

## Ways to stay active and get better as you age

Aging gracefully is not an art. It's an integral part of several sciences. Here's a look at four key areas that affect how you age, plus practical tips for navigating each as you move through different phases of aging.

### 1. Nutrition

Maintaining a healthy weight and finding a diet that provides nutrition and energy that's right for you is important throughout your life. As we age, we start to make adjustments to our diet due to a slower metabolism and perhaps a less-active lifestyle. Finding the right number of calories, balancing the good fatty acids your body needs, and eating colorful fruits and vegetables daily is consistent advice at every stage. Here are some specifics to ask your health care provider about as you reach certain milestones.

- In your 50s—Pay attention to your blood sugar levels and stay active.
- In your 60s—Identify how inflammation, pain, and digestion are changing, and work with your doctor on a diet that can manage symptoms and that's right for you.
- In your 70s and beyond—As sense of taste and smell decline, so might appetite. Try smaller, more nutrient-dense meals, and ask your doctor about a multi-vitamin, multi-mineral supplement.

### 2. Exercise

Research bears out the benefits of staying active throughout your life. Whether you go for high intensity, or something slower, the important thing is to find what works for you and then do it consistently. Exercise doesn't have to be (and shouldn't be!) a dull routine. Find ways to get outdoors and hike with friends, take up ballroom dancing, or incorporate yoga. There are plenty of ways to make staying active a healthy part of what makes your life great—not just something you have to do.

- In your 50s—If you haven't yet, start incorporating appropriate warm-up, stretching, and cool-down exercises to your regular fitness routine. Stretching is often overlooked at younger ages, but if ignored later in life, injuries can become more commonplace.
- In your 60s—Work with a trained specialist on how to incorporate resistance training, balance, mobility, and flexibility activities into your routine. Consider exercises that minimize impact to joints such as cycling, rowing, and water-based exercises like swimming or water-jogging.
- In your 70s and beyond—Find exercises that help with balance and mobility, as well as exercise that includes socializing and building relationships.

### 3. Brain health

Diminished brain health doesn't have to be an inevitable part of aging.

- In your 50s—Make sure your diet, exercise, and sleep patterns are setting you up for aging well. Ongoing sleep deprivation and unmanaged stress are issues you can address early on and potentially prevent more serious problems later in life.
- In your 60s—Make sure you're retiring into a new life, not just leaving the past behind. Plan early for the hobbies, volunteer work, social activities, and intellectual pursuits you want to maintain or begin.
- In your 70s and beyond—Keep moving. The connections between an active body and a healthy mind continue to be proven. An analysis that included 16 studies found that regular exercise reduced the risk of developing Alzheimer's by 45%.<sup>1</sup>

### 4. Maintaining relationships

It turns out that of all the many options we have for staying young, many begin with maintaining and growing our existing relationships. Louis Cozolino, professor of psychology at Pepperdine University and author of *Timeless: Nature's Formula for Health and Longevity*, states, "Of all the experiences we need to survive and thrive, it is the experience of relating to others that is the most meaningful and important."

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The field of interpersonal neurobiology is built on understanding people as we connect with others. “We’re wired to connect with each other and to interact in groups,” writes Cozolino. “A life that maximizes social interaction and human-to-human contact is good for the brain at every stage, particularly for the aging brain.”

- In your 50s—Start to assess your friendships. If work is your main social outlet, start looking at ways to expand your circle. What other activities interest you, and where are the social circles you can join to enjoy them?
- In your 60s—Consider how you want to spend your time in retirement. What activities will serve double-duty? For example, can you take fitness classes and make friends at the gym? Will you take on volunteer work or get a part-time job to find ways to be social?
- In your 70s and beyond—How are you growing your social circle outside your peer group? How can you build friendships with your grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and other younger people in organizations you belong to? Not only will interacting with younger people help keep you young, but you’ll be passing on your wisdom and insights in ways that benefit them as well.

Research in several scientific areas continues to back up our capacity to age well and provides ample evidence to the benefit of starting now, whatever stage you’re at. Update your lifestyle today for benefits well into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2095254620300119>

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