



Stay ACTIVE

BY CENTURY OAKS ASSISTED LIVING

We've all heard that staying active and keeping our minds sharp will lead to longer lives, but the concept is more than simply common sense. As we age, we begin to lose muscle mass, are likely to have some memory loss and decreased thinking skills, and we may potentially experience periods of depression.

Muscle mass issues can be addressed by increasing aerobic activity with brisk walks, swimming, yoga, and stretching. Physical activity can slow the aging process and builds endorphins that add to our feeling good. The benefits of exercise are numerous, including reducing the risk for obesity, diabetes, dementia, and depression.

In addition to adding exercise to our daily routine, we can also eliminate processed foods from our diets, eat more omega-3 fatty acids, drink enough water daily, and take vitamins. We can eat more fruits and vegetables, notably blueberries and mushrooms, which have been proven to slow the aging process.

Not to be overlooked are ways to keep our brains active. According to the *British Medical Journal*, over 40 percent of adults age 65+ have some age-associated memory loss, which comes to approximately 16 million people. While there are several studies underway of drugs to treat mild cognitive impairment in order to delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, other areas under study include

non-drug therapies, like puzzles and crossword puzzles, and games, such as Sudoku.

A study from the University of Exeter and King's College in London discovered that people who engage in word puzzles have brain function equal to people 10 years younger than their age. On problem-solving tests and grammar tests, people who regularly do word puzzles and grammar tests performed an average of eight years younger compared to those who don't. The benefits of such activities include: boosting logical thinking, improving memory and recall, improving concentration, slowing Alzheimer's, and reducing anxiety.

Lastly, staying active not only encompasses physical and mental exercises but also social activities. Making time for your friends reduces loneliness. Social activities, such as singing in a church choir, joining a book club, belonging to a bridge club or sewing club, are effective ways to maintain a healthy social life.

By maintaining daily or weekly social activities, we can lessen our chances of experiencing periods of depression and improve overall physical health at the same time. By staying active and keeping our minds sharp, we can slow down the aging process. We can honestly tell ourselves "We're not getting older, we're getting better!"



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