

Healthy Aging

Some people spend more time planning a vacation than they do the second half of their lives. They plan where they'll sleep, eat, and play. But they don't think about these things when it comes to the second half of their lives. Planning for your retirement years can and should be just as intentional and comprehensive as planning that vacation!

Here are things you should take into consideration:

Social Connections

Too many older adults lose their social connections in later life and become isolated and alone. Plan ways to meet new people and forge new friendships. Create a "circle of care" of people who you can turn to for help and advice. Also, visiting your senior center to play cards, take a class, exercise, or have lunch with friends can help you find and make new friends to connect with.

Get and Stay Active

Experts in healthy aging agree – we have to include aerobic movement, like walking, as well as load bearing training, like light weight training, into our everyday lives if we want to maintain good health and stay independent. Your Senior Center likely has a number of classes to help you stay active, no matter your fitness level. Find an activity that gets you moving, whether it be walking with a group, chair yoga, or Zumba. Adding exercise to your weekly plan benefits you physically, mentally and socially.

You Are What You Eat

Eating a balanced diet is important because your organs and tissues need proper nutrition to work effectively. Without good nutrition, your body is more prone to disease, infection, fatigue, and poor performance. Many community programs help us find and buy healthy foods – from community farm shares, food pantries, commodity food distribution programs, group meals in senior centers and other community centers, and more. Learn how to prepare healthy meals and talk with a senior center director to learn about ways to stretch your food budget by using some the programs listed above.

Practice Financial Fitness as Well

Practicing financial fitness may be one of the most important things you undertake! Planning for your retirement and a drop in income can make a great difference in your later years. Putting a little away into savings each month and living within your means can make a great deal of difference in your later financial freedom. If your employer matches contributions in a retiree plan, that is 'free money' so make sure to take advantage of it! If you are retired, form a household budget and stick to it. If you need to earn more income, consider a part time job or sharing housing or lowering your expenses by using the senior citizen income tax credit and property tax relief programs of your town. Visit your senior center to talk with a SHINE Health insurance councilor to lower medical costs and the outreach worker to lower food, heating, housing and transportation costs.

Take Care of Your Emotional Well-Being

Too many of us were taught that you just "buck up" or "turn that frown upside-down," when you are sad, rather than asking for help. Admitting we were sad was viewed as a sign of weakness. In truth, it takes an incredibly strong person to admit they are sad or confused and to reach out for help. Everyone has down days, but if you're just not feeling like yourself, talk to your healthcare provider or a trusted staff member at your senior center.

Everyone is Aging

We're all getting older, but social isolation, financial insecurity, disease, physical decline, and depression don't have to be accepted as normal ways to age. Happy and healthy aging can be as natural as getting older is!