



Get 10 Steps To Preserve Independence And Control As You Age

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Healthy aging and how to age in place successfully are foremost in many seniors' minds. These 10 steps can help you as well as seniors in your life.

Home safety and accessibility: Take a look at your home environment and create a place that is accessible and free from hazards that could lead to injuries. This includes installing proper railings along stairs and grab bars in the bathroom and avoiding multiple levels. Too many area rugs can be a danger as well. Also think about outside surfaces as you enter, trying to achieve level areas.

Prevent falls: A fall can lead to severe disability and loss of independence. Balance problems can be common as you age due to physical or neurologic conditions or frailty. Make sure you use a mobility device to help if recommended by your doctor or physical therapist. Using a cane, walker or wheelchair used to be stigmatized and many people feel self-conscious using them. Times have changed and this is really no longer the case. It's more important to prevent a fall than to be vain about appearances.

Exercise and nutrition: Regular moderate exercise, 30 minutes a day, is an accepted standard for all ages. Find what you enjoy and stick to it, whether it's a walk outside or in a mall, or a class at the Y, senior center or gym or taking a swim in a pool. Keep moving. It's not only essential for overall physical health, but also important for your cognitive health. Proper balanced nutrition is a key to health as well. If shopping or preparing meals is becoming a burden, consider signing up for meals on wheels or prepared foods from your local specialty stores.

Socialization: The best way to combat isolation, loneliness and depression is to socialize and be around people. Senior centers, arts activities like museums and concerts and other activities in your community are very important aspects to overall well-being.

Intellectual stimulation: Do things that are stimulating for your brain like puzzles, classes or lectures on new and novel subjects.

Accept help when you need it: Accepting help is not a sign of weakness. Rather, it is a way of being in control of your life. Refusing help can be foolish and lead to disability and dependence or institutionalization after an injury or illness that could have been prevented.

Be realistic about chronic conditions and disease progression: Sometimes people do not want to believe or accept a diagnosis, or they simply neglect their health. It's important to get a second opinion if needed, and then to follow what is recommended and learn about what will happen in the future as the disease progresses. Being prepared is essential to coping with chronic disease.

Prepare financial and legal documents: Make sure you have current legal documents and have a financial plan in place to manage long-term care needs. Learn about programs that may help you finance long-term care through your state or the VA if you qualify. Senior center social workers can help with these programs. Put together a binder with essential legal and financial documents for your family members.

Have open discussions with family: Talk with your support system and loved ones about how to make decisions about your care or health if you are unable to. Whomever you appoint as your Power of Attorney should know what your wishes are so they can act in your stead if needed. Don't be shy about communicating your end-of-life wishes. This will help your significant others during times of stress or crisis to make good decisions on your behalf.

Get help from professionals: There are many professionals in the field of eldercare who can help you through difficult or confusing times. These include social workers, doctors, nurses, elder law attorneys, financial advisors and geriatric care managers. You may be facing an overwhelming web of options or needs, and the right professionals can help you through it all.