

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Staying Active and Healthy in Your Later Years

Although we can't totally prevent the effects of aging or of many medical conditions, keeping physically and emotionally fit can help to make the golden years more enjoyable. Healthy diet, exercise, social activity and rest are key.

Healthy Eating

To stay physically and mentally healthy at any age, maintain good nutrition. Along with ensuring diets include all four food groups—grain products, fruit and vegetables, milk products and meat and alternatives—seniors may also need:

- Additional **calcium** and **vitamin D** to keep bones strong and help prevent osteoporosis
- **Iron**, **vitamin B12** and **folate**, often lacking in the diets of adults over 55
- **Fiber**, to maintain regularity
- **Reduced fat intake**, to prevent risk of heart disease

Regular Exercise

Moderate physical activity for 30 minutes, three times a week can prevent bone density loss, reduce blood pressure, improve circulation and strengthen heart and lungs. It can also improve appetite, sleep, energy and mobility.

Whether it’s a stroll around the block, swimming, tai chi or a fitness class geared to older participants (including those with limited mobility), exercise is a great way for older adults to stay energized. Be sure to consult a physician before starting any new exercise program.

Stay Safe

If you are less mobile or agile, don’t overlook your safety in day-to-day activities. Install handrails, ramps, slip-resistant mats, lights and other safety devices to you get around the home independently, safely and easily.

Emotional Well-Being

Recreational and social activities can be crucial in preventing feelings of isolation and loneliness that can contribute to depression in older adults. Investigate senior citizen programs offered at local community centres and places of worship. From painting classes to language lessons, sing-alongs to computer training, day programs give you a chance to get out of the house and mingle with people who have similar interests.

Volunteering is great way for you to maintain a connection to the community and feel that you’re making a contribution. Whether it’s packing boxes at the local food bank, reading stories to children at the library or assisting new immigrants with language learning, helping others feels good at any age. You’ll stay active and energized and may even learn a lesson or two about how you can remain young at heart along the way.

Get out and about with friends and family. Set up regular visiting times. E-mail, phone or write on a regular basis and make an effort to gather for holidays or celebrations. If you need to get out and are not able to drive, look into local volunteer and agency-based transportation services.

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Along with physical and social activity, older adults also need to communicate. Talk to others regularly about how you are feeling. Tell them how your aging, health or loss of independence may be affecting you emotionally. If you feel you are withdrawing and showing signs of depression, be sure to consult your physician.

Over the last few decades researchers have begun to build a case for what most of us have long suspected: age is a state of mind. Staying involved—physically, socially and intellectually—is one of the best ways to keep young in body and spirit.