

Chapter 3

Health and Wellness

Overview

Chapter 3 will describe ways to support a healthy lifestyle. Sections include keeping active for a longer, healthier life; what is physical activity; active at any age; dietary guidelines 2020-2025 and information about common health concerns of older adults.

KEEP ACTIVE FOR A LONGER, HEALTHIER LIFE

What's the secret to a long and healthy life? While genes play a role, your lifestyle has the biggest effect on how healthy you are and how long you live. That includes what you eat and drink, how active you are, whether you smoke, how you handle stress, and staying connected to people.

A little physical activity goes a long way. At least 30 minutes of activity, five or more days a week, can improve your overall health. Researchers continue to uncover health benefits from being physically active. Some of these include:

- Weight control
- Better sleep
- More energy
- Relief from depression
- Reduced stress
- Arthritis relief
- Better ability to fight off colds and other illness
- Stronger bones and muscles, which can prevent falls and bone loss disease
- Lower risk of diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, blood pressure, and colon cancer

People who are physically active also tend to have healthier diets, which is also very important for good health.

WHAT IS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Physical activity simply means movement of the body that uses energy. Walking, gardening, briskly pushing a baby stroller, climbing the stairs, playing soccer, or dancing the night away are all good examples of being active. For health benefits, physical activity should be **moderate** or **vigorous** and add up to at least 30 minutes a day, five days per week.

Moderate physical activities include:

- Walking briskly (about 3 ½ miles per hour)
- Hiking
- Gardening/yard work
- Dancing
- Golf (walking and carrying clubs)
- Bicycling (less than 10 miles per hour)
- Weight training (general light workout)

Vigorous physical activities include:

- Running/jogging (5 miles per hour)
- Bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour)
- Swimming (freestyle laps)
- Aerobics
- Walking very fast (4 ½ miles per hour)

Some physical activities are not intense enough to help you meet the recommendations. Although you are moving, these activities do not increase your heart rate, so you should not count these towards the 30 or more minutes a day that you should strive for. These include walking at a casual pace such as while grocery shopping and doing light household chores.

ACTIVE AT ANY AGE

If you aren't active or haven't done any physical activity in a while, don't worry it's never too late to start. Even people in their 90s can benefit from physical activity. The more active you are, the more health benefits you'll enjoy. Here are some tips to get you started or keep you going in the right direction:

- **Pump yourself up.** Keep reminding yourself of all the good things that come with physical activity. Make a list, post it where it's obvious, and review it every day.
- **Do what feels good.** Choose an activity you like. That way you're more likely to stick with it. Try combining exercise with another activity: lift weights or walk in place while you're watching television; take a walk with your grandchild while you're babysitting.
- **Don't sweat it.** If you're pressed for time, don't add to your stress. Divide your daily activity into small sessions. Take a 10-minute walk at lunch, another one after dinner; pull weeds for 10 or 15 minutes.
- **Ease into it.** Don't try to do too much at once, especially if you have a health problem. Start slowly. If you want to jog, start out by walking. If walking for 30 minutes seems too hard, try walking for 10 minutes first.
- **Eat well.** Good nutrition and physical activity go hand in hand. Good food gives your body the fuel it needs to stay active and function at its best. Choose foods wisely and try to pack in as many nutrients as you can.
- **Starting a walking program** is one example of a physical activity program. It's the easiest, least expensive, and most enjoyable. No special equipment or clothing is necessary, just good walking shoes. Having a walking partner will help you keep your commitment to yourself and stay with it. Many shopping malls are open early for walkers who want a level surface and a controlled climate. Call ahead to ask if they have early hours and a mileage map. You'll find you have lots of company.

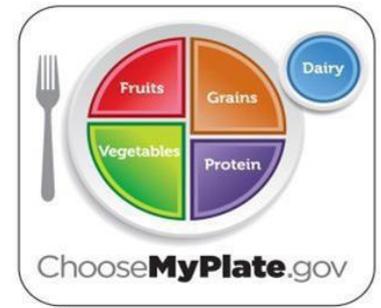
There are no guarantees in life — staying active doesn't mean you'll automatically live to 100 and never be sick. But with regular physical activity, you'll increase your chances of living a longer, healthier, and more independent life. Source: <https://www.aarp.org/health/>.

