

# Get Going To Keep Going



*Helping you. Live your life.™*



# What is Active Aging?



*The World Health Organization (WHO) defines active aging as the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security so as to enhance quality of life as people age.*

*Studies show that to be happy, people need to feel safe, healthy and connected to other people. Whether we're 18 or 80, our sense of well-being is linked to our participation in life.*

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At the end of each section you can access additional information by linking to We Care's website where you can choose to print material, create SMART goals to help you Get Going or link to more resources. If you do not have a computer, simply call our toll-free number and we will mail you the information you require.

# It's *never* too late to improve your health.

There's a common misconception that as we get older, we can't really do anything about our health. Nothing could be further from the truth! While we may not have control over our genetics, there are still many things we can do to maintain vital, active lives.

Right now, you or your loved-one could be at the crossroads of life – perhaps coping with a chronic health condition, learning to live with advancing age or adjusting to life on your own. Like most Canadians, you want to live as long as possible and reside in a place of your choosing. **You** have the power to slow down the progression of health conditions and even prevent illness by taking charge of your health. You can choose the road to a better YOU!

Your life is like a big puzzle and each aspect of who you are is a piece of this puzzle. When you give time and attention to these pieces, your life puzzle will fit easily together to make a healthier you, now and for years to come.

*You have the  
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# 1 Get Eating – Food is Vital for Life

As we age, our bodies change and so should our nutrition. Eating wisely has been shown to slow signs of aging by keeping arteries soft and elastic, promoting brain functioning, providing important nutrients to major organs (heart, brain, kidneys, liver etc.) and fueling our bodies for everyday activities.



## Planning a Healthy Meal

- Eat a wide variety of foods;
- Choose a fibre-rich diet, rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables;
- Eat at least 5-7 servings of fruits and vegetables daily;
- Cut down on fast foods which tend to be high in saturated fats, salts, chemicals and sugars;
- Choose and prepare foods with less salt – helps to lower blood pressure
- Learn to read food labels;
- Limit alcohol and caffeine intake;
- Eat calcium-rich foods like milk and cheese to promote strong bones and teeth; those over 65 years require 1500mg of calcium and 400-800mg of vitamin D daily;
- Drink plenty of beverages and stay hydrated, especially when you exercise.



## Get munching on fruits and veggies

It's hard to argue with the health benefits of a diet rich in vegetables and fruits: lower blood pressure; reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, and some cancers; lower risk of eye and digestive problems; and a mellowing effect on blood sugar that can help keep appetite in check.

## 5 tips for sneaking more fruits and veggies into your day

1. Keep fruit out where you can see it. That way you'll be more likely to eat it. Keep it out on the counter or in the front of the fridge;

2. Get some every meal, every day. Try filling half your plate with vegetables at each meal;
3. Explore the produce aisle and choose something new. Get out of a rut and try some new fruits and vegetables;
4. Think one week at a time. If you find it difficult eating all these fruits and veggies every day – try spreading them out over a week;
5. Make it a meal. Try some new healthy recipes where vegetables take center stage. Visit our website for some great recipes.



In collaboration with the Senior Friendly™ Program, Dietitians of Canada has developed a series of 12 tip sheets to assist seniors with planning, shopping and preparing healthy meals. Nutritional information is available by printing fact sheets off the internet – either at home or at the library. [http://www.dietitians.ca/public/content/eat\\_well\\_live\\_well/english/faqs\\_tips\\_facts/fact\\_sheets/](http://www.dietitians.ca/public/content/eat_well_live_well/english/faqs_tips_facts/fact_sheets/)

For additional information on: reading food labels, spice is nice, recipes and more visit



[www.wecare.ca/geteating](http://www.wecare.ca/geteating) or call 1-877-853-1195

## 2 Get Active – Promoting Your Physical Health

### Get Motivated

Physical activity is one of the most important things you can do to maintain your physical and mental health and quality of life as you age. Walking, stretching and keeping your muscles in good condition can help you maintain your independence indefinitely.

Studies show that being active reduces the risk of heart disease, falls and injuries, obesity, high blood pressure, adult-onset diabetes, osteoporosis,



stroke, depression, colon cancer and premature death. In fact, moderate exercise and physical activity can even improve the health of people who are already frail or have diseases that accompany aging.

