

Can Anything Be Done to Extend Life?

There are no known "anti-aging" treatments, drugs or supplements that slow aging or extend life. But your chances of staying healthy and living a long time will improve if you:

- **Don't Smoke**
- **Eat a balanced diet and maintain your desirable weight**
- **Exercise regularly**
- **Have regular health check-ups; see a doctor when you detect a problem and follow a doctor's advice when taking medication**
- **Stay involved with family and friends**
- **Allow time for rest and relaxation**
- **Get enough sleep**
- **Stay active through work, recreation and community activities**
- **Drink alcoholic beverages in moderation, if at all and don't drive after drinking**
- **Use seatbelts**
- **Avoid over-exposure to the sun and cold**
- **Practice good safety habits at home to prevent accidents such as fires and falls**

Nutrition is very important. The basic guidelines for a nutritious diet are the same for most healthy adults. Older people, however, need to pay special attention to the quality of foods that they eat.

Most people gain weight more easily as they age. Because of changes in the body and decreasing physical activity, older people usually need fewer calories.

The elderly in particular should limit their intake of fatty foods, sweets, salty snack foods, high calorie drinks and alcohol. These foods contain many calories, but few nutrients. Eating them in place of more nutritious foods can lead to weight gain without adequate nourishment.

Salt is a necessary part of life, and not only because it flavors and protects food. Our bodies need sodium, present in salt, because it helps to maintain blood volume, regulate water balance, transmit nerve pulses and other vital functions.

Regular physical activity can help the body maintain, repair and improve itself to an amazing degree.

Anyone planning to start a fitness program should see a doctor first.

There is evidence that exercise may strengthen your heart and lungs, lower your blood pressure and protect against the start of adult onset diabetes.

Exercise can strengthen your bones, slowing down the process of osteoporosis, a bone thinning disorder common in elderly women. It can strengthen and tone your muscles and help you move about more easily by keeping joints, tendons and ligaments more flexible.

When combined with good eating habits, exercise can help you lose weight and maintain your ideal weight by burning excess calories and helping control your appetite. Exercise may also give you more energy, help you sleep better and feel less tense, improve your appearance and self-confidence and contribute to good mental health.

Because the elderly are prone to develop pneumonia along with the flu, many doctors recommend that their older patients get a flu shot in the early fall.

It also helps to have a positive attitude toward life. Expect to live a long time. Plan ahead for housing and financial security. Find out what makes you happy and do it.

ATTENTION: This web page is intended to be used for health information ONLY. If you or a family member has a medical emergency, please call your doctor or 911, or your local emergency service number.