Lack of sleep can cause depression, irritability, increased fall risk, and memory problems.

6. Reduce stress
As we age, our stressors change and so does our ability to deal with stress. Long-term stress can damage brain cells and lead to depression. Stress may also cause memory loss, fatigue, and decreased ability to fight off and recover from infection. In fact, it is estimated that more than 90% of illness is either caused or complicated by stress.

7. Practice prevention
Many accidents, illnesses, and common geriatric health care conditions, such as falls, chronic illness, depression, and frailty, are preventable.

8. Take charge of your health
Most of our health is not controlled by the health care system but by our own actions, our environment, our genes, and social factors. In addition, physicians are not perfect; medical errors do happen. The more patients participate in their own health care, the more satisfied they tend to be with the care they receive.

9. Make community connections
Older adults who engage in meaningful community activities like volunteer work report feeling healthier and less depressed.

10. Complete your Advance Directive
The Patient Self-Determination Act gives you the right to participate in your own health care decisions, but you may not always be in a position to make a decision for yourself. You can outline your health preferences and appoint somebody to make a decision in your place when you are unable to by completing your Advance Directive.

The Aging Resource Center