

## Ten Tips for Healthy Aging

by [Mary Calvagna, MS](#)



Today, due to numerous medical and scientific advances, people are living longer than ever before. But, you do not just automatically live longer—you have to be good to your body, mind, and soul. The following 10 tips are a good start for getting you on your way to living a long and healthy life.

- Eat a balanced diet.**—A balanced diet is one that is rich in [fruits](#), [vegetables](#), [whole grain](#), and [fiber](#) and low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol. A well-balanced diet can provide your body with the essential nutrients needed to achieve and maintain optimum health. If you have certain conditions, you may need to take supplements. For example, if you have [osteoporosis](#), your doctor may recommend that you take [calcium](#) and [vitamin D](#).
- Be physically active.**—Try to incorporate at least 30 minutes of activity into your day, *every day*. The options are endless. Start [walking](#) in the mornings, join a [yoga](#) class, try jogging with a friend, sign up for a basketball league, or go for a bike ride in the afternoons. Make sure you choose activities that you enjoy, that way you will be more likely to make them a habit.
- Get regular preventive check-ups.**—See your doctor regularly. Remember your doctor is your partner in healthcare. The two of you are working toward the same goal—your optimum health. By having regular check-ups, you may be able to catch small problems before they become big problems. It is also important to have regular dental and eye exams.
- Do not smoke.**—[Smoking](#) is the number one cause of preventable death. It is never too late to [quit](#). Your body will begin to feel the benefits almost immediately. After one day of quitting, your risk of having a heart attack decreases.
- Be safe.**—Use common sense and be street smart. Do not put yourself in situations that may be dangerous. Just a few ways you can put safety first include:
  - Always wear your seatbelt.
  - Wear a helmet when participating in sports, like biking or skiing.
  - Use smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home.
  - Do not go for a run, walk, or jog alone at night. Most attacks happen to people who are alone. Reduce your risk by bringing a friend.
  - Use medicines wisely. Follow directions and ask your doctor or pharmacist about side effects and drug interactions.
  - Keep your home well lit. Remove items (like loose wires, cords, throw rugs) that could cause you to fall.
- Avoid environmental extremes.**—Protect your skin when you are outdoors by using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Try to avoid getting too much sun. Dress appropriately for the weather so that you do not get too hot or too cold.
- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.**—For a man aged 65 or younger, moderation means no more than two drinks a day. For a man aged 65 or older or a woman of any age, moderation means no more than one drink a day. One drink is:
  - One 12-ounce bottle of beer
  - One 5-ounce glass of wine
  - 1.5 ounces of spirits
- Keep your personal and financial records in order.** —start planning now for your long-term housing and financial needs. For information on banking, saving, buying, getting credit, and investing, check out Consumer.gov at <http://www.consumer.gov/ncpw/everyone/>—an excellent resource that can answer many of your questions.
- Stay in touch with family and friends.**—Get to know your neighbors. Take the time to be involved with your community. By creating a strong social network, you will have friends to celebrate with when good things happen and a support system in difficult times.
- Keep a positive attitude.**—Studies have shown that people who have a positive attitude tend to live longer and lead healthier and happier lives. Try to avoid taking things personally. Look for the humor in life. And remember to laugh. Several studies have shown that laughter makes you feel better. But, who needs a study to prove that? Just

laugh, and you will know it is true.

#### RESOURCES:

The Healthy Aging Campaign

<http://www.healthyaging.net/>

National Institute of Aging

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/>

#### CANADIAN RESOURCES:

Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging

<http://www.uwo.ca/actage/>

Health Canada

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index\\_e.html/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html/)

#### References:

Alcohol use: why moderation is key. Mayo Clinic website. Available at: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sprained-ankle/DS01014>. Updated June 2009. Accessed April 6, 2010.

Dawson-Hughes B, Heaney RP, Holick MF, et al. Estimates of optimal vitamin D status. *Osteoporos Int*. 2005; 16:713.

Lifestyle changes to manage osteoporosis. EBSCO Health Library website. Available at: <http://www.ebscohost.com/thisTopic.php?marketID=15topicID=81>. Updated March 2010. Accessed April 6, 2010.

Malabanan A, Veronikis IE, Holick MF. Redefining vitamin D insufficiency. *Lancet*. 1998; 351:805.

Need AG, O'Loughlin PD, Morris HA, et al. The effects of age and other variables on serum parathyroid hormone in postmenopausal women attending an osteoporosis center. *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*. 2004; 89:1646.

Protect your skin: how to avoid sun exposure. EBSCO Health Library website. Available at: <http://www.ebscohost.com/thisTopic.php?marketID=15topicID=81>. Updated May 2008. Accessed April 6, 2010.

Tsai KS, Wahner HW, Offord KP, et al. Effect of aging on vitamin D stores and bone density in women. *Calcif Tissue Int*. 1987; 40:241.

---

Last reviewed April 2010 by [Brian Randall, MD](#)

Please be aware that this information is provided to supplement the care provided by your physician. It is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. CALL YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IMMEDIATELY IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE A MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to starting any new treatment or with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Copyright © 2007 EBSCO Publishing. All rights reserved.

© Copyright 2010, Unity Health System. All Rights Reserved.