
SIMPLE STEPS TOWARDS HEALTHY AGING



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What this guide covers:

Aging is a natural part of life, but it doesn't mean you have to compromise on your quality of life or independence. By understanding the changes that come with aging and taking proactive steps, you can thrive and enjoy a fulfilling lifestyle.

Why it matters:

Aging brings physical and mental changes that can impact your daily life. Recognizing what's "normal" versus what may require attention is key. While genetics and disease play a role, your lifestyle choices can significantly shape your aging experience. By adopting proven practices, you can maintain your independence and enhance your well-being.

What you need to know:

Follow this two-step learning process to help identify and understand the key challenges related to normal aging, as well as strategies to help you shape how these changes impact your quality of life.

- Understanding the Changes
- Adapting to Thrive

1. Understanding the Changes

Aging affects everyone differently, but there are common physical, cognitive, and sensory changes that many people experience. Understanding these changes can help you distinguish between what's normal and what might require medical attention. By being aware of these shifts, you can take steps to address them and maintain your quality of life.*

Let's take a closer look at what we mean by normal aging changes.

Cognitive changes:

As you age, you may begin to worry about potential cognitive issues such as memory loss or difficulty multitasking. The risk of developing dementia increases with age, but it's important to understand that Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia are not a normal part of aging. It's normal to need more time to process information or to have difficulty retaining new information, remembering names or thinking of the right word during conversation. As always, if you have concerns about any cognitive changes, you should call your physician.

Physical changes:

As you age, you may notice a decline in strength, endurance, and flexibility, which can make everyday tasks more challenging. Mobility issues and balance problems can increase the risk of falls, a leading cause of injury among older adults. Staying active and incorporating balance and strength exercises into your routine can help you maintain mobility and reduce risks.

1 in 4 of American adults over age 65 fall at least once a year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). In 2021 alone, falls among older Americans caused over 38,000 deaths, making it the leading cause of injury death for older adults (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024).**

Digestive and nutritional need changes:

Decline or changes to your sense of smell and taste are common as you age, causing foods to lose flavor. You may also lose the sensation of thirst, putting you at an increased risk of dehydration.*** Your digestive tract may also become more sensitive as you age, which can cause bad reactions to foods you enjoyed previously.

Body composition changes:

For older adults, problems associated with body composition may be more critical than those related to obesity. The ratio of fat to muscle, and whether that fat is located around your waist or hips, can be more indicative of potential health issues than simply being overweight. Having more fat around the waist, instead of the hips, can increase risk of heart disease and possibly breast cancer.* It is normal to gain some weight with age. And while extra weight can cause health risks, losing weight can also cause health issues in some adults as well. Always consult your doctor about any weight concerns or questions.

*Source:<https://www.blsa.nih.gov/about/healthy-aging/introduction>

**<https://www.cdc.gov/falls/about/>

***<https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-to-stay-hydrated-for-better-health/>



Sensory changes:

It is common to experience some impairment in your senses as you age, too. In addition to taste, hearing and vision changes are just as common among older adults. Difficulty hearing or seeing others can impact your independence. It can make it challenging to have conversations with others, and can result in increased feelings of isolation. Combined with typically slower reaction times, changes in your hearing and vision can also impact your ability to drive safely, again impacting your risk of social isolation. Learning and using alternative options, such as public transit, ride-sharing services, or coordinating transportation with family members or friends can provide peace of mind for those who are unable to drive safely.

Sleep changes:

Older adults need about the same amount of sleep as all adults—7 to 9 hours each night. However, it is common to experience changes in sleep quality or time, due to frailty, medicines that keep you awake, stress or other physiological changes. Getting poor quality—or not enough—sleep can make you irritable, and it can also result in memory problems and more falls or accidents.**

*<https://www.blsa.nih.gov/about/healthy-aging/what>

**<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/good-nights-sleep#aging>

2. Adapting to Thrive

What can you do to thrive through these changes?

While aging brings changes, it also presents opportunities to adapt and thrive. By making small, intentional adjustments to your lifestyle, you can maintain your independence, improve your health, and continue enjoying the activities you love. Here are some practical ways to embrace healthy aging.