DIETARY GUIDELINES 2020-2025

“Make Every Bite Count with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.”

Source: <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>

The Dietary Guidelines are jointly issued and updated every 5 years by the Departments of Agriculture ([USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov/)) and Health and Human Services ([HHS.gov](https://www.hhs.gov/)). They provide authoritative advice for Americans ages 2 and older about consuming a healthy, nutritionally adequate diet, and being physically active to attain and maintain a healthy weight, reduce risk of chronic disease, and promote overall health.



The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines provides four overarching Guidelines that encourage healthy eating patterns at each stage of life and recognize that individuals will need to make shifts in their food and beverage choices to achieve a healthy pattern.

Make every bite count with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. Here’s how:

- 1. Follow a health dietary pattern at every life stage.** At every life stage—infancy, toddlerhood, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, pregnancy, lactation, and older adulthood—it is never too early or too late to eat healthfully.
- 2. Customize and enjoy nutrient-dense food and beverage choices to reflect personal preferences, cultural traditions, and budgetary considerations.** A healthy dietary pattern can benefit all individuals regardless of age, race, or ethnicity, or current health status. The Dietary Guidelines provides a framework intended to be customized to individual needs and preferences, as well as the foodways of the diverse cultures in the United States.
- 3. Focus on meeting food group needs with nutrient-dense foods and beverages and stay within calorie limits.** An underlying premise of the Dietary Guidelines is that nutritional needs should be met primarily from foods and beverages—specifically, nutrient-dense foods and beverages. Nutrient-dense foods provide vitamins, minerals, and other health-promoting components and have no or little added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. A healthy dietary pattern consists of nutrient-dense forms of foods and beverages across all food groups, in recommended amounts, and within calorie limits.
- 4. Limit foods and beverages higher in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and limit alcoholic beverages.** At every life stage, meeting food group recommendations—even with nutrient-dense choices—requires most of a person’s daily calorie needs and sodium limits. A healthy dietary pattern doesn’t have much room for extra added sugars, saturated fat, or sodium—or for alcoholic beverages. A small amount of added sugars, saturated fat, or sodium can be added to nutrient-dense foods and beverages to help meet food group recommendations, but foods and beverages high in these components should be limited.

STAY HEALTHY – PRACTICE PREVENTION

Working with your doctor to stay healthy is as important as getting the right treatment when you're sick. Preventive care, or care to prevent illness and disease, includes health tests/screenings, vaccines, and health counseling. Regular preventive care can help you stay healthy and live longer.

Like exercise, eating right, and other things you do to keep healthy, preventive care is up to you. Talk to your doctor about which tests and vaccines you need and how often you should get them. Keep a record of all the tests you have and when, as well as the results. Mark the dates you need to get tested again on your calendar.

Health Tests

Some tests can help find problems or diseases before you start to have symptoms. Treating a health problem sooner rather than later improves your chances of getting better - it can even save your life.

Your doctor will recommend tests — and how often you should have them — based on your:

- age and gender
- current health
- medical history
- family history

Your doctor might want you to get some tests sooner or more often than other people if you're at risk for a certain illness based on your family or medical history.

If you're a woman aged 40 or older, talk to your doctor about testing for:

- breast cancer (mammogram, self-breast and clinical breast examinations)
- colorectal cancer (digital rectal examination, fecal occult blood test, sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy, barium enema)
- skin, ovarian, cervical, and other types of cancer
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- osteoporosis (bone density test)
- vision and hearing
- tuberculosis

If you're a man aged 50 or older, ask your doctor about:

- colorectal cancer
- prostate cancer
- skin and other types of cancer
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol
- vision and hearing
- tuberculosis

Vaccines

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends you get a flu shot every year. The CDC also recommends for healthy adults, older than 50, to get the tetanus, pertussis, shingles and pneumococcal vaccine. In addition, ask your doctor about vaccines for hepatitis B, chickenpox (varicella), RSV, and COVID-19.

