

NUTRIFAX[®]

2008

LIVING INDEPENDENTLY in Your Later Years

Few of us know exactly what challenges our later years will bring. Staying healthy and independent are clearly connected. While factors beyond your control – such as genes and environmental toxins – influence your health, your actions have a major impact, too. A good diet and regular exercise will help you stay healthy as long as possible.

The following 10 steps can set you on a path to a longer, healthier life:

1. **Don't smoke.** According to the American Cancer Society, smoking is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths overall. No matter how long you have smoked, your body reaps health benefits from the day you stop.
2. **Eat a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.** Replace saturated fats found in meat, dairy products, and palm and coconut oils with healthier fats such as olive or soybean oils. Other sources of healthier fats include nuts, avocados, whole grains, salmon and tuna.
3. **Take a daily multivitamin.** Select one that has at least:
 - 400 micrograms (mcg) folic acid
 - 2 milligrams (mg) B6
 - 2 mcg B12
 - 400 international units (IU) of vitamin D
 - some of 1200 mg calciumThese lower your risk of developing heart disease.
4. **Watch your weight.** Excess weight causes more than 30 illnesses, including stroke and arthritis. Middle-aged adults who gained 11-22 pounds over several years were more likely to develop heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and gallstones.
5. **Challenge your mind.** It's like any other muscle – use it or lose it. Join a book group, take classes, or work the crossword puzzle regularly.
6. **Be physically active most days of the week.** Focus on exercise that strengthen bones and improve balance.
7. **Establish a social safety net.** Your social network with friends and group setting helps keep you connected, protected, and vital.
8. **Get any routine screening exams that your doctor recommends.** These tests can protect your sight, hearing, and overall health.
9. **Get vaccinated.** The U.S. Prevention Task Force recommends an annual influenza vaccine if you are age 65 or over or chronically ill.

Reference: Harvard Medical School

Food and Nutrition Services can assist in providing nutrition information. Call 703-813-4800 and ask for a Registered Dietitian.