



FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



SEPTEMBER 2018

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

SEPTEMBER IS HEALTHY AGING MONTH



September is healthy aging month. This annual observance focuses on the positive aspects of growing older and aims to encourage people to take personal responsibility for personal physical, social, mental and financial health. The Extension Family and Consumer Sciences program, Keys to Embracing Aging, is a great program that encourages overall health and well-being throughout the lifespan. Remember, it is never too late to think about your health and well-being.

The following keys to embracing aging have been recommended by centenarians — people who live to the age of 100 (or more). These healthy older adults attribute their life quality to the following:

- **Positive attitude:** A positive attitude affects overall happiness, health and well-being. A positive attitude can also help you better manage life's transitions and challenges.
- **Eating smart and healthy:** Eating right can help prevent illness and chronic disease. It can also

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provide you with more energy so that you can be alert and a better decision-maker. Eating healthy includes a well-balanced diet and a healthy relationship with food.

- **Physical activity:** Regular exercise is associated with decreased death and/or disability from diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer. It is also associated with positive psychological benefits, such as improved quality of life. The most important thing to remember about exercise is to do it. Make exercise a habit.
- **Brain activity:** A healthy brain is crucial to survival, growth and everyday successes. Similar to the rest of the body, the brain needs exercise and maintenance in order to optimize and protect its current and future health. In particular, the brain needs socialization, mental stimulation, physical activity, nutrition and sleep.
- **Social activity:** Engaged people are often healthier, happier, less depressed and demonstrate enhanced brain vitality. Social activity also improves academic performance, inspires a positive attitude, enhances self-esteem, connects you to family and peers and reduces the risk of illness and disease.
- **Safety:** Practicing safety is important because it helps keep you out of harm's way. From locking doors to learning how to swim, it is important to be safe in the various realms of life, including home, transportation, health, recreation and emergency preparedness.
- **Know your health numbers:** Certain health numbers can save and extend your life. These numbers are associated with cholesterol, blood pressure, triglycerides, blood sugar, body mass index (BMI) and waist circumference. A lifestyle including regular visits to a healthcare provider, proper nutrition and physical activity promotes these numbers and contributes to healthy aging throughout the lifespan.
- **Stress management:** Appropriate stress is healthy and useful; however, when stress overwhelms

you, it can become distress, causing anxiety, tension, irritability and a number of health problems. Learning what causes stress and how to manage it in positive ways helps you to cope and live a more balanced, healthy life.

- **Financial affairs:** Good financial management is important, whether you earn minimum wage or are a millionaire. The first step to healthy financial management is to balance income with expenses. With a money management and spending plan in place, you are more likely to meet your financial goals.
- **Sleep:** Sleep has a major impact on overall health and quality of life, including the way we look, feel and perform on a daily basis. Our bodies need sleep to repair muscles, consolidate memories and regulate hormones and appetite. When you sleep well, you wake up feeling refreshed and alert for daily activities. Sleep prepares you to concentrate, make decisions and fully engage in school, work and social activities.
- **Taking time for you:** In today's busy world, you juggle multiple priorities and responsibilities. You make time for others before making time for yourself. Taking time for yourself means taking care of you, which makes you a better family member, friend, co-worker, caregiver or leader. If it is just for 10 minutes a day, a time out is good for your mind, body and soul.

Since there is no magic potion to stop the aging process, it is important to take care of your body, mind and spirit throughout your life. These 12 keys, and many additional healthy behavior practices, encourage optimal aging throughout the lifespan.

REFERENCE:

Kostelic, A., & Yelland, E. (2013) Keys to Embracing Aging, University of Kentucky, Cooperative Extension publications.

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