*Studies show that being active reduces the risk of many chronic diseases.*



### **Activity Benefits Checklist**

✓ Check which of the following benefits are most appealing to you:

- Better physical and mental health
- Continued independent living
- Improved quality of life
- More energy
- The ability to move with fewer aches and pains
- Better posture and balance
- Improved self-esteem
- Weight maintenance
- Stronger muscles and bones
- Relaxation and reduced stress

### **How to stay fit and mobile**

If you have one or more chronic diseases such as heart disease or diabetes, or if you smoke or are obese, you will need to consult with your doctor before increasing your activity level.

### **To Get Going:**

- Choose an activity that you enjoy! Buy a pedometer (measures the steps you take). Check how many steps a day you do now – then set a goal each week to gradually increase this number, one step at a time;
- Walking sticks are the latest trend for adding arm strength and stability to your walks;
- In the winter, be sure to add ice grippers to boots, an ice pick to a cane or go ‘mallin’;
- Wear proper foot wear – check your feet frequently for any cuts or blisters;
- Don’t overdo it! You should be able to talk or sing a song without getting breathless;
- Keep hydrated by bringing a bottle of water;



- Always carry personal identification.

Before you *Get Going to Get Active* – make sure that you are not at risk for a fall. Download the *Falls Prevention Checklist* from the website and review it with your Doctor.

For additional information on: types of exercise, tips for using a pedometer, preventing falls and more visit

[www.wecare.ca/getactive](http://www.wecare.ca/getactive) or call 1-877-853-1195



## 3 Get Involved – Keeping Your Mind in Shape

### Volunteer Activity

Getting involved in regular volunteer activities is a winning proposition for everyone: you, those you help, and the community around you. Whether you are housebound or able to go out, reaching out to your community is good for you. Studies show that people who volunteer just two hours per week live longer than those who don't. Volunteering has also been shown to lessen symptoms of chronic pain and heart disease.

***Why is giving back to your community good for your body, mind and spirit? It can:***

- Boost your zest and interest in life;
- Combat stress, depression and loneliness;
- Help you stay well;
- Make you feel good inside.

***Where can you help?***

Volunteer services are appreciated and welcomed in a wide variety of locations including:

- Arts, culture, recreation organizations;



- Senior centres, libraries, historical societies;
- Theatres, museums, sports teams, after-school programs;
- Social services organizations, hospitals, meals-on-wheels, hospice;
- Religious organizations and houses of worship.



*People benefit from learning new things throughout their life.*

There are many activities that can be done from the comfort of your home – knitting, woodworking and other crafts, friendly support by telephone or email, tutoring, baking or clerical assistance.

### Pay it Forward

If someone has shown a kindness to you, think about how you can “pay it forward” by doing something nice for someone else. You can create an unexpected delight in someone’s life. This has also been termed a “random act of kindness” – when a kind-hearted deed is done ‘just because’ and the recipient never knows who did it.



### Lifelong Learning

The concept of lifelong learning is based on the understanding that people benefit from learning new things throughout their life. Learning new skills – how to use a computer, dance, sew, speak a foreign language, paint a picture, write a memoir or repair a car – can provide wonderful benefits, particularly if you’re over 50.

Continuing education and lifelong learning can:

- Sharpen your mind and memory;
- Expose you to new opportunities;
- Provide a chance to meet people who share your interests;
- Build on what you already know;
- Master new skills;
- Bolster your confidence;
- Help you develop a new hobby.



### *Where to find lifelong learning resources*

Adult education and continuing education courses are provided by school boards, colleges, universities and trade schools. Programs are also offered at parks and recreation centres and senior centres.

For additional information on: writing a memoir, creating your family tree and more visit

[www.wecare.ca/getinvolved](http://www.wecare.ca/getinvolved) or call 1-877-853-1195



## 4 Get Happy – Dealing with Negative Emotions

As people age, it is not uncommon to feel afraid, anxious, depressed or lonely. Often there are valid reasons for such reactions. Life-changing events – the death of a partner or close friend, physical illnesses and operations, and even certain medications – can trigger such feelings. There is nothing to be embarrassed about. Although depression and loneliness can be quite common in later life, depression is not a typical part of aging and loneliness should not be taken lightly.

### **Loneliness**

Research shows that loneliness is a major risk factor in increasing blood pressure in older adults, and could increase the risk of death from stroke and heart disease.

