

# A Guide To Staying Healthy During Your Senior Years



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Staying healthy and feeling your best is important at any age. That doesn't change just because you have a few more grey hairs! As you age, you experience an increasing number of major life changes. These can include career changes and retirement, children leaving home, the loss of loved ones, and physical and mental challenges. How you handle and grow from these changes is the key to staying healthy.

In this guide, we've compiled a number of tips can help you maintain your physical, mental and emotional health, as well as some common myths about aging that aren't quite true. Follow these tips, and you can live life to the fullest, whatever your age.

# Myths About Aging




There is plenty of information on the changes people face when aging, and unfortunately, a lot of it can be negative. But while there are some health issues to keep in mind when you age, a lot of the negativity you see and hear can be exaggerated. Here are some common myths about aging, and the facts behind them:

Myth	Fact
Aging means declining health and/or disability	About 80 percent of seniors say they are healthy enough to carry out their normal activities
Dementia or Alzheimer's is an inevitable part of aging	Most studies estimate that only about 2-3% of adults in their 70s experience some form of dementia
You can't teach an old dog new tricks	Learning patterns may change or slow down as you age, but the basic capacity to learn remains
All old people are stuck in their ways	This tends to be personality based, not age based. So if you were stubborn in your youth, you'll probably be stubborn as you age
Physical strength declines in old age	While technically true, regular exercise can slow down the process for most people

Many of these myths about aging can be counteracted with a healthy lifestyle. Exercise, eating right, developing proper sleep habits, and facing the other changes in your life head on can make a big difference in how healthy you are later in life.



There are questions most of us will ask at some point as we age. *For example:*

-  How will I take care of myself late in life?
-  What if I lose my spouse?
-  What is going to happen to my mind?

It is very difficult to cope with changes like these, no matter how old you are. The challenge for older adults is the sheer number of changes and transitions that start to occur. The changes can range from children moving away or the loss of loved ones, to changes to your career, and even loss of independence. It's natural to feel those losses.

But if you balance these with positive ingredients, you'll have a formula for staying both mentally and physically healthy as you age.

Healthy aging means continually reinventing yourself as you pass through landmark ages such as 60, 70, 80 and beyond. It means finding new things you enjoy, learning to adapt to change, staying physically and socially active, and feeling connected to your community and loved ones.





# Tips for Staying Healthy During Senior Years

So what exactly goes into this formula for a healthy lifestyle? There are four main ingredients, or areas of your life, you should be focusing on. They are listed below, along with some tips to help you maintain them.

## 1 » Coping With Mental and Emotional Change As You Age

As you age, there will be periods of both joy and stress. It's important to build your resilience and find healthy ways to cope with challenges. If you are having trouble doing this on your own, seek help from a loved one, close friend, or a professional. To help you cope, you should:

- ✓ Focus on things that make you happy.
- ✓ Acknowledge and express your feelings, even if they're not what you expected or wanted
- ✓ Learn to accept things you can't change
- ✓ Search for the silver lining

## 2 » Healthy Eating as You Age

As you age, your relationship to food may change along with your body. A decreased metabolism, changes in taste and smell, and slower digestion may start to affect your appetite. You could also start to see changes in the types of food you can eat, and how your body processes food. To make sure you maintain healthy eating habits, follow these guidelines:



## Tips for Staying Healthy During Senior Years (Cont'd)

- ✓ Increase high-fiber fruits, vegetables and whole-grains intake.
- ✓ Watch out for dehydration, drink eight 8oz. glasses of water every day.
- ✓ Make meals a social event.
- ✓ Make your food look and taste good.

### 3 » Exercising & Staying Fit as You Age

Exercise helps you maintain your strength and agility, increases vitality, improves sleep, gives your mental health a boost, and can even help diminish chronic pain. Exercise can also have a great effect on the brain, helping prevent memory loss, cognitive decline, and dementia.

- ✓ Find a fitness activity you like and motivates you to continue.
- ✓ Start slow. Don't take on more than you can handle at first. Work up to the level you want to be at.
- ✓ Walking is a friendly beginner exercise.
- ✓ Make exercising social. Exercise with a friend or family member.

#### NOTE:

*Check with your doctor before starting any exercise program.*

## 4 » Healthy Sleeping as You Age

Many adults encounter sleep problems as they age, including insomnia, daytime sleepiness, and frequent waking during the night. But getting older doesn't automatically bring sleep problems. Poor sleep habits are often the main causes of low-quality sleep as you age. If you're having trouble sleeping, try doing the following:

- ✓ Make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and cool.
- ✓ Develop bedtime rituals.
- ✓ Stay away from bright computer screens before bed.
- ✓ Dim the lights in the evening.
- ✓ Go to bed early.
- ✓ Increase your activity levels during the day.

## Conclusion

There are many good reasons for staying healthy during your senior years. You will feel better, and your loved ones want you here and going strong. Exercising to keep your brain active, coping with aging changes, practicing healthy eating and sleeping are all essential to achieving this goal.

Use the tips provided in this guide to jumpstart your healthy journey and improve your overall well-being as you age!



**To assist you with an active and healthy lifestyle, Presbyterian Senior Living offers a wide variety of services for older adults.**

**To learn more about how our communities can help you live your life to the fullest, contact us today.**

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