Six Tips For Healthy Aging

by Melissa Athmer
September 20 2022 9:21 AM

O'FALLON, IL. - September is Healthy Aging Month and HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital and HSHS Medical Group are recommending ways that you and your loved ones can age healthfully. The way our bodies and minds age is not always out of our hands. While we may not be able to completely control the physical environments that we live and work in, such as home, office, school, or the grocery store, we can still choose to engage in regular physical activity, healthy eating, and forming strong social connections, all of which can help us to age healthily.

"As you age, it is important to be consistent with your checkups to minimize the number of hospital stays and admissions that you experience," said HSHS Medical Group Family Nurse Practitioner Deanna Weinacht, APRN. "It can also assist in the early diagnosis of many chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and dementia."

Healthy aging is also about maintaining a healthy brain. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), several studies indicate that maintaining strong social connections and staying mentally active as we age may lower the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. This could be due to the strengthening of connections between nerve cells in the brain.

Here are six tips from the CDC for healthy aging:

1. **Eat and drink healthy.** Make healthy food choices – like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, and water.
2. **Move more, sit less throughout the day.** Aim for moderate physical activity, like walking, at least 150 minutes a week (22-30 minutes a day), and muscle-strengthening activity, like carrying groceries, at least two days a week. Being active, even moderately, can help prevent, delay and manage chronic diseases; improve balance and stamina; reduce the risk of falls; and improve brain health.
3. **Don't use tobacco.** According to the National Institute on Aging, smoking tobacco can increase your risk of cancer, eye diseases, respiratory problems, and other illnesses that can shorten your life. If you use tobacco, take the first step towards quitting by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free help.
4. **Get regular checkups.** Visit your doctor for preventive services, not just when you are sick. This can prevent disease or find it early when treatment is more effective.
5. **Know your family history.** Share your family health history with your doctor, who can help you take steps to prevent chronic diseases or catch them early.
6. **Be aware of changes in brain health.** Everyone's brain changes as they age, but dementia is not a normal part of aging. See your doctor if you have questions about your memory or brain health.

For more about how to prevent chronic disease and maintain a healthy lifestyle, visit cdc. gov/chronicdisease.

If you'd like to schedule an appointment with an HSHS Medical Group primary care physician or provider, call Patient Advocate Kim Schneider at 844-520-8897. To learn more about HSHS Medical Group, visit hshsmedicalgroup.org.