

KEEPING YOURSELF YOUNG!

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That is a challenge for all of us!

Unfortunately, nobody has figured out how to create a 'Fountain of Youth'. But there are things that we can all do to stay healthy which in turn helps us to keep as 'young' as possible.

EXERCISE

When we are younger, we tend to stay active and exercise. But as we get older, we get busy with kids (and sometimes grandchildren), jobs and lots of other things. Then we get sedentary (or maybe a little bit lazy), gain a few pounds and maybe find it hard to get back in the "swing of things". As your weight goes up, there are a number of health issues that we can encounter --- especially involving your heart and Type 2 Diabetes (non insulin dependent).

A 'rule of thumb' is that for every extra pound of fat there is an extra mile of blood vessels that your heart has to pump blood through. It is not really fair to your heart is it?

Walking --- yes it is that simple. Start walking every day. Try 15 minutes to start and just add 5 minutes every week. Before you know it you will be up to a brisk 40-45 minute walk a day (weather permitting of course). Be sure to check with your health care professional before you start any new exercise program or fitness activity. Make sure your heart and lungs are up to it.

If the weather is bad, have a 'back up plan'. Go to a local mall and walk there --- but don't 'stop and shop'! If you have a treadmill, use it on those days that it is snowing, too cold or raining 'cats and dogs'.

There are a variety of other options to consider as well:

- **Eldaerobics** – some fitness facilities have exercise classes designed for older participants but that will help to improve your overall fitness and aerobic capacity (in other words increase the effectiveness and efficiency of your heart and lungs).
- **Water Aerobics** – little pools of exercise classes which are great for reducing the strain on your hips, knees and ankle joints --- especially if you have a bit of arthritis. You can choose between shallow end classes or deep water (you wear a vest that keeps your head out of the water in these ones).
- **Cycling** – this is a great exercise for the legs. It also gives you a chance to see a bit of the town and countryside. Maybe take the grandchildren for an educational tour of an historic site or for a picnic. Be sure to drive carefully in traffic and wear an improved cycling helmet. Head injuries are a serious matter! It is always a good idea to have your bicycle checked every spring to make sure the gears and brakes are working properly.
- **Yoga** – there are many types of yoga classes available in most communities. This will help with your flexibility which in turn can help to prevent muscle strains. Watch a few different classes and talk to the instructors. Check to see if there is a yoga class designed for older individuals.

DIET

As we get older, our metabolism slows down which can lead to an increase in our body weight. Unfortunately this usually happens gradually and before you know it you can step on the scale one morning and have gained 10, 15 or 20 pounds. Not a good way to start your day!

It is important to monitor your weight and don't let it get ahead of you. Watch your diet:

- Regular servings of vegetables and fruit.
- Concentrate on chicken and fish rather than beef.

- Eat smaller portions --- even if it is your favourite dish!
- Cut back or eliminate sweets. Eat fresh fruit for dessert instead.
- Drink more water --- it is amazing how much better you feel and how much more efficiently your 'system' will work if you drink enough water. Sorry --- coffee, tea and sodas don't count towards your 8 glasses a day.
- Alcohol --- in moderation --- a glass of wine with supper or when chatting with friends is fine. Too much alcohol can be hard on your liver and dehydrates your body.

SKIN CARE

This one is pretty basic --- be careful not to spend too much time in the sun. Sun damaged skin loses its elasticity (it sags in other words) and can put you at risk for skin cancer. Our faces are the most susceptible especially our noses, cheeks and tops of our ears. Make sure you wear a wide brimmed hat if out in the sun and use a good quality sun block product with high SPF. If the grandchildren are around make sure that they put adequate amounts of sun block on especially if they have been in the water. Skin damage can start in our early years.

Be sure to have any skin moles or skin blemishes that are new or have changed (i.e. colour, size, texture) checked out by a dermatologist. If there is a 'spot' on your face or shoulders that wasn't there last year, check it out. Or if that mole that was quite pale in past years, becomes darker, or a multi colour, get it checked out too. Better to check it and it be nothing.

WRAPPING IT UP

So there is a lot that we can do to keep ourselves feeling young:

- Exercise regularly.
- Keep your weight down.
- Eat sensibly and correctly.
- Protect your skin from the sun.
- Drink adequate amounts of water.

But most importantly enjoy life! Don't think of it in terms of how many birthdays that you have had but rather how you feel. Remember --- age is a state of mind --- **THINK YOUNG!**

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