

We are all afraid of aging. Watching our parents and grandparents age, we all say, "That's not going to be me; I'm never going to a nursing home." The fact is that risk factors begin to increase when we reach our forties, so now is the time to switch from sporadic attempts, to steady progression toward a healthy lifestyle. The truth is we won't avoid going into a nursing home someday just because we said so.

So where to start? The current research on healthy aging agrees that adopting the following healthy habits will slow some of the age-related processes that clog arteries, raise blood pressure, impair sugar metabolism,

Take Control Now to Live Longer and Better.

By Barbara Trimble RN, M. Ed



turn firm muscles to flab, sap energy, weaken and wrinkle the skin, and attack memory and mental functions. All of these lead to pain, disability, loss of function and independence, and ultimately diminished quality of life.

JoAnn Manson, M.D., chief of preventive medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital says, "Lifestyle changes can prevent 80% of heart attacks, strokes and type-2 diabetes. Heredity is not destiny." "Since people are living longer than ever," says Walter M.

Bortz II, M.D., past president of the American Geriatrics Society, "Why not live healthier, too? If you say, 'I'll be climbing mountains and making love at 90,' you've got a good shot at that."

Here is a plan to help you to slip healthy habits into your life painlessly:

Daily:

- Aerobic Exercise – Four days a week for 30 minutes.
- Strength Train with weights two days per week.
- Eat better - Start dinner with a Mediterranean-inspired salad. Mix greens with a variety of vegetables (red grape tomatoes, carrots, yellow bell peppers...), dress with good quality olive oil and a splash of balsamic vinegar. Build bones – Postmenopausal women need 1500 mg. of calcium per day (1200 mg. for pre-menopausal women). Eating foods rich in calcium (spinach and arugula) is a good start, but you may want to take a 1000 mg. calcium supplement.
- Train your brain – Do the daily newspaper crossword or sudoku puzzle. Keep the scrabble board out – anyone passing the board takes a turn, and then points the pen to other side of the board signaling whose turn is next.
- Drink water, tea and wine – Fill a 2-liter bottle of water in the morning and have it empty by the end of

day. For an antioxidant boost, have a cup of green or black tea and a glass of red wine daily.

- Watch your posture – Pull your abs in and shoulders back every time you stand up.
- Sleep – 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Find a ritual; warm bath, cup of chamomile tea, or a good book.

Weekly


- Be creative – take an art class, join a chorale, theatre or dance group.
- Eat good dark chocolate – three times per week.
- Have sex - 1-2 times per week
- Practice peace – Meditation, religious service, reading something calming.
- Connect – have friends and one person with whom you can have a "heart-to-heart conversation."
- Eat Fish – 2 times per week.

Monthly

- Cultural outing – Visit a museum, art gallery or concert
- Monthly check-in – Each month, look back to see what needs attention (exercise, diet, stress, finances ...) don't wait for January.
- Care – Do at least one charitable act (soup kitchen, fund raiser, visit a nursing home...)

Yearly

- Get away - Take a vacation
- Renew – In January, buy a new journal, go somewhere quiet and reflect on what's working in your life and what isn't. Check your attitude and make a new plan.

Barbara Trimble RN, M. Ed. is Founder and President of Extended Family, a premium and comprehensive provider of support services, helping older adults stay home, while enhancing their independence, good health and engagement in life. Started in Portsmouth, Extended Family is currently expanding to new locations. For more information call (603) 834-4513 or visit their website at: www.extended-family.net. 

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