



# 6 HABITS TO HELP YOU AGE WELL

While it's a fact that growing older affects most parts of your body, adopting and maintaining healthy lifestyle habits can go a long way in helping you age well. In fact, maintaining healthy behaviors around things like exercise, sleep and diet can be as important as your genes when it comes to growing old gracefully.

While you may already follow healthy habits in some areas of your life, there are likely other areas that could use some improvement. Check out the six habits below to see what you're doing well, and where you might improve. Your future self will thank you!

## Eat a Healthy Diet

When it comes to aging, nutrition plays a key role. In fact, the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy & Promotion reports that about half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases, often related to poor diet. But the good news is diet is something you have control over. Why not challenge yourself to try a new healthy food each week, then incorporate your favorites into your diet? For tips on how to eat healthier, go to <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/>.

Overeating—even if you are consuming healthy foods—can quickly lead to obesity, which in turn can lead to heart disease, type 2 diabetes and other serious diseases. To help you better understand the amounts you should be eating, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) offers a helpful portion chart you can download for free to help you. Here are some examples: one serving of cereal is about the size of your fist; to visualize a single serving of cheese, imagine 4 dice stacked on top of each other.

## Get Enough Calcium

Did you know that calcium is the most plentiful mineral found in your body? It's not only in your teeth and bones, it's in your blood, nerve cells, body tissues and more. Because it's so important, the earlier you start paying attention to your calcium intake, the denser your bone mass will be as you age. Additionally, your calcium needs increase with age, so make sure you are getting the recommended amounts. Doing so may help you avoid osteoporosis, a serious condition associated with aging that leads to broken bones and a permanently stooped posture. To help you get more calcium in your diet, try our Mango Shake recipe, found in this month's newsletter.

## Rest Up

Consistently getting a good night's rest can help you age well. But technology may be making it harder to slumber peacefully. Recent studies have shown a connection between sleep quality and length and the use of technology at bedtime. According to the National Sleep Foundation, using devices at bedtime negatively affects sleep by suppressing melatonin, the body's natural sleep drug. They can also keep the brain alert and wake you or your partner with unanticipated chimes, calls, alerts and blinking lights. Build a new healthy lifestyle habit by turning off all devices and smartphones at least 30 minutes before you plan to go to bed.

## Exercise Every Day

You're probably aware that regular exercise is good for your body. You may also be aware that people lose muscle more rapidly as they age. So, getting both cardiovascular and weight-bearing exercise is a vital part of aging well. But did you also know that staying fit may also reduce age related memory loss? It's true, according to a recent study published in the journal *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*.

## Use Sunscreen

While people with lighter color skin may have skin that burns easily, people of every ethnicity are at risk of sun damage and skin cancer. No matter what your background, always wear sunscreen when you are exposed to the sun. And if you use a tanning bed, stop. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, 419,000 cases of skin cancer occur each year that are linked to indoor tanning.

## Choose to Focus on the Bright Side

Finally, when it comes to aging well, your mindset is one of the most important factors, so choose to stay positive. In fact, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, seniors who see aging as a way to grow as a person, become more wise and gain overall satisfaction reap a significant benefit: more than 40% are more likely to recover from a disability than people who associate aging with feeling helpless or useless.

# The Wellness Advocate's Got Your Back



A common issue related to aging is back pain. It can be due to many things—such as a “wear and tear” issue, like arthritis or degeneration in a disc, or another problem related to the spine or surrounding muscles and soft tissues. However, back pain and aging are not inevitable, and there are steps you can take to help you maintain your back health and avoid injury.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP YOU KEEP YOUR BACK HEALTHY AS YOU AGE:

**Develop Good Posture:** The way you carry your body can have as much of an impact on your joints as how you move them. Watch your posture not only when you are standing, but also while you’re sitting. And, if you sit and read a book, make sure your head is not tilted awkwardly, which can lead to neck and back pain.

**Avoid Heavy Lifting:** Just one wrong move and you may not only “throw your back out” but cause permanent damage—so why take the chance? Always think twice before you decide to pick up something heavy, and if you do, lift with your legs, not your back.

**Carry Backpacks Properly:** If you carry a backpack during the day, always use both straps to ensure the weight is distributed evenly across your back. If not, your spine will become misaligned, leading to back pain. Over time, this can lead to increasing problems as you age, and a good chance of chronic back pain.

**Don’t Sit too Long:** You may have heard a recent saying: “Sitting is the new smoking.” What it means is that sitting for long periods is now recognized as an unhealthy behavior that can impact many areas of your health, such as blood circulation and your back. To help you age well, get in the habit of standing up at least once an hour and moving, stretching and preferably, taking a short walk.

For more information on how to keep your back healthy, visit the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeon’s web page, [Preventing Back Pain at Work and Home](#).

## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR WEBINAR!

Join us on Thursday, September 21 to  
get strategies for aging well.

## Recipe: Mango Shake

Try this delicious low calorie, low fat shake that’s also high in calcium. If you’re not a fan of mango, try substituting orange juice, papaya or strawberries.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups 1% milk
- 4 tablespoons frozen mango juice (or 1 fresh pitted mango)
- 1 small banana
- 2 ice cubes

### Directions

- Put all ingredients into a blender. Blend until foamy. Serve immediately.
- Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 3/4 cup

### NUTRITION FACTS

Calories: 106 | Total fat: 2g | Saturated fat: 1g | Cholesterol: 5 mg | Protein: 10 g  
Sodium: 63mg | Calcium: 157mg | Carbohydrates: 28 g | Dietary Fiber: 1 g

