

## September is Healthy Aging Month

Adopting healthy habits can greatly affect the course of aging, even if you don't start those habits until you are age 50 or older. A recent study in the Journal of Gerontology looked at the secrets of aging by following over 2,400 older men and women for 10 years. Study participants who aged with little disability shared some common traits: they tended to have a moderate to high income, they were non-smokers, drank alcohol in moderation, maintained a positive outlook and claimed to have less stress.



Here are some tips for healthy aging:

- **Exercise your brain** – reading, writing, doing puzzles, participating in group discussions, and playing games or music help to keep the brain stimulated which slows cognitive decline
- **Stay socially connected** – getting together with family or friends or volunteering are activities that help slow memory decline
- **Keep eyes and ears sharp** – obtain regular vision and hearing tests to detect and control problems if caught early
- **Stay young at heart** – see your doctor on a regular basis to diagnose and keep blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels under control as these conditions left untreated can lead to disability by triggering heart attacks, strokes or memory decline
- **Eat a balanced diet** – choose a variety of whole grains; lean meats, poultry and fish; fruits and vegetables; low fat dairy and small amounts of healthy fats like almonds, walnuts and olive oil
- **Maintain a healthy weight** – if you are overweight, take steps to lose weight to decrease your risk for chronic, debilitating diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and certain cancers
- **Strengthen your core** – back pain is the nation's second leading cause of disability; Pilates and yoga are two types of exercises that can promote a healthy back and spine as you age
- **Protect your hips, knees and feet** – working out using stretch bands, free weights or weight machines can help preserve muscle mass and take stress off the joints; strength training also builds strong legs which helps maintain balance and decrease risk for debilitating falls
- **Sleep well** – take steps to get a good night's sleep because inadequate sleep can increase the risk for high blood pressure, heart disease and depression

Source: Consumer Reports on Health

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