

# Healthy Aging

Facing aging is not a new concept. But our views on older age are changing. Experts on aging now know that poor health and loss of independence are not a natural and normal part of getting older. And there are many steps that you can take now to help maintain your health, vitality, and independence throughout your golden years.

## You're never too old to live healthy

Adopting healthy behaviors—even later in life—can help prevent, delay, and control disease. In fact, research has shown that a healthy lifestyle matters more than your genes in helping you to avoid poor health as you age. A healthy lifestyle can protect you from frailty, too. Preventing health problems also saves money. The cost of providing health care for an older American is 3 to 5 times greater than the cost for someone younger than 65. So why wait? Take these steps to boost your physical health and self-esteem:

- **Get moving!** By age 75, about 1 in 2 women does not engage in any physical activity. But physical activity can help people of all ages—even those with serious health problems. For instance, muscle-building physical activity can help people with heart failure in ways that medicine cannot. Talk to your doctor about safe ways for you to become active.
- **Eat healthy food.** Nutrient-rich foods are vital to our health as we age. If shopping for or preparing good food



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is hard for you, contact your local Area Agency on Aging (the number is in the phone book) or Eldercare locator (see the resources listed in the resource section on page 233). You may be able to enjoy free or low-cost meals for older people at a community center, church, or school or have meals delivered to your home.

- **Quit smoking.** If you have smoked for many years, you might think it's too late for you to quit—that the damage is done. But quitting has immediate health benefits even for lifelong smokers and people with smoking-related diseases. For instance, smokers have twice the risk of dying of heart disease as nonsmokers. But this risk begins to drop after quitting. After 15 years of not smoking, past smokers' risk of heart disease is similar to those who have never smoked.

- **See your doctor regularly for health screenings and vaccines.** Tell your doctor about any health changes you notice. Also, tell your doctor if you feel sad, lonely, or like you don't have the energy or interest in doing things you once enjoyed. (See page 416 in the Appendix for screening and immunization guidelines.)
- **Be safe when drinking alcohol.** The body responds differently to alcohol with age. Even a small amount can impair judgment, coordination, and reaction time. And many medicines do not mix well with alcohol. Talk to your doctor about your alcohol use and the medicines you are taking.
- **Stay connected.** You can protect yourself from isolation and depression by interacting with others. Get involved with a volunteer, hobby, or special interest group. Local senior centers offer social programs. Your local Area Agency on Aging can help you connect with outreach programs if you are homebound.

### **Consumer Alert—Don't Be a Victim of Health Scams**

Living with chronic health problems can be hard. You might be willing to try just about anything to feel better—including unproven remedies that promise a quick or painless cure. Be smart and talk to your doctor before buying a product that sounds too good to be true. Quacks—people who sell unproven remedies—target older people. Those who fall victim to their scams waste money and put their health at risk.

Normal age-related decline affects most of our body’s organs and systems. How and when this happens is different for each of us. It depends on many factors, including our genes, lifestyle, and health history.

<b>“Normal” Aging</b>	
<b>Brain</b>	Brain structure changes with age, the effects of which are unclear. Healthy older people might notice some mild changes, such as needing new information repeated or more time to learn something new.
<b>Heart and arteries</b>	The heart muscle thickens, and arteries tend to stiffen with age. This makes it harder for the heart to pump oxygen-rich blood throughout the body. It also becomes harder for the body to take out the oxygen from blood.
<b>Lungs</b>	The amount of air the lungs can breathe in and out can decrease with age, causing shortness of breath while working hard or during brisk activities.
<b>Kidneys</b>	Over time, the kidneys don’t work as well at removing waste from the blood.
<b>Bladder</b>	With age, the bladder cannot hold as much urine.
<b>Body fat</b>	Levels of body fat stay about the same from middle age until late life, when body weight tends to decline. Older people tend to lose both muscle and body fat. Fat also shifts from just beneath the skin to deeper organs.
<b>Skin</b>	The skin thins and loses elasticity as it ages, leading to wrinkles and sags. Loss of sweat and oil glands can lead to dry and flaky skin. Spots appear on sun-damaged skin.
<b>Hair</b>	Hair often grays and becomes brittle. Some women also notice hair loss or thinning.
<b>Muscles</b>	Without physical activity, muscle mass declines up to 22 percent in women between age 30 and 70, affecting strength, flexibility, and balance.
<b>Bones</b>	Bone mineral is removed and replaced throughout life. Beginning in the 40s, bone may be lost faster than it can be replaced. Bone loss speeds up even more after menopause. Over time, bones can weaken and become brittle.
<b>Eyes</b>	In midlife, it can become harder to focus on close-up items, such as a book. From 50 on, glare tends to interfere more with vision, and seeing in low-light and detecting moving objects become more and more difficult. Seeing detail can become a challenge in the 70s.
<b>Ears</b>	Higher pitched sounds become more difficult to hear with age. Understanding speech, especially if there is background noise, can be a problem, even for older adults with good hearing.
<b>Reproductive system</b>	Menopause marks the end of a woman’s reproductive years. She no longer has periods and she cannot become pregnant.
<b>Hormones</b>	Hormones are chemical messengers that control the function of many organs and tissues. As we age, our bodies make less of certain hormones, such as estrogen and growth hormone, and more of others, such as parathyroid hormone (PTH). Estrogen and PTH affect bone health. Researchers are studying the effect of this change on aging.
<b>Immune system</b>	The organs and cells of the immune system work throughout the body to protect it from infection. With age, these cells become less active, making the body less able to defend against bacteria and viruses. Researchers think that this system might play an important role in the aging process.

## Important health topics for aging women

### Menopause

Menopause marks the end of a woman's reproductive years. You have reached menopause when a full year has passed without having a period. This happens for most women after age 45. Some women are hardly aware of the changes occurring as they near menopause. Some are bothered by hot flashes, night sweats, and vaginal dryness. You might notice other changes too, such as mood changes and memory problems. We don't always know if changes are related to menopause, aging, or both. For most women, some discomforts related to menopause, such as hot flashes, may go away 3 to 5 years after reaching menopause. Other symptoms, such as vaginal dryness, may not go away.

Many women are able to cope with mild menopause discomforts. Try these tips:

- **Hot flashes**
  - Wear fabrics that breathe, and dress in layers.
  - Drink something cold when a hot flash starts.
  - Keep track of when hot flashes happen so you can avoid triggers.
- **Night sweats**
  - Keep your bedroom cool or use a fan.
  - Wear breathable nightclothes.
- **Vaginal dryness and discomfort**
  - Water-based lubricants or estrogen creams or tablets can help restore moisture and tissue health when dryness is caused by reduced estrogen.



Taking hormones, called menopausal hormone therapy (MHT), can be good at relieving moderate to severe symptoms and preventing bone loss. But MHT has some serious risks, especially if used for a long time. Talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks of MHT. If you decide to try MHT, use the lowest dose that helps for the shortest time you need it.

Keep in mind that menopause is a normal part of a woman's life—not a disease. But it can affect your health in some important ways. Lower levels of estrogen increase your risk of bone disease in the postmenopausal years. Heart disease risk also increases after menopause. You might wonder if MHT can help. But recent studies suggest that women should not use MHT to protect against heart disease. (See page 28 of the *Heart Disease* chapter for more information.) And other drugs can help bone loss. You also can take steps to lower your risks for these health problems. (See the section “Bone health” that follows.)

## Hysterectomy

Some types of surgery can bring on early menopause. A woman who has her uterus removed (hysterectomy) and/or both ovaries removed will stop having periods. But if her ovaries are left in place, she could still have symptoms of menopause in her 40s and 50s. If both ovaries are removed, symptoms of menopause can begin right away, regardless of age.

## Bone health

Men and women lose bone as they grow older. But women need to give bone health their full attention, even more so than men. Women have smaller bones than men. But also, they lose bone faster than men do because of hormonal changes that occur during the menopause transition and after menopause. Over time bone loss can lead to osteoporosis (OSS-tee-oh-puh-ROH-suhss), which makes your bones weak and more likely to break. Of the 10 million Americans with osteoporosis, 80 percent are women. Osteoporosis affects all people, including women of color. But those at greatest risk are:

- Caucasian women
- thin, small-boned women
- women with a family history of bone breaks because of weak bones or who have broken a bone as an adult
- women who smoke
- women who use certain medicines for a long time, such as those used to treat asthma, lupus, and seizures

Your bone health matters because your risk of falling goes up as you get older. About 1 in 4 women age 50 and older falls each year. Broken bones that result from falls are frequently caused by osteoporosis or low bone mass. A broken bone—commonly of the hip, spine, or wrist—is often how a woman finds out she has osteoporosis.

Don't let a broken bone be your wake-up call. Talk to your doctor about your risk of osteoporosis and whether you need a bone density test. This test can tell how strong your bones are and if you have a higher chance for breaks. You should get a bone density test if you are age 65 or older or if you are between ages 60 and 64, weigh less than 154 pounds, and don't take estrogen. Also, take these steps to help keep your bones strong and prevent bone loss:

- Eat foods rich in calcium and vitamin D. Both are needed to build bone and keep bones strong. Adults age 50 and older need 1200 mg of calcium and 400 to 600 IU or more of vitamin D<sup>3</sup> daily. Supplements can help if you cannot get the amount you need from the foods you eat.
- Engage in weight-bearing physical activity 3 to 4 times a week to make bones stronger. Examples include walking, jogging, tennis, and dancing.
- Don't smoke, and use alcohol only in moderation. Smoking is a risk factor for osteoporosis. Heavy drinking is linked to lower bone density and high risk of bone breaks.





## Preventing Falls

Falls are the most common cause of injury and injury-related death among older adults. Falls that result in serious injury, like a broken bone, can threaten your physical health and independence. Even if you don't get hurt from a fall, a fear of falling again can keep you from doing things you want or need to do. This can result in isolation and depression. There are many reasons older people fall more. But hazards around you are the leading cause of falls. Many times, these falls could have been avoided. Here are some steps you can take to lower your risk of falling:

- Get regular physical activity to improve strength and balance.
- Ask your doctor to review the medicines you are using to check for side effects and interactions that might make you dizzy or sleepy.
- Have your eyesight checked by an eye doctor every 1 or 2 years.
- Make your home safer: Install handrails and grab bars, secure throw rugs, improve lighting, remove clutter you can trip over, keep items you use daily within easy reach, and wear supportive shoes both inside and outside.

For women at high risk of bone disease, many medicines can help slow bone loss and reduce the risk of bone breaks. Short-term use of estrogen (menopausal hormone therapy, or MHT) can relieve symptoms of menopause and prevent bone loss. But long-term estrogen use has serious risks. If used, MHT should be used for the shortest time possible. Currently, no “natural” products, such as phytoestrogens (feye-toh-ESS-truh-juhnz), are recommended to prevent osteoporosis. If you are at high risk, talk to your doctor about your options.

## Brain health

Many women want to live a long life, but worry about memory loss or becoming “senile.” Our brain health—or cognitive health—involves the functions we need for everyday activities. These include thinking, learning, memory, judgment, planning, talking, and perception. Some people think that losing these functions is a normal part of aging. But this is not true. Most older adults do not have the marked decline in mental function that so many of us fear.



Still, declines that are not related to normal aging are a distressing reality for many older people and their families. These can range from mild cognitive impairment (MCI) to severe dementia (dih-MEN-chuh). People with MCI have a slight mental decline, such as memory loss, that is worse than that expected for their age. But it does not interfere with the ability to care for oneself. Some experts think MCI, mainly involving memory, might be an early sign of Alzheimer's disease (AD).