Counseling

Unfortunately, many doctors just don't have the time to talk with patients about behaviors and lifestyle habits that could hurt their health. Here are some of the things your doctor should ask you about. If any of them cause you problems or concern, ask about them on your own if your doctor doesn't bring them up:

- feeling anxious or depressed
- diet/eating right
- staying at a healthy weight
- physical activity
- hormone replacement therapy
- sleep problems
- vision or hearing problems
- alcohol use
- quitting smoking
- sexual problems or sexually transmitted diseases
- prescriptions and any over-the-counter medicines, including supplements and herbs you are taking

It's a good idea to make a list of all your medicines, the doses, and how often you take them, so you don't forget. Put this list in your wallet so in an emergency, it is readily available, and always bring it with you to the doctor's office. Medical advances and technology have greatly improved our ability to catch illnesses and diseases earlier and to save lives. Make preventive care part of your healthy lifestyle plan. To promote health, practice prevention! Source: <https://www.aarp.org/health/>.

COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS OF OLDER ADULTS

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a bone thinning disease that gradually weakens bones making them increasingly fragile and more likely to break. Some bone loss is normal with aging, but osteoporosis is not a normal part of aging. Osteoporosis is more likely to occur when you reach a low peak bone mass. Peak bone mass, your maximum bone density, is usually reached by the time you are 25. Your gender, race, and family history as well as your overall health, diet, and lifestyle choices determine whether you reach your peak bone mass. Osteoporosis can also happen when bone loss is greater than normal.

Risk factors for bone loss include certain medical conditions or treatments, smoking, lack of physical activity, inadequate calcium or vitamin D intake, and excessive alcohol consumption. A decline in estrogen production, brought on by menopause, either natural or surgical, leads to bone loss. Early menopause before age 45 puts a woman at increased risk for osteoporosis.

Keeping your bones strong is a smart goal at any age. But a fracture-proof frame becomes a bigger priority in the decades after age 50. Fortunately, there are plenty of steps you can take at home and with your doctor's help to protect against painful fractures that can reduce your independence and, surprisingly, even increase your risk of dying due to medical complications.

Over time, spine fracture and collapse can result in stooped posture, difficulty breathing, abdominal discomfort, and other systemic symptoms. The good news is that osteoporosis can be diagnosed. A bone mineral density test (BMD test) measures bone density and can help predict your risk for fracture. A prescription is necessary for a BMD test. It is recommended that all women aged 65 or older and all men aged 70 or older have a BMD test. A BMD test is recommended earlier for men and women who have fractures with minor trauma or other significant risk factors for osteoporosis. Your doctor or healthcare provider can advise you about the right time for you to have a BMD test.

A bone healthy diet for adults under the age of 50 should contain 1000 milligrams of calcium daily. After age 50 this should be increased to 1200 milligrams daily. Dairy foods are rich in calcium along with many other nutrients necessary for strong bones. It is best to choose low fat and nonfat dairy foods as part of a healthy low-fat diet. Eight ounces of skim milk has about 300 milligrams of calcium. Nondairy sources of calcium include certain green leafy vegetables and canned fish eaten with bones. Fortified foods are foods with calcium added and include soymilk, rice milk, juices, and cereals, among others.

It is possible to get all the calcium you need from food alone. You only need a calcium supplement if you cannot meet your calcium needs from your diet. If you need a calcium supplement, be sure to take only the amount of calcium you need. For example: If you need 1200 mg of calcium a day and get 600 mg from food, you will need 600 mg of calcium from a supplement. Your body uses calcium best in small amounts of 600 mg or less. Consider having a calcium rich food at each meal or snack.

Vitamin D is very important to help your body use calcium and to promote strong bones. The body makes vitamin D when skin is exposed to the sun. However, New Yorkers do not get enough vitamin D during winter months or whenever using sunscreen as recommended to protect skin from sun damage. There are only a few natural food sources of vitamin D, most of which are high in fat and not commonly eaten. Fatty fish, eel, catfish, herring, halibut, light tuna, mackerel, oysters, salmon, and sardines provide 200 IU to over 1000 IU of vitamin D per 3 ounce serving. Fortified foods that have 100 IU of vitamin D added per 8 ounces include all cow's milk, most soymilk, some rice milk, some juices, and only a few types of yogurt and cheese. Many adults are unable to get enough vitamin D from diet alone but can get additional vitamin D from multivitamins (most contain 400 IU), in combination with some calcium supplements, or alone as a separate vitamin D3 supplement.