That's why staying socially connected – by volunteering, taking a course, attending cultural events and engaging in regular visits with family and friends are so important to healthy, active aging. It's hard to GET GOING if you are feeling 'down' – perhaps review Get Involved for some helpful ideas.



## Depression

People occasionally feel sad due to the natural ups and downs of life. Depression is different. To be diagnosed with depression, you may experience two or more of the emotions on the *Feelings Checklist* for two weeks or longer.

*“... the only way  
to have a friend  
is to be one.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

This tool is designed to help you identify whether you could be suffering from depression. Bring this checklist with you to help you start a clear and candid discussion with your doctor.

### ***Feelings Checklist***

✓ Check which of the following you have been feeling for two or more weeks:

- Sadness or the blues
- Losing interest in life
- Tired for no reason
- Snappy or irritable
- Sleeping badly
- Feeling in a panic
- Considering suicide
- Feeling bad or guilty out of proportion to the circumstances
- Concentration or thinking problems
- Feeling unwell; aches and pains
- Losing weight or appetite
- Restless, agitated or sluggish
- Worrying more than usual
- Wanting to avoid people
- Losing self-confidence
- Feeling useless or a burden to others



For more information on getting happy visit  
[www.wecare.ca/gethappy](http://www.wecare.ca/gethappy) or call 1-877-853-1195

# 5 Get Talking – Communicating About Your Health

Active aging also means taking an active role in managing your health care. Communicating effectively with your healthcare providers is an essential element in receiving good medical care. A Canadian not-for-profit organization called “Patient Destiny” ([www.patientdestiny.com](http://www.patientdestiny.com)) is trying to change the way we communicate about our personal health information.

According to Kevin J. Leonard, Founder of Patient Destiny, there is an inevitable evolution taking place in health care which is rooted in the fact that patients are beginning to demand immediate and timely access to their own personal health information. Patients want this access so they can partner effectively with healthcare providers in the management of their health and wellness. The ultimate goal of Patient Destiny is an informed patient: a person who has all the appropriate information in hand and able to work within the system to obtain the best healthcare services and outcomes. Ideally, YOU set the agenda and your medical team will consult with YOU by providing advice and recommendations that are in your best interests.



## How to Connect with your Health Care Provider

### *Before your appointment:*

- Write down all your questions. Put the most important questions first;
- Have you been hospitalized since your last appointment? If so, bring your discharge summary;
- Make a list of all prescription and non-prescription medications (over-the-counter medicines, herbal remedies and vitamins) you are taking, including the dosages. Or, you could put all of your current medications into a bag and bring them to your appointment;
- Bring a list of all your allergies – particularly to medications with you;
- If you think that you may have difficulty remembering what is said during your appointment, arrange for a friend or family member to accompany you.

*One can argue that no one cares as much about your health as you do.*

### ***Discuss your concerns***

Medical offices are usually very busy, you may find it difficult to discuss your personal health challenges. It's often hard to hear and remember a lot of new information and instructions all at once. Do not be intimidated by the doctor's busy schedule – your health is your most valuable asset and deserving of their time and attention.

### ***To help you manage the situation:***

- Take notes, record the session or ask for important information to be written down for you;
- Speak up and if you can't understand the response say things like:
  - “Please speak more slowly and clearly.”
  - “I don't understand. Could you repeat that please?”
  - “Please give me more time to answer.”
- Describe your worst problem *first*;
- Discuss personal issues which are affecting you;
- Request another appointment if you don't have enough time.



### **Get Connected, Get Healthy**

Managing a chronic condition can be a challenge at the best of times. But you can take charge of your health in ways you never thought possible. Keep track of medications, blood sugar and other information your doctor needs, and get tips for managing your condition that are clinically proven to improve your health. You can even have a We Care nurse monitor you for added security. Curious? Call or visit We Care.



For more information on: TELUS, tracking your vital signs and more visit [www.wecare.ca/gettalking](http://www.wecare.ca/gettalking) or call 1-877-853-1195

# 6 Get to Know Your Medications – Knowledge is the Best Medicine

Did you know that taking your medicine as prescribed by your doctor is the single most important way to stay healthy, prevent complications and slow the progression of your condition? Proper use of your medicines can also prevent falls, ER visits, hospitalizations, surgeries, and some treatments.