Dementia is a group of symptoms that are caused by changes in brain function. AD and stroke are the most common causes of dementia in older people. People with severe dementia are not able to think or remember well enough to take care of themselves. They might not have control of their emotions. Their personalities might change. They sometimes see things that are not there.

AD develops over time, and more women have it than men. One reason for this is that women live longer than men, and the risk of AD goes up greatly with age. In fact, nearly 1 in 2 people older than 85 have AD. More and more people are expected to develop AD in the future be-

### Minority Women's Health

Chronic disease hits older minority women the hardest, in part because they are in poorer health, have less access to health services, and have lower health literacy. The reasons for these disparities are complex. Many minority women face huge social, economic, and cultural barriers to protecting their health.



### Tips for Mental Fitness

Taking these steps might help maintain mental fitness:

- Lower high cholesterol (koh-LESS-tur-ol) levels.
- Lower high blood pressure.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Control diabetes.
- Don't smoke.
- Engage in regular physical activity.
- Take part in social activities.
- Stay connected with friends and family.
- Read, do puzzles, play games, or learn something new to keep your brain active.

cause of longer life spans and our aging population. How to best care for people with AD and support their caregivers are areas of intense public health interest.

We don't know what causes AD, how to prevent it, or how to make it better. Beyond age, family history of AD and having a lower level of education are other risk factors for AD. Research also strongly suggests a link between poor heart health and cognitive decline. It also suggests that a healthy lifestyle can help

to maintain mental function. This is important because older adults with cognitive decline are at higher risk of getting dementia later in life.

**Common health concerns of older women**

Today, people are living longer than ever before. As a result many women will have health concerns that are more common in old age. This can include chronic dis-

eases, as well as conditions that are more bothersome than harmful to your health.

Almost 8 in 10 people older than 65 have at least one chronic condition. If you have one, you can help yourself to keep active and independent by learning about your condition, adopting healthy habits, and seeing the doctor regularly.

<b>Chronic Health Conditions Common in Older Age</b>		
<b>Chronic condition</b>	<b>Did you know?</b>	<b>Where to learn more</b>
<b>Asthma</b>	Many people get asthma for the first time as an older adult.	<i>Respiratory Health</i> chapter, page 279
<b>Cancer</b>	Breast, lung, and colorectal cancers are most common in women, and risk goes up with age.	<i>Cancer</i> chapter, page 51
<b>Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)</b>	Smoking is the main cause of COPD, which is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States and world.	<i>Respiratory Health</i> chapter, page 279
<b>Depression</b>	Twice as many older women as men have depression, often along with other chronic illnesses common in later life, such as heart disease and cancer. Widows are at increased risk of depression.	<i>Mental Health</i> chapter, page 207
<b>Diabetes</b>	The risk of diabetes increases with age. Diabetes that is not controlled can hurt your eyes, heart, and kidneys. It also is linked with depression.	<i>Type 2 Diabetes</i> chapter, page 69
<b>Epilepsy</b> (E-puh-LEP-see)	Many older adults don't realize that epilepsy is as likely to begin in older age as in young children. Having a seizure can be scary, but epilepsy can be treated.	
<b>Gum disease</b>	Many older people did not grow up with drinking water with fluoride or fluoride toothpastes, which protect teeth. This has caused many to have gum and other oral diseases, which can lead to tooth loss.	<i>Oral Health</i> chapter, page 293
<b>Heart disease</b>	Heart disease is the number one killer of women. But most heart attacks in women may be preventable.	<i>Heart Disease</i> chapter, page 15
<b>High blood pressure</b>	After menopause your risk of high blood pressure goes up, even if you had normal blood pressure most of your life. High blood pressure is called the "silent killer" because there are no symptoms.	<i>Heart Disease</i> chapter, page 15
<b>HIV</b>	More and more older women are finding out they have HIV. One reason is that women who no longer worry about getting pregnant may be less likely to use a condom and to practice safe sex.	<i>HIV/AIDS</i> chapter, page 139



<b>Chronic Health Conditions Common in Older Age</b>		
<b>Chronic condition</b>	<b>Did you know?</b>	<b>Where to learn more</b>
<b>Incontinence</b>	Urinary incontinence is common among older women, but it is not a normal part of aging. Treatment can help most women.	<i>Urologic and Kidney Health</i> chapter, page 251
<b>Pain</b>	Poorly controlled pain can lead to depression. Back pain can make it hard to get around and enjoy life. Also, daily back pain might be associated with a higher risk of heart disease.	<i>Pain</i> chapter, page 351
<b>Stroke</b>	More women die of stroke than men. People who survive stroke often need a caregiver.	<i>Stroke</i> chapter, page 37

Not all people struggle with the health concerns in the chart that follows, but many older people do. Talk to your doctor about symptoms that bother or concern you.

<b>Other Common Health Concerns</b>		
<b>Concern</b>	<b>What you can do</b>	<b>When to see your doctor</b>
<b>Arthritis</b> Age-related arthritis, called osteoarthritis (OSS-tee-oh-ar-THREYE-tuhss), occurs when the tissue that cushions the ends of the bones within joints wears away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get plenty of rest.</li> <li>• Get physical activity to reduce stiffness.</li> <li>• Wear supportive shoes.</li> <li>• Use gadgets to help you do things such as open jars and turn doorknobs.</li> <li>• Try medicines to reduce pain and swelling.</li> </ul>	Call your doctor if one or more of these symptoms last more than 2 weeks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lasting joint pain</li> <li>• Joint swelling</li> <li>• Joint stiffness</li> <li>• Tenderness or pain when touching a joint</li> <li>• Problems using or moving a joint normally</li> <li>• Warmth or redness in a joint</li> </ul>
<b>Balance problems</b> Disturbances in the inner ear, other health problems, and some medicines can cause a balance problem—a reason many older people fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat a low-salt, heart-healthy diet.</li> <li>• Get physical activity to improve strength and balance.</li> <li>• Avoid alcohol and caffeine.</li> <li>• Don't stand up too quickly or change direction suddenly.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor to review the medicines you are using.</li> </ul>	Call your doctor if you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel unsteady</li> <li>• Feel like you or your surroundings are spinning or moving</li> <li>• Feel like you are falling</li> <li>• Lose your balance and fall</li> <li>• Ever feel disoriented</li> <li>• Feel like you might faint</li> <li>• Have blurred vision</li> </ul>
<b>Dry skin and itching</b> Dry skin and itching—mainly on lower legs, elbows, and forearms—is a common complaint of older people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use moisturizers—mainly creams and ointments.</li> <li>• Bathe less often and use mild soaps and warm—not hot—water.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of water.</li> <li>• Stay out of the sun, and protect your skin with sunscreen.</li> <li>• Don't smoke, which dries out skin.</li> </ul>	See your doctor if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your dry skin does not improve with self-care</li> <li>• Your dry skin affects your sleep</li> <li>• You have sores that do not heal</li> <li>• You notice a change on the skin, such as a new growth or a mole that looks different</li> </ul>

## Other Common Health Concerns

Concern	What you can do	When to see your doctor
<p><b>Eye problems</b></p> <p>Many people notice changes in vision as they age. Other common eye complaints include having too many tears, dry eyes, or eyelid problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your eyes checked every 1 to 2 years by an eye-care professional. An eye exam is the only way to find out about some eye diseases.</li> <li>• Ask your doctor if you are at high risk of eye disease.</li> <li>• Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.</li> </ul>	<p>Call your doctor if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eye pain</li> <li>• Fluid coming out of your eye</li> <li>• Double vision</li> <li>• Redness</li> <li>• Swelling of your eye or eyelid</li> </ul> <p>Call your doctor <b>right away</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You suddenly cannot see or everything looks dim</li> <li>• You see flashes of light</li> </ul>
<p><b>Flu and pneumonia</b> (noo-MOH-nyuh)</p> <p>The flu—short for “influenza”—can make you very sick, especially if you have health problems like heart disease or diabetes. Older people who get the flu are more likely to also get another infection, such as pneumonia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People age 50 and older should get a flu vaccine every year.</li> <li>• All people 65 and older should get a one-time-only pneumonia vaccine.</li> <li>• Clean your hands often.</li> <li>• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.</li> <li>• Stay away from people who are sick.</li> </ul>	<p>Call your doctor if you have these symptoms, even if you got the flu shot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Aches and pains</li> <li>• Extreme tiredness and weakness</li> <li>• Chest discomfort or cough</li> <li>• Stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat (less common)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hearing loss</b></p> <p>Hearing problems come in many forms and have many causes. Ignoring a hearing problem can lead to depression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your hearing checked every 3 years.</li> <li>• Review the medicines you are using with your doctor.</li> <li>• Wear earplugs or earmuffs to protect your hearing from loud noise.</li> </ul>	<p>See your doctor if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People you talk to seem to mumble</li> <li>• You have to strain to understand what others are saying</li> <li>• Others say you play the TV or radio too loudly</li> <li>• You cannot hear the doorbell or phone ring</li> <li>• You have trouble hearing in crowded or noisy rooms</li> <li>• You have dizziness, pain, or ringing in your ears</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shingles</b></p> <p>Shingles is a painful skin rash caused by the chicken pox virus. As you get older, the virus may come back as shingles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people 60 and older should get the one-time-only herpes zoster vaccine, which can prevent shingles. Some people with specific health conditions should not get it. Your doctor can tell you if it’s okay for you.</li> </ul>	<p>Call your doctor right away if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You feel burning or shooting pain and tingling or itching, usually on one side of the body or face</li> <li>• You have a rash or blisters appear on the side of the trunk or face</li> </ul>

## Other Common Health Concerns

Concern	What you can do	When to see your doctor
<p><b>Sexual problems</b></p> <p>Many women remain sexually active in older age. But about one-half of them report at least one bothersome sexual problem.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try over-the-counter lubricants to relieve vaginal dryness.</li> <li>• If you have more than one partner or are divorced or widowed and have started a new sexual relationship, have your partner wear a condom to protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).</li> </ul>	<p>See your doctor if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have problems that make it hard for you to enjoy an active sex life</li> <li>• You have pain during sex</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sleep problems</b></p> <p>Older women still need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep each night to stay healthy and alert. But sleep problems are more common with age.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to avoid daytime napping, which can keep you from getting a restful night's sleep.</li> <li>• Practice good sleep habits. (See page 28 in the <i>Heart Disease</i> chapter for more information.)</li> <li>• Avoid alcohol and caffeine before bedtime.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your doctor if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have trouble falling and staying asleep</li> <li>• You wake up many times during the night</li> <li>• You don't feel well-rested on waking or feel sleepy during the day</li> <li>• You feel tingling or crawling in your legs that disrupts your sleep</li> </ul>

### Planning ahead

Life changes can happen quickly and without warning. To avoid making important decisions in haste or under stress, it's best to plan ahead. Some issues you should discuss with loved ones include:

- **Your health and health care.** Discuss your health insurance and health care options, including long-term care.



- **Where to live.** Think about health conditions you have that might affect your independence as you age. Talk to your family about your wishes, should you need help from a caregiver.
- **End-of-life issues.** Make sure your will is up to date, and advance directives are in place. Advance directives are instructions that direct a person's medical care should she become unable to do so herself. You might also want to give someone you trust the power to act in your place, should you be too sick to do so. Make sure your important papers are organized and in one place, and let family members know where to find them.

