

PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES YOU ENJOY AS YOU AGE

You can do many things to help boost your health as you age. Did you know that participating in social and other activities you enjoy can also help support healthy aging? As you grow older, you may find yourself spending more time at home alone. Being lonely or socially isolated is not good for your overall health. For example, it can increase feelings of depression or anxiety, which can have a negative impact on many other aspects of your health. If you spend a lot of time alone, try participating in meaningful activities that create a sense of purpose in your daily life. These include hobbies, volunteer activities, and time with family and friends.

BENEFITS OF AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Engaging in social and productive activities you enjoy, such as taking an art class, joining a hiking club, or volunteering in your community, may help maintain your well-being and independence as you age. An active lifestyle is more than just getting your daily steps in. It includes doing activities that are meaningful to you and benefit your mind, spirit, and body. Research has shown that older adults with an active lifestyle:

- **Are less likely to develop certain diseases.** May have a lower their risk of developing some health problems, including dementia, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer.
- **Have a longer lifespan.** Doing things that you enjoy may help cultivate positive feelings.
- **Are happier and less depressed.** Studies suggest that older adults who participate in activities they find meaningful, such as volunteering in their communities, say they feel happier and healthier.
- **Are better prepared to cope.** When people feel happier and healthier, they are more likely to be resilient, which is our ability to bounce back and recover from difficult situations.
- **May be able to improve their thinking abilities.** Research suggests that participating in certain activities, such as mentally stimulating or involving physical activity, may positively affect memory.

FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE

Everyone has different limits on how much time they can spend on activities. What is perfect for one person may be too much for another. Add one or two activities to your routine and see how you feel. You can always add more. Remember: Participating in activities you enjoy should be fun, not stressful!

ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

There are plenty of places to look for opportunities to engage in activities you enjoy, depending on your interests and ability. Following are ideas that might work for you.

CONNECT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Play cards or other games with friends in person or online
- Video chat or call your friends and family members
- Join a group interested in hobbies such as knitting, hiking, birdwatching, painting, or woodworking
- Reconnect with old friends through your high school or college alumni association
- Travel with a group of older adults, such as a retiree group



LEARN SOMETHING NEW

- Take a cooking, art, dance, language, or computer class
- Get in touch with your local community college or library
- Find classes online
- Form or join a book or movie club
- Try yoga, tai chi, or another new physical activity
- Learn or relearn how to play a musical instrument
- Visit local museums
- Attend group tours and educational programs

BECOME MORE ACTIVE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Take part in a community organization, club, or non-profit entity
- Run errands for people with limited mobility or access to transportation
- Join a committee or help with an activity at your place of worship
- Volunteer at a school, library, museum, hospital, or animal shelter
- Help with gardening at a community garden or park. Join a gardening club
- Sing in a community choral group or play in a local handbell choir or band
- Teach a favorite pastime or skill, such as embroidery, photography, building models, chess, baking, woodworking, calligraphy, quilting, etc., to someone
- Be a 4-H project leader

GET OUT AND GET MOVING

- Garden or do yard work
- Take an exercise class or do exercises at home
- Go dancing Walk or bicycle with a friend or neighbor around the neighborhood or on nature trails
- Participate in open or lap swimming
- Play with your grandchildren or great-grands.
- Teach them a game or dance you remember from childhood.

ADOPT HEALTHY STRESS-RELIEVING HABITS

- Read a good book, magazine, or newspaper
- Practice gratitude and mindfulness
- Do tai-chi or yoga
- Cook your favorite healthy meal
- Enjoy the little things, such as a cup of coffee or sunrise



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