Eating a well-balanced diet, including the recommended intakes of calcium and vitamin D will help you achieve and maintain strong bones. For most healthy individuals, nutrients such as magnesium, potassium, vitamin C, vitamin K, and others needed for healthy bones can be easily met by consuming a wholesome diet including enough whole grains, lean protein, and at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Exercise is also important to promote strong bones throughout life. An ideal program combines weight bearing, muscle strengthening, postural training, and balance exercise/activities. Weight-bearing activity such as walking, or dancing is excellent for skeletal health and should be done at least two days per week. Everyone should aim to get 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week. The goal for those who have osteoporosis is to prevent bone loss and to improve muscle strength for fall prevention. It is important to check with your doctor before starting any new exercise program. If you already have osteoporosis or a fracture you may want to meet with a physical therapist to determine the right exercises for you.

Fall prevention should include education about risk factors, strength and balance exercises, safety in your home and surroundings, and assessment of medications to minimize side effects that impact balance. If you have osteoporosis, your home can be organized to prevent common falling risks. Remove loose floor wires, cords, and rugs to minimize clutter and prevent falls. Keep your room arranged so that it is familiar to you. Make sure that carpeting on the stairs is firmly tacked and that stair handrails are secure. Your tub and shower should be non-skid and equipped with a grab bar. Place nightlights in strategic places to be sure your home is well lit in all areas.

The strategies to promote strong bones are necessary for all individuals but may not be enough for everyone. You may need to take a medication to reduce bone loss and prevent fractures. If you are diagnosed with osteoporosis, speak with your doctor as there are many osteoporosis medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration. It is never too late to prevent further bone loss or fractures related to osteoporosis.

Vision

Poor eyesight is not inevitable with old age, but some physical changes do occur during aging which can cause a decline in visual acuity. Over the years, the eye loses ability to keep images focused at close range (presbyopia). You should have brighter lights for tasks such as reading, cooking, sewing, and driving. It may take longer to adjust to changes in brightness. With good care, most older adults can maintain adequate eyesight throughout their lives.

Eye disorders and disease can be prevented by regular health checkups to detect hypertension and diabetes, which may affect the eyes. A complete eye exam by an eye doctor, or an ophthalmologist, every two years is important. This should include a vision evaluation, check of the eye muscle, glaucoma checks, and a complete inner and outer eye exam.

For support with vision issues go to the American Foundation for the Blind at www.afb.org/

For someone who is legally blind, the *Talking Books* program is available. <https://www.loc.gov/nls/>

Hearing

Hearing is an area in which more disabilities are related to aging than any other factor. It is often first noted as the inability to hear high-pitched sounds.

Often, people are too self-conscious about their looks or frightened to admit they have a hearing problem. Approximately 30 percent of adults over age 65 and about half of those over 75 suffer some hearing loss. If hearing problems are ignored, they may get worse, interfere with normal social interaction, and reduce pleasure from leisure activities. If you can't hear well, it is tempting to withdraw socially to avoid embarrassment.

If you experience any hearing problem, your doctor can refer you to a hearing specialist (otologist or otolaryngologist), who can diagnose and treat the problem. Common signs of hearing impairment may include difficulty in understanding words, inability to hear high pitched notes or sounds, hearing noises that sound muffled, and less enjoyment at social events. The causes can range from excess earwax to actual nerve deafness. Treatment ranges from simple flushing of the ear canal to removing wax, to prescribing a hearing aid or possible surgery. For most people, all or some hearing may be restored.

Information about hearing and hearing loss can be obtained from:

Hearing Health Foundation <https://hearinghealthfoundation.org/> or

Hearing Loss Association of America www.hearingloss.org

Dental Care

As you grow older, you may be faced with new problems in the care of your mouth. This may involve loss of teeth, adjusting to dentures, or problems with gums. Poor dental hygiene missed dental checkups, missing teeth, and improperly fitting dentures can all cause problems. Losing your teeth not only affects your self-image but can impair your ability to chew food properly. As a result, the diet may be limited to soft foods which may not provide essential nutrients and fiber. Speech can be affected by loss of teeth, and that can make people too embarrassed to interact socially.