Living a healthy lifestyle, becoming informed, and planning ahead are steps you can take now to help make your golden years among the best of your life. ■

# One Woman's Story

I was born 65 years ago into a hardworking, Midwestern, German immigrant, meat-and-potatoes family. I grew up mowing the lawn, shoveling snow, tilling the garden, hanging out laundry, picking fruit in orchards that my father had painstakingly nurtured, and bagging and carrying groceries at the small grocery store my parents owned. It wasn't until I chose a more sedate career as a college faculty member that “physical activity” became a yes-or-no decision.

I'm blessed with good health and see keeping fit as an opportunity to enjoy the wonders that surround me, wherever they may be. So over the years, my husband and I have hiked some of the most beautiful trails in the Oregon Cascades and the German Alps, fished in pure Wyoming mountain streams, biked scenic trails in nearly a dozen states, and tried in vain to ski as well as our kids. In my 40s and 50s, I ran local road races and would still be doing so if the cartilage in my right knee hadn't worn away. Instead, today I go to a gym 5 days a week to get my physical activity.

Regrettably, my family history can't be denied—the same stock that gave me physical strength and spiritual and emotional optimism also brings a genetic history of heart problems that claimed the lives of most of my family members before the age of 70.

So my doctor and I are watching my blood pressure readings, cholesterol numbers, and triglyceride levels. I make sure to also get the other regular screening tests and exams that I need for my age. We also focus on healthy food choices that are high in nutrients. The meat on our table is leaner, the chicken is skinless, the fish is broiled or baked, we choose a wide variety of vegetables, and our bread is now whole wheat. But we don't always forget about the pie—we just make sure apples are in it!

Ruth

**Cumberland, Maryland**

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**I make sure to also get the other regular screening tests and exams that I need for my age.**

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## For More Information...

### **Office on Women's Health, HHS**

200 Independence Ave SW, Room 712E  
Washington, DC 20201  
Web site: [www.womenshealth.gov/ow](http://www.womenshealth.gov/ow)  
Phone number: (800) 994-9662,  
(888) 220-5446 TDD

### **Administration on Aging, HHS**

1 Massachusetts Ave  
Washington, DC 20201  
Web site: [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov)  
[www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)  
[www.longtermcare.gov](http://www.longtermcare.gov)  
Eldercare Locator: (800) 677-1116

### **Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, HHS**

7500 Security Blvd  
Baltimore, MD 21244  
Web site: [www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)  
[www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)  
Phone number: (800) 633-4227,  
(877) 486-2048 TTY

### **Healthy Aging Program, CDC**

4770 Buford Highway NE, MS K-51  
Atlanta, GA 30341-3717  
Web site: [www.cdc.gov/aging](http://www.cdc.gov/aging)

### **National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, NIH**

PO Box 5801  
Bethesda, MD 20824  
Web site: [www.ninds.nih.gov](http://www.ninds.nih.gov)  
Phone number: (800) 352-9424,  
(301) 468-5981 TTY

### **National Institute on Aging, NIH**

Building 31, Room 5C27  
31 Center Dr, MSC 2292  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
Web site: [www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)  
Phone number: (800) 222-2225

### **Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases National Resource Center, NIH**

2 AMS Circle  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3676  
Web site: [www.niams.nih.gov/Health\\_Info/Bone](http://www.niams.nih.gov/Health_Info/Bone)  
Phone number: (800) 624-2663

### **AARP**

601 E St NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
Web site: [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)  
Phone number: (888) 687-2277

### **The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging**

350 Fifth Ave, Suite 801  
New York, NY 10118  
Web site: [www.healthinaging.org](http://www.healthinaging.org)

### **Alzheimer's Association**

225 N Michigan Ave, Fl 17  
Chicago, IL 60601-7633  
Web site: [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)  
Phone number: (800) 272-3900,  
(866) 403-3073 TDD

### **American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**

409 12th St SW, PO Box 96920  
Washington, DC 20090-6920  
Web site: [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)  
Phone number: (202) 863-2518 Resource Center

### **The North American Menopause Society**

5900 Landerbrook Dr, Suite 390  
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124  
Web site: [www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org)  
Phone number: (800) 774-5342