In addition to specific lifestyle strategies and resources, research links having a sense of purpose in life with healthy aging.* People who report a higher sense of purpose in life have been found to be 28% less likely to develop cognitive impairment.**

Stay Active

An exercise routine can improve your overall fitness and physical health and may even decrease the risk of cognitive decline.*** Emerging evidence suggests that people who exercise regularly not only live longer, they live better. And, being physically active—doing everyday activities that keep your body moving such as gardening, walking the dog, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator—can help you continue doing the things you enjoy and stay independent as you age.****

Your individual exercise routine should be based on your condition and needs—what works for others may not necessarily work for you. Regardless, include

a combination of endurance, strength, flexibility and balance exercises. Balance exercises help prevent falls, a major cause of disability in older adults. Strength exercises build muscles and reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Flexibility or stretching exercises help keep your body limber and give you the freedom of movement you need to do your everyday activities.****

Your routine should change regularly, as repetitive workouts can stress your joints, increase risk of injury and lose effectiveness quickly. Variety can also make exercise more fun, helping you maintain a routine. Consider inviting friends or family members to join you in your fitness goals—another way to make your fitness routine more fun and sustainable.

Eat for Your Health

If your sense of taste or smell has changed, and you find yourself no longer enjoying foods you once did, try getting creative with spices and herbs to heighten flavors you enjoy. If you're having trouble staying hydrated, consider “flavoring” your water with fruits, herbs or tea and set reminders to keep you drinking regularly.

If you've developed sensitivities to certain foods, avoid the foods that upset your system. If you have concerns about your diet, work with your doctor or consult a nutritionist to answer your questions and develop a plan specific to your needs.

*<https://connect.mayoclinic.org/blog/living-with-mild-cognitive-impairment-mci/newsfeed-post/now-what-the-importance-of-having-purpose-as-we-age/>

**Source: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3258000/>

***<https://health.ucdavis.edu/news/headlines/having-a-sense-of-purpose-may-protect-against-dementia/2025/08>

****[http://www.alzheimersanddementia.com/article/S1552-5260\(15\)00197-1/abstract](http://www.alzheimersanddementia.com/article/S1552-5260(15)00197-1/abstract)

*****<https://www.blsa.nih.gov/about/healthy-aging/what>

Get a Good Night's Sleep

Just because your sleep habits have changed doesn't mean you can't improve them. Be sure to follow a regular sleep schedule, going to bed and getting up at the same time each day. Avoid napping late in the day if possible—this can make it harder to stay on your sleep schedule. Create a routine before bedtime, whether you read, listen to music or soak in a warm bath. Try to limit your screen time by turning off the television, computer, cell phone or other devices well before you go to bed. The blue light from these devices can keep you up longer or reduce the quality of your sleep. Here is another area where a regular exercise routine can help by tiring you out—but be sure to avoid exercising too close to bedtime as increased activities before bed can keep you stimulated. Limit caffeine and alcohol use close to bedtime, as they can keep you awake or make it harder to stay asleep. If you think a more serious issue is causing you difficulty sleeping, consult your doctor.

Seek Support

Specialized expertise can help with a wide variety of needs, including extending your driving years, reducing the likelihood of a fall or even helping you access benefits you may not have been aware of. The following are some specialists to consider, depending on your needs:

- Extend your driving years by working with an occupational therapist. They can help you identify any limitations you may have and recommend specialized driving aids or classes.
- Reduce the likelihood of a fall by working with an occupational therapist. They can develop specific exercises to build strength and balance based on your physical needs or limitations.

- Improve longevity and health care by working with a geriatrician or other physician with extensive experience treating older adults. Working with a physician experienced with older patients can improve the likelihood you are diagnosed correctly and receive the right care for your needs. Geriatricians focus on health issues specific to older adults, and understand how illnesses and medicine may affect you differently from younger adults.
- Make the most of your benefits by working with a Medicare specialist, Veterans' Administration Service Officer or care manager included in your health plan. They can help you identify and access available resources you may not know about or would have found on your own.

How This Prepares You for the Road Ahead

Learning what changes to expect as you get older allows you to prepare by determining which strategies and resources you may use to adapt and maintain the lifestyle you want. Some changes may be out of your control, but you can use these tactics to ensure you maintain and even improve your quality of life despite those changes.

Fisher Investments Can Help You Reach Your Financial Goals

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