



Healthy Aging And Longevity

IN FLORIDA

ALONG WITH LONGER LIFE EXPECTANCY, THE DESIRE TO AGE WELL
AND LIVE A MORE CONNECTED & FULFILLING LIFE IS SHARED
AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN THE SUNSHINE STATE.



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The Longevity Revolution

According to the National Council on Aging, life expectancy has increased dramatically over the past 50 years. Vast improvements in sanitation and hygiene during the first half of the 20th century combined with the introduction of antibiotics in the 1930s dramatically decreased death rates from infectious disease. Americans living in 1900 could expect to live to age 47. Today, people can expect to live to age 80 or longer!

Chronic disease has emerged as the new leading cause of death. According to the CDC, heart disease and cancer were the top two causes of death among people aged 65 and over in 2016. Chronic lower respiratory disease (CLRD) ranked third followed by stroke, Alzheimer's disease and diabetes.

Age-Friendly Innovations

Along with longer life expectancy, the desire to age well and live a more connected and fulfilling life has created a paradigm shift in how we think about aging. It has accelerated the demand for age-friendly products, social policies and programs, medical research and service-enriched housing. Each of these trends will benefit the aging population in ways we have yet to discover.

While technology and research may extend our life span, experts at the Harvey A. Friedman Center for Aging at Washington University have found productive engagement to be the key to longevity. They claim keeping older adults engaged, secure and healthy are the three cornerstones of healthy aging.

Nowhere is that easier accomplished than in the Sunshine State.





Florida Sunshine & Seniors

It's easy to see why Florida ranks number one among retirement destinations. Having earned AARP's designation as an Age-Friendly State, the tax benefits and cost of living are very attractive to older adults. Plus, at an average daily temperature of a near-perfect 70 degrees Fahrenheit, an outdoor lifestyle is not only an attainable goal; it's a way of life.

Florida sunshine does more than just boost your Vitamin D levels. Research has shown when it's nice outside, you're more likely to engage in physical activity. And physical activity prevents age-related cognitive decline and disease.

According to the National Institute on Health, people who lead an active lifestyle are less likely to develop chronic disease and more likely to live longer. Older adults in colder states simply move their bodies less during winter months due to the dangers of walking on snow and ice, and an inability - or unwillingness - to tolerate cold temperatures. Add to that the appeal of a longer lifespan and retirement in Florida is a no-brainer.

The Path to Good Health

Florida living provides the perfect setting for those seeking an active retirement lifestyle, but the fundamentals of health and wellness still apply.

Along with an increased lifespan, older adults everywhere are finding a need to manage the changes that occur from aging. While we cannot stop the aging process, there are simple changes you can make to your lifestyle now to add years to your life.



Your Journey to Healthy Aging

According to the Mayo Clinic, as we age, we experience reduced elasticity of the blood vessels and arteries which can cause stress on the cardiovascular system. The way the body burns calories also changes with age making it more difficult to maintain a healthy weight. In addition, many older adults also become isolated in late life, leading to depression.

Proper nutrition and physical activity will ensure your journey to good health and longevity.



Weight

Our metabolism slows down with age. If you decrease your activity, but continue to eat the same as you always have, it's likely you'll gain weight. Ask your doctor how to eat the right amount of food for your body and age to maintain your weight. The recommended daily servings are published by The American Heart Association.



Exercise

Daily physical activity will also help you maintain a healthy weight. Exercise can increase both physical and emotional wellbeing at any age. Walking, swimming and other low-impact and moderate exercise are effective ways to promote heart health.



Diet

Increased consumption of sucrose in the American diet has been linked to a spike in chronic illnesses such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease. Nutritionists recommend limiting sugar and foods high in saturated fat. Instead, choose vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean sources of protein.



Supplements

The size and density of our bones change as we age, compromising coordination and making older adults more susceptible to falls. Nutritionists recommend calcium to promote joint, muscle and bone health. Supplements are helpful to getting the recommended vitamins and minerals for your age.



Social Wellness

Scientists have found a link between socialization and your health. According to research, the biological benefits of forming social connections can lengthen your life by reducing harmful levels of stress, which compromises your coronary arteries, insulin regulation, and immune system.



Vaccines

Due to a weakening immune system, older adults are at higher risk from complications related to disease. According to the CDC, the influenza, Tdap, shingles and pneumococcal vaccines are recommended for adults over 65 years of age. Ask your doctor which vaccines are recommended for you.

A Recipe for Good Health

Aging affects many functions of body, including the absorption of foods and nutrients. A healthy diet can help you maintain digestive health and prevent many of the unwanted effects of aging!

To promote successful aging and prevent chronic disease, doctors recommend consuming a wide variety of foods to ensure a balance of nutrients. A registered dietitian can help you customize the ideal diet for your individual age and health goals.

Whole Foods. Unprocessed and unrefined foods that come from plants not only provide good nutrition, they can prevent dementia, Alzheimer's and cognitive decline. Diets rich in whole foods like vegetables and fruits, legumes, whole grains and nuts can lower your risk of heart disease by as much as 30%!

Sugar. Highly processed foods contribute 50% of the calories and 90% of the added sugars in the American diet! Over a lifetime, consuming sugar in this form causes insulin spikes that promote the storage of fat, insulin resistance and metabolic diseases. The American Heart Association recommends ways to reduce sugar in your diet using healthy food substitutions.

Fiber. A diet high in fiber can help you control blood sugar levels and lower cholesterol levels. It can also help lower the risk of diabetes, diverticular disease, heart disease and colorectal cancer. According to the Institute of Medicine, women older than 50 years of age should aim for 21 grams of fiber a day while men age 51 and older should aim for 30 grams.

Sodium. Too much sodium in your diet can cause high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Processed foods were responsible for most of the sodium consumed by older adults. Look for the hidden sodium in bread, cold cuts, pizza and soups.



Fiber Tips

- ☐ Substitute whole grain flour for white flour in baking recipes
- ☐ Choose nuts or dried fruit for a snack
- ☐ Choose whole wheat over white bread
- ☐ Choose cereals made with whole grains
- ☐ Eat more beans, an excellent source of fiber
- ☐ Eat whole fruits and vegetables instead of fruit juice
- ☐ Take a fiber supplement



Staying Active in the Sunshine State

Retirement represents an opportunity for seniors to pursue their passions, interests and hobbies. The mild year-round climate in Florida provides more options for physical activity and recreation for older adults of every ability level and budget. It also helps retirees maintain an active lifestyle late in life.

Keeping your body and mind moving are key to a long, happy life. In Florida, the options are plentiful.

Golf. Playing golf is a year-round activity in Florida and home to several world famous courses toured by the PGA. Florida boasts 1,250 golf courses - more than any other state!

Leisure. Your favorite activities can become daily occurrences in retirement. Socializing with friends, bowling, tennis, pickle ball, yoga, Tai Chi, ballroom dancing, water aerobics, theater, cards, painting, woodworking, birdwatching, bocce ball and shuffleboard...the possibilities are endless. Not only will your health benefit from the physical activity, but you'll make new friends with similar interests.

Boating. Known as the boating capital of the world, thousands of miles of beaches, lakes, rivers and marshes carved into the Florida landscape create abundant opportunity for outdoor recreation. From ocean and dinner cruising to fishing trips, ferries, airboats, scenic boat tours and even glass-bottom boats, people of all ages enjoy boating.

Theme Parks. Florida is known as the capital of theme parks. The magical feeling one gets visiting a theme park never gets old. Plus, it's a great opportunity to spend time with the grandchildren. Need we say more?



Popular Boat Tours

- ☐ Sunset cruises in Key West
- ☐ Fishing charters in Destin
- ☐ Manatee tours in Crystal River
- ☐ Sponge dock cruises in Tarpon Springs
- ☐ Celebrity waterfront homes in Miami
- ☐ Glass-bottom boat tours in Key Largo
- ☐ Alligator airboat tours in Everglades
- ☐ Guided wilderness tour in Hobe Sound



Finding Friendship in the Sunshine State

Birds of a feather flock together. Especially in Florida.

Loneliness and depression are serious health risks for older adults living at home alone. Fortunately, Florida supplies a huge variety of social groups and senior living options, which make it easy to find like-minded individuals with common interests.

Hobby Groups. It's never too late to take up a new hobby. Ask for the event calendar at your local senior center to find something new that interests you. On the web, [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) features groups on countless topics from travel to gardening to simple social outings for friendship and fun.

Volunteering. Staying active in the community will have a positive effect on your health. Schools, libraries, shelters, museums and hospitals are always looking for volunteers in Florida. Choose an organization that supports a cause close to your heart and offer your time. Not only will you make a difference in the lives of others, but you'll make new friends and gain a sense of fulfillment from giving back to your community. Visit [volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org) or [Senior Corp's RSVP](#) for more ideas.

Retirement Communities. Among the many social benefits offered by senior living communities, the constant availability of activities, events, continuing education and companionship can improve your health and extend your life. Add to that the convenience of having a chef prepare healthy meals for you every day and independent living in Florida ticks all the boxes required for healthy aging.

If you are living alone during your retirement years, consider the health benefits of a senior living community.



Volunteer Opportunities in Florida

- ☐ Walk dogs at a local animal shelter
- ☐ Foster grandparenting through Senior Corps
- ☐ Serve meals at a homeless shelter
- ☐ Museum docent for guided tours
- ☐ Cuddle babies at local hospital
- ☐ Read books to or tutor children in need
- ☐ Teach English to immigrants
- ☐ Organize assistance for hurricane victims

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