Most tooth loss results from periodontal disease, inflammation of the gum tissues surrounding and supporting the teeth, and bone factors like osteoporosis.

Because removing the teeth aggravates osteoporosis, it is best to try to keep them, if possible. Yearly dental checkups help prevent dental problems in later years.

There are dentists who specialize in problems that occur most often in the older adult. Further information on such dentists can be obtained by going to:

Special Care Dentistry Association <https://www.scdonline.org/>

Foot Care

Older people often complain their feet hurt. Since your feet bear a weight of several million tons over the course of your lifetime, this is not surprising.

Common foot problems can be related to a variety of things, such as fungal and bacterial conditions, warts, ingrown toenails, corns, calluses, dry skin, ill-fitting shoes, poor circulation, and disease. You should have your feet checked regularly by a family member or do it yourself in order to note any visible changes. Prevent some foot problems by wearing proper fitting shoes, cutting toenails straight across, wearing foot covers, and soaking feet in warm water to relax and soothe them.

A foot checkup by your doctor can help diagnose diseases such as diabetes or circulatory problems. In the case of diabetes, a person is more susceptible to sores or infections on the feet. If you have diabetes, you must give immediate attention to cuts or bruises because you are prone to healing more slowly. Avoid extremely hot or cold temperatures for your bath or swimming, and don't use an electric blanket. Feet should be kept clean and dry.

To prevent problems with your feet as you age, keep active to improve circulation. Avoid sitting or resting for long periods. Smoking reduces blood flow to the feet, as does crossing legs, tight socks, or garters, and exposure to cold temperatures. In addition to exercise, standing, stretching, and foot massage improve circulation.

STAYING MENTALLY ACTIVE

The latest in brain research shows that regular mental stimulation, along with other healthy habits, can help keep you mentally sharp, as you grow older. One way to get that mental stimulation is to be a life-long learner, always challenging yourself to master new skills and acquire new information. Other excellent sources of mental stimulation are leisure pursuits that require planning details like gardening, traveling, and needlework crafts. Don't forget about regularly playing cards, doing crossword puzzles, or sudoku. These kinds of games that provide a bit of mental challenge can become increasingly valuable tools for keeping your mind nimble. Staying socially active and engaging in good conversations on a regular basis also plays a part in keeping you mentally agile. While our brain and our muscles are obviously quite different, both definitely require exercise in order to stay in good shape!

COPING WITH LOSS

Loss is a major part of the emotional challenge of aging. Many people experience retirement as a loss of status, relationships, and meaningful activity. Many friends and relatives move away or die during the retirement years. Moving, even when it's a happy occasion balanced by gains, can be traumatic. Disability or chronic illness that results in diminished independence and personal control is experienced as a loss and is accompanied by the same grief as if a beloved person had died. This grief may be expressed by anger, depression, or refusal to cooperate in treatment. Loss and its pain can be a very real part of retirement. The courage and creativity you demonstrate in dealing with a loss can help you deal with the pain.

LANDING ON YOUR FEET

Loss is hard to talk about. Loss of a partner presents a particular challenge which needs to be addressed. People who have survived loss don't have much of a chance to share their experience with those who could benefit from it.

It is important to admit that loss is painful. People who bury their feelings don't stop feeling the pain. It manifests itself in some other way, ranging from anger to illness. Those who do best admit the pain of loss and express themselves clearly, firmly, and positively. Many local Offices for the Aging or mental health clinics offer free or low-cost counseling or support groups. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) offers a widowed persons program in some areas.

It is also important to keep in touch with your community or even to "reinvent" your life. We never outgrow the need to meet new people and try new things. Senior centers and senior meal sites offer activities from art lessons to hot meals, and a chance to make new friends. Employers and volunteer centers are actively looking for retired workers and offer meaningful involvement and social contacts. Being a mentor, passing on skills to younger people, is one of the special rewards of the retirement years.

