Acknowledging Aging

If you want to age gracefully hip, here are some tips:

- Arkansans can age well and healthfully by exercising regularly, eating well and learning from those who have lived the longest.
- Incorporating some simple guidelines will aid in setting you squarely on the path to optimal health and give you the best shot at living a long, happy life.

The Leading Cause of Premature Aging and Death

Too much sugar and processed foods, combined with insufficient exercise. Controlling these two factors will likely eliminate more than 90% of these medical conditions:

- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol

Next, in order to better understand the cause of aging, you need to become familiar with some nasty little compounds called "free radicals."

Free Radicals on a Mission to Damage Your DNA

Poor lifestyle choices such as smoking, consuming processed foods laden with trans fats and other harmful chemical additives, along with pesticide and other chemical residue, add to your free radical burden.

Learn How to Effectively Cope With Stress

Stress has a direct effect on the body, which in turn underlies many of chronic diseases. Thus, developing effective coping mechanisms is a great strategy for aging gracefully.
**Exercise Regularly, and Correctly**

Studies repeatedly show that regular, moderate-to-vigorous exercise can help prevent or delay the onset of hypertension, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis and the falls that lead to hip fractures. Although a lifetime of regular exercise is ideal, it's never too late to start. It's been shown that even individuals in their 70s can substantially increase both strength and endurance with exercise.

**Learning from Those Who've Lived the Longest**

Longevity have found that the people who've lived the longest tend to eat large amounts of whole unprocessed minimally cooked vegetables and fruits and live in areas that promote regular physical activity, such as daily walking.

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**KEYS TO EMBRACING AGING Attitude Is Everything. . . Be Positive**

**Do you have a positive attitude?**

- Are you optimistic, easygoing or extroverted?
- Are you willing to learn no matter how difficult it is?
- Do you laugh a lot or have a sense of humor by not taking yourself too seriously?
- Do you express emotions rather than bottle them up?
- Do you do your best when studying/working and try to improve how you do your work?
- Do you demonstrate enthusiasm in whatever you say and do?
- Do you welcome challenges, experiments or try new ideas?

Because the connection between the mind and body is so strong, an overall positive attitude, including an upbeat outlook on life, can affect overall happiness, health and well-being. Similar to eating well and getting plenty of exercise, good health practices should be a habit that starts early in life (Phillips and Ferguson, 2013). A positive attitude can impact mental health and physical functioning including the ability to fight disease and infection. Attitude can also affect relationships and social networks and can help make success in life more likely. The bottom line: being more positive across the lifespan causes less stress and enables people to live healthier, happy lives (Lawson, 2009; Mayo Clinic, 2011; White, 2012).

**Develop a Positive Attitude**

- Be confident.
- Be positive.
- Be patient.
- Be a goal setter.
- Be a hard worker.
- Be fun (don’t take yourself too seriously).
- Be accepting of change.

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**Extension Get Fit**

Are you ready to improve your health? Have you decided it is time for you to start exercising? Get fit with Extension! A regular exercise program can help with weight management, reduce diabetes and stroke risk, increase energy levels, and improve overall sense of well-being. The new Extension Get Fit program from the University of Arkansas Extension Service can help! To learn more contact Trudy McManus at 741-6168 or tmcmanus@uaex.edu. You may also choose to come to our orientation on January 20th at 9:00 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church.
Avoiding Medication Jeopardy

For caregivers and care recipients (the people receiving care), medications can be both burden and blessing. Prescription medications have a substantial and positive effect on illness and disease - but those same medications can also have side effects.

Side effects vary from something as simple as a slight rash on your arm to more complicated issues such as daytime sleepiness or periodic unsteadiness and balance problems.

Medications that make a person tired, disoriented or unstable pose the greatest risk. Instability and unsteadiness can lead to:

- Falls
- Fractures
- Hospitalizations
- Possible greater dependency in the home
- Possible nursing home placement

For caregivers, there are several approaches that may help reduce medication side effects.

✓ Stay vigilant about of the number of medications taken. Medications include non-prescription over-the-counter (OTC) drugs as well as supplements. More medications mean a greater likelihood of side effects.

✓ Recognize individual differences and the importance of having a dosage tailored to need. People differ greatly in how they absorb, metabolize, and eliminate specific drugs.

✓ Ask the prescribing health provider and re-check with the involved pharmacist regarding medications. For example, “My grandpa has been on the same amount of blood pressure medication for five years — should that be re-evaluated?” or “The person I’m caring for becomes very agitated when she takes this. Is it the right medication? The right dosage?”

✓ Consider taking medications (prescription and non-prescription) with water - not coffee, soda pop, or herbal tea — water. Unless a medication specifically indicates you should take it with another type of beverage or your health provider advises differently, water is preferable. Sometimes placing the water in a favorite coffee cup instead of a glass makes a difference. Sometimes adding a little lemon juice or other flavoring helps.

✓ Use exactly as prescribed. If the directions indicate a specific pill should be taken before lunch on an empty stomach, make sure that is exactly what happens. And always ask the pharmacist - “What is the best approach if we forget to take this medication?” Pharmacists recommend taking medications exactly as prescribed as the single best way to reduce the likelihood of unwanted side effects.

From eXtension

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution. If you require a reasonable accommodation to participate or need materials in another format, please contact your County Extension office as soon as possible. Dial 711 for Arkansas Relay.