

Best Ways for Seniors to Stay Healthy

Being a senior is just a state of mind. If it means getting a discount, a 50-year-old may be willing to make that claim. But in terms of feeling “old,” a healthy 80-year-old may have trouble identifying.

Seniors can and should do everything possible to stay healthy, but the earlier people start to take care of themselves, the better. Here are some of the best ways to begin.



Have an annual physical — Bone density deficiencies, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and pre-cancerous skin conditions are things that can be handled when caught early. Men should have a PSA test for prostate cancer, women should have an annual mammogram and everyone over 50 should have the dreaded colonoscopy.

Exercise — Young people know that exercise is important, but seniors should keep it up. Aerobic exercise is good for the heart – and for fat burning. And less fat leads to less weight on our joints, lower cholesterol and a smaller chance of becoming diabetic. Weight training is another way to tone muscles and keep bones healthy. Many senior housing facilities or apartments have fitness rooms or classes for residents. And just about everyone can walk – outside or at the mall. Just get moving.

Take your medicine — If your doctor prescribes medications, be sure to take them as directed. It’s amazing the number of people who take their meds incorrectly (with or without food, at the wrong time of day, with other medications that should never be mixed or in the wrong dosage). And don’t stop taking a prescription without consulting your doctor.

Stay active — Studies have shown that seniors that stay active are also the healthiest. Socialization apparently keeps us busier, happier and more physically fit. Maybe it just gives seniors something more to live for. Laughter might really be the best medicine.

Eat your greens — Eating well is another key to staying healthy. Vitamins and minerals are helpful, but they shouldn’t take the place of healthy foods. That doesn’t mean people can’t enjoy a piece of cake or slice of pizza, but it’s important to eat a balanced diet – a little of each food group. Vegetables and fruits don’t have to taste bad just because they’re good for us. Dairy and protein are an important part of the diet. And don’t let anyone tell you different – even carbs have a special place on our plates.

Play mind games — Keep your mind healthy by doing daily “brain exercises.” Crossword puzzles, Sudoku, and other games and activities that require using brain cells help to hold dementia at bay. Seniors who do notice memory problems, however, should seek medical help. Sometimes memory issues are the result of a physical problem that can be fixed. And even those with Alzheimer’s disease are best off with an early diagnosis – when medications are the most effective.

Sleep tight — Try to get a good night’s rest. Sleeping is our body’s way of recharging and keeping us energized.

Have fun — Staying healthy can – and should be fun. Play with a grandchild. Take a nature walk. Start a new – or old – hobby. Take a class. Read a good book – and discuss it with friends. Or find a cause and volunteer.