HealthStyle-a-self-test

This brief test, developed by the Public Health Service, is all about changing lifestyle. Its purpose is to tell you how well you are doing to stay healthy. The behaviors covered in the test are recommended for most Americans. Some of them may not apply to persons with certain chronic diseases or people with disabilities. Such persons may require special instructions from their physicians.

Cigarette Smoking

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
If you never smoke, enter a score of 10 for this section and go to the next section on <i>Alcohol and Drugs</i> .			
1. I avoid smoking cigarettes.	2	1	0
2. I smoke only low tar and Nicotine cigarettes, or I smoke a pipe or cigars.	2	1	0

Smoking Score: _____

Alcohol and Drugs

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I avoid drinking alcoholic beverages or I drink no more than 1 or 2 drinks a day.	4	1	0
2. I avoid using alcohol or other drugs (especially illegal drugs) as a way of handling stressful situations or the problems in my life.	2	1	0
3. I am careful not to drink alcohol when taking certain medicines (for example), medicine for sleeping, pain, colds, and allergies).	2	1	0
4. I read and follow the label directions when using prescribed and over-the-counter drugs.	2	1	0

Alcohol and Drug Score: _____

Eating Habits

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I eat a variety of foods each day, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads and cereals, lean meats, dairy products, dry peas and beans, and nuts and seeds.	4	1	0
2. I limit the amount of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol I eat (including fat on meats, eggs, butter, cream, shortenings, and organ meats such as liver).	2	1	0
3. I limit the amount of salt I eat by cooking with only small amounts, not adding salt at the table, and avoiding salty snacks.	2	1	0
4. I avoid eating too much sugar especially frequent snacks of candy or soft drinks.	2	1	0

Eating Habits Score: _____

Exercise/Fitness

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I maintain a desired weight, avoiding overweight and underweight.	3	1	0
2. I do vigorous exercise for at least 75 minutes each week (examples include running, swimming, brisk walking).	3	1	0
3. I do exercises that enhance my muscle tone for 15-30 minutes at least 2 times a week (examples include yoga and calisthenics).	2	1	0

Exercise/Fitness Score: _____

Stress Control

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I have a job or do other work that I enjoy.	2	1	0
2. I find it easy to relax and express my feelings freely.	2	1	0
3. I recognize early and prepare for events or situations likely to be stressful for me.	2	1	0
4. I have close friends, relatives, or others who I can talk to about personal matters and call on for help when needed.			

Stress Control Score: _____

Safety

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Almost Never
1. I wear a seat belt while riding in a car.	2	1	0
2. I avoid driving while under the influence of alcohol and other drugs.	2	1	0
3. I obey traffic rules and the speed limit when driving.	2	1	0
4. I am careful when using potentially harmful products or substances such as household cleaners, poisons, and electrical devices).	2	1	0
5. I avoid smoking in bed.	2	1	0

Safety Score: _____

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS TO YOU

SCORES OF 9 AND 10

Excellent! Your answers show you are aware of the importance of this area to your health! More importantly, you are putting your knowledge to work for you by practicing good health habits. As long as you continue to do so, this area should not pose a serious health risk. It's likely that you are setting an example for your family to follow. Since you got a very high-test score on this part of the test, you may want to consider other areas where your scores indicate room for improvement.

SCORES OF 6 TO 8

Your health practices in this area are good, but there is room for improvement. Look again at the items you answered with a "Sometimes" or "Almost Never." What changes can you make to improve your score? Even a small change can often help you achieve better health.

SCORES OF 3 TO 5

Your health risks are showing! Would you like more information about the risks you are facing and about why it is important for you to change these behaviors? Perhaps you need help in deciding how to successfully make the changes you desire. In either case, help is available.

SCORES OF 0 TO 2

Obviously, you were concerned enough about your health to take the test, but your answers show you may be taking serious and unnecessary risks with your health. Perhaps you are not aware of the risks and what to do about them. You can easily get the information and help you need to improve, if you wish. The next step is up to you!

YOU CAN START RIGHT NOW!

In the test you just completed were numerous suggestions to help decrease your risk of disease and premature death. Here are some of the most significant.

Avoid Cigarettes



Cigarette smoking is the single most important preventable cause of illness and early death. Persons who stop smoking reduce their risk of getting heart disease and cancer. So, if you're a cigarette smoker, think twice about lighting that next cigarette. If you choose to continue smoking, try decreasing the number of cigarettes you smoke and switching to a low tar and nicotine brand.

Follow Sensible Drinking Habits



Alcohol produces changes in mood and behavior. Most people who drink are able to control their intake of alcohol and to avoid the undesired and often harmful effects. Heavy, regular use of alcohol can lead to cirrhosis of the liver, a leading cause of death. Also, statistics clearly show that mixing drinking and driving is often the cause of fatal or crippling accidents. So, if you drink, do it wisely and in moderation. Use care in taking drugs. Today's greater use of drugs – both legal and illegal – is one of our most serious health risks. Even some drugs prescribed by your doctor can be dangerous if taken when drinking alcohol or before driving.

Exercise Regularly



Almost everyone can benefit from exercise, and there's some form of exercise almost everyone can do. (If you have any doubt, check first with your doctor). Usually, as little as 15-30 minutes of vigorous exercise three times a week will help you have a healthier heart, eliminate excess weight, tone up sagging muscles, and sleep better. Think how much difference all these improvements could make in the way you feel.

Learn to Handle Stress



Stress is a normal part of living; everyone faces it to some degree. The causes of stress can be good or bad, desirable, or undesirable (such as promotion on the job or the loss of a spouse). Properly handled, stress need not be a problem. But unhealthy responses to stress – such as driving too fast or erratically, drinking too much, or prolonged anger or grief – can cause a variety of physical and mental problems. Even on a very busy day, find a few minutes to slow down and relax. Talking over a problem with someone you trust can often help you find a satisfactory solution. Learn to distinguish between things that are “worth fighting about” and things that are less important.

Be Safety Conscious



Think “safety first” at home, at work, at school, at play, and on the highway. Buckle seat belts (back seats too) and obey traffic rules. Keep poisons and weapons out of the reach of children and keep emergency numbers by your telephone. When the unexpected happens, you'll be prepared.

WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

Start by asking yourself a few frank questions: Am I really doing all I can to be as healthy as possible? What steps can I take to feel better? Am I willing to begin now? If you scored low in one or more sections of the test, decide what changes you want to make to improve. You might pick that aspect of your lifestyle where you feel you have the best chance for success and tackle that one first. Once you have improved your score there, go on to other areas.

If you already have tried to change your health habits (to exercise regularly or stop smoking, for example), don't be discouraged if you haven't yet succeeded. The difficulty you have encountered may be due to influences you've never really thought about – such as advertising – or to a lack of support and encouragement. Understanding these influences is an important step toward changing the way they affect you.

There's help available!

RETIREMENT CHECKLIST

Health and Wellness

As you approach retirement it is useful to determine what you know, what you've done, and what you still need to find out or do.

Read each of the questions below and circle your answer, "YES" or "NO." Next, for each "NO" answer you gave, write down a few words in the space provided that will help you find the answers. You may want to use the same space to record other personal questions about this topic.

1. Do I get some type of exercise regularly?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
2. Am I careful to eat daily balanced meals?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
3. Do I get annual checkups?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
4. Do I understand the main effects of stress on the body?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
5. Can I identify several healthy ways to deal with stress?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
6. Have I taken a diet survey to determine what I actually eat?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
7. Do I know how to read labels for nutritional value?	YES	NO
<hr/>		
8. Can I describe all the personal benefits of regular exercise as I grow older?	YES	NO
<hr/>		

RESOURCES

Health & Wellness

WEBSITES:

American Association of Retired Persons
www.aarp.org

HealthinAging.org
<https://www.healthyaging.org/>

International Council on Active Aging
www.icaa.cc/

The NYS Office for the Aging
<https://aging.ny.gov/>

The Mayo Clinic
www.mayoclinic.org

Office of Disease Prevention and
Health Promotion
<https://health.gov/>

US Department of Health and Human Services
Healthfinder
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