

POSITIVE AGING:
HEALTHY LIVING
HANDBOOK



Stay Healthy
for Life!



fountain of health

FACTS ON AGING: DID YOU KNOW?

Fact: Seniors Enjoy a Higher Quality of Life Than Ever Before

Being a senior means something very different than it did in the past. Many people are in better health than ever before.

Fact: How Long We Live Is Not Just In Our Genes
Science shows that only 25% of our longevity is due to family genes. Much more is shaped by how well we take care of ourselves.

Fact: Our Brains & Bodies Improve With Use
A common myth about aging is that our bodies and brains are pre-wired to fail with age. On the contrary: research shows our bodies and brains improve and stay healthy when actively used.

Fact: Positive Outlook is Key to A Long Life
Studies on 100-year olds suggest that qualities of optimism and a positive outlook are more important than physical health in longevity.

Q: How do we change how we think about aging?

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WELCOME

The Fountain of Health is your source for reliable information about positive aging, with steps you can take to promote and protect good health.

Inside this handbook are 5 key actions research suggests will help keep you healthy for life:

1. STAY SOCIALLY ACTIVE

2. CHANGE HOW YOU THINK ABOUT AGING

3. STAY PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

4. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

5. CONTINUE TO LEARN NEW THINGS

This handbook will help you reflect on where you are now, set goals, and strive for a healthier life!

TAP INTO YOUR FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH!

Do it for your community. Do it for your family.
Do it for yourself.

TAP INTO YOUR FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH!



Call a Friend – It's Good for You!

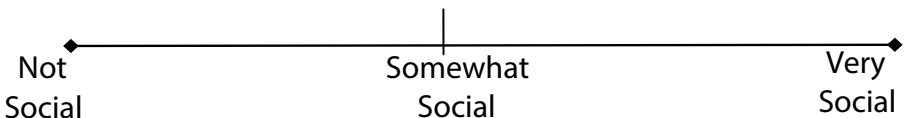
You might have noticed that spending time with your friends makes you feel good. Did you also know that being socially active improves brain health? Being social has been shown to:

- Lower your risk of dementia
- Improve your brain performance
- Lower your risk of depression
- Increase longevity

Self-reflