

Healthy Living:

Making healthier lifestyle choices can improve one's overall quality of life including physical, mental and emotional health. It is important for older adults to take care of their physical and mental health to prevent illness and manage chronic conditions. This is especially important because as one ages their risk of developing chronic conditions increases. Healthy living practices can help to manage and potentially prevent these conditions.

1. What should older adults know about healthy living?

- **Healthy eating** is important to get the vitamins, minerals, and proteins needed to maintain physical health, prevent illness, and increase energy.
- An **active lifestyle** helps prevent various health conditions including: heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, and type 2 diabetes. Physical activity builds strength, flexibility and coordination that reduce risk of falls and injuries.
- **Healthier practices** contribute to overall wellness and ability to manage change and stress through healthy habits and routines.
- **Healthy relationships** provide the practical and emotional supports necessary to maintain well-being and improve quality of life.

2. What are some healthy living activities you do?

What are some areas where you can improve?



Discussion
Questions

Healthy eating:

- Increase the number of fruits and vegetables you eat on a daily basis.
- Eat more fresh foods and less packaged foods that are high in sugar and salt.
- Try to eat more food containing whole grains that are high in fibre.
- Try nuts or dried fruit as a snack.
- Eat foods that are good for your brain such as oily fish, dark green vegetables and almonds.
- Talk to your doctor or dietician about what vitamin supplements could improve your health.

Good website for information on Vitamins for older people:

http://www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-09-2010/vitamins_from_a_to_z.html

- Grow your own herbs.
- Have a potluck dinner with friends or family.
- Drink lots of water – especially if you are drinking coffee or alcohol. It can make you dehydrated.
- If you are drinking, try and have a nutritious meal beforehand.

You can create a personalized food guide on the Health Canada website based on your age, sex, and level of physical activity. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/myguide-monguide/index-eng.php#mfg>

Active lifestyle:

- Take part in classes or groups offered at community centres, recreation centres, local agencies like the YMCA and libraries.
- Take an exercise class to improve your lung health such as water aerobics.
- Take yoga or Tai Chi classes to improve your bone strength and flexibility.
- If you have an injury or physical disability – try chair exercises or chair yoga.
- When possible, try to walk or bike to places you need to go.
- When possible, try and take the stairs.
- Try to watch one hour less of television per day.

Start slow – every little bit counts!

****If you have a chronic condition or are on medication it is a good idea to check with your doctor before starting an exercise routine.****

- Learn techniques to manage stress including meditation and breathing exercises.
- Reduce caffeine – try decaffeinated coffee and tea or herbal teas.
- Reduce alcohol intake by having less drinks in a day. Try drinks with less alcohol such as light beer or putting extra ice or water in your drinks.

Recommended Drinking Limits for Older Adults

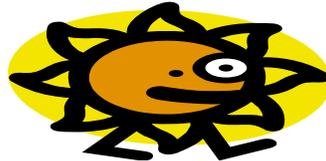
- No more than 1 standard drink/day.
- No more than 4 standard drinks on any drinking day
(Chermack, Blow, et al., 1996)

- Reduce smoking. Try to engage in activities that you don't associate with smoking or in activities where you cannot smoke for set periods of time.
- Ask your pharmacist about how medications might interact with alcohol or other over the counter medications.
- Keep a regular sleep routine by trying to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Develop a relaxing routine such as listening to music or reading a book.

Another way to improve your sleep is to try and limit caffeine, alcohol, and smoking before bed as they can disrupt your sleep.

"Once in the body, caffeine will persist for several hours: it takes about 6 hours for one half of the caffeine to be eliminated." -<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/caffeine-and-sleep>

- Try positive coping mechanisms to deal with grief and sadness - express your feelings through art or writing, talk to others about what is happening for you, go for a walk.
- Practice pain management techniques such as relaxation and mental imagery.
- Spend some time outdoors to boost vitamin D and improve mood.



Healthier relationships:

- Keep regular contact with friends and family – in person, on the phone, by email.
- Develop rituals such as going for a coffee or having dinner that you can do with friends or family on a regular basis.
- Support friends and family when they are in need.
- Recognize what is going on for friends and family and how this could affect the time they have available
- When you are upset with a friend or family member – try to have a conversation about what your feelings and what is happening for you.

What healthy living activities can I do in my community?

Healthy Eating:

- Visit a neighbourhood market to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Attend a cooking class at a local community kitchen.
- Join a community garden.



Active Lifestyle:

- Attend exercise classes at your local community centre.
- Check out volunteer opportunities in your community.
- Attend community events, such as neighbourhood festivals or free concerts.
- Go to local library to find out about different groups or clubs to join.

Healthier Practices:

- Check out smoking cessation programs available by talking to your local pharmacist
- Visit your local library to learn about positive coping and stress management techniques.

- Find out what healthy living groups are available at your local community centre.

Volunteering is a great way to be active and get involved with your community. Volunteering also provides opportunities to meet new people and learn new skills. To learn about volunteer opportunities in your community check with your local library or community centre.

Healthier Relationships:

- Be aware of local crisis lines in case you need support dealing with a relationship issue.
- Look for free events in your community to attend with friends or family.
- Join a local club or group with people who share similar interests. Start your own book or music club.
- Join a local support group in your area that addresses challenges you may experience.

3. How can healthy living improve the lives of older adults?

- Healthy living contributes to feeling better, both physically and emotionally.
- Developing healthy eating habits can help build resistance to colds and viruses.
- Eating healthy foods and being active can improve overall physical health and increase energy and motivation.
- Participating in an active lifestyle helps to meet new people and friends.
- Being active can increase your energy, endurance, strength and concentration.
- Attending various activities and events allows for learning about new things.
- Learning new things can improve brain health and functioning.
- Working towards healthier practices can improve mood and self-esteem through setting and accomplishing goals to improve well-being.
- Developing healthier relationships can build consistent supports needed to deal with life changes and issues.

• How can healthy living improve my community?

- Working towards healthy living can be beneficial to the community through providing opportunities to get to know and interact with neighbours.
- Engaging in activities and events can help to build a stronger community and increase the overall safety and security.

4 How can I maintain my healthy living changes?

- Try to make healthier practices part of your weekly routine by setting aside particular days for physical activities or for making fresh meals.
- Try to make one vegetarian meal and eat one healthy snack per day. Try Meatless Mondays or Stir-Fridays.
- If you are drinking, try to reduce the number of drinks each week and dilute your drinks with water.
- Try to talk to someone about your feelings a couple times a week.
- Build on your relationships by doing something nice for someone in your life.
- Develop relationships with persons interested in healthy living so that you can take part in activities together.
- Join a group that meets on a regular basis.
- Keep motivation up through practicing positive thinking.
- **Set short term and achievable goals.**



What are some local resources I can check out?

- Have local crisis numbers available.
- Visit your local library to find information on nutrition and pain management as well as healthy resources in your community.
- Look for resources in your community with access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables such as farmer's markets and community gardens.
- Access a dietician at a local healthcare centre to provide information and advice on making healthier eating choices.

REFLECTION:

What did you learn about healthy living that you did not know before?

What tips did you find most useful?

What is one healthy living practice that you are going to try?



Something to think about:

Through trying out some of these suggestions for healthy living you will be able to

REAP the BENEFITS. Try to maintain **healthy living** through:

Relationships

Eating healthy

Activities

Practices

Thank You!