## *Here are some general guidelines about managing your medicines.*

- Review your medications with your physician or pharmacist;
- Keep a list of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, herbal or natural remedies or vitamins – place a copy on your fridge and one in your wallet;
- Ask about test results that indicate whether your medicine is effective;
- If you take medication for a particular problem, is it working?
- Is your condition better? Do you need to continue taking the medicine? Can the dosage be reduced?
- Any side effects or new issues that could be caused by these medicines?

## *For any new medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist:*

- What is this medication for?
- How and when do I take it?
- What effects and side effects can I expect from the medication?
- When should I call if I have side effects?
- What do I do when I finish the prescription?
- Do I stop taking other medication when I start taking this one?
- Do I take it with food?
- Ask about your immunization record. When was your last: ...
  - Flu vaccination (recommended annually)
  - Pneumonia vaccination (once is usually enough)
  - TB (Mantoux) test
  - Tetanus vaccination (booster shot recommended every 10 years)
  - Hepatitis A vaccination (protects against contaminated food or water.)



- Hepatitis B vaccination (protects against tainted blood and body fluids.)

For additional information on: recording your medicines, how to receive a complimentary fridge magnetic and more visit



[www.wecare.ca/medications](http://www.wecare.ca/medications) or call 1-877-853-1195

## 7 Get Help – When an Unexpected Health Issue Arises

Don't wait when a new problem or symptom happens. Get re-acquainted with your body signals, vital signs and symptoms. The old saying "if you snooze... you lose" is very true. Take action while you can to prevent the problem from becoming urgent and critical.

### Taking Action – Options for Care



1. **Call your Family Doctor.** Depending on the severity of your symptoms and providing that you can get through quickly, you may want to call your family doctor's office and relay your situation to the receptionist or nurse. They can advise you of what to do.
2. **Call Telehealth** line in your province. The Registered Nurses will guide you on a course of action.
3. **Call Home Care.** Every Canadian can call their provincial home care agency to see if you qualify for services – you do not need to have a doctor's referral.

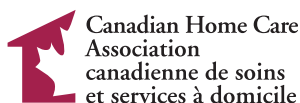
Home and community care services help people to receive care at home, rather than in a hospital or long-term care facility. Home and community care is delivered by regulated health care professionals (e.g., nurses, occupational or physical therapists), or non-regulated workers (personal care workers and homemakers).

4. **Call a private home healthcare agency** and request a complimentary needs assessment.

**We Care Home Health Services** is the largest Canadian, home care service provider in Canada, with over 50 locations from coast-to-coast. Our professional and compassionate service personnel include: nurses, personal support workers and homemakers, who provide nursing services, meal preparation, homemaking, cleaning, transportation. Our specialized, dedicated programs support those living with Brain Injury, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, osteoarthritis, diabetes, COPD and end of life care. These services are offered 24 hours per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year.

*Take action while you can to prevent the problem from becoming urgent and critical.*

To learn more about home care services in your province in Canada or to become a member of the Canadian Home Care Association, visit [www.cdnhomecare.ca](http://www.cdnhomecare.ca)



For additional information on: We Care's complimentary needs assessment, provincial telehealth nurse line or homecare program visit [www.wecare.ca/gethelp](http://www.wecare.ca/gethelp)



## 8 Get Safe – The Independent Living Guide



Security is further elaborated in We Care's Independent Living Guide. This booklet will help you to recognize safety risks and assist you in making simple changes to reduce the chances of injury in and around your home.

For a complimentary copy visit [www.wecare.ca/independentliving](http://www.wecare.ca/independentliving)





### Get Connected, Get Healthy

Managing a chronic condition can be a challenge at the best of times. But you can take charge of your health in ways you never thought possible. Keep track of medications, blood sugar, vital signs and other information your doctor needs, and get tips for managing your condition that are clinically proven to improve your health. When it comes to managing your health, the easier it is the better off you'll be. So we're making it easier than ever for you with new tools and programs that fit your lifestyle. Curious? For more information, call or visit We Care.



It's easier than you think.  
Talk to your We Care  
representative for more details.

*Helping you. Live your life.*<sup>TM</sup>

Compassionate, professional care that helps our loved ones live their lives – and helps you live yours. Services include: Personal Care, Home Making, Nursing, help with meds, Foot Care and Accompanied Visits. Our caregivers are specially trained to help people with Alzheimer's/dementia, diabetes, acquired brain injury, and end of life care.



1-877-853-1195  
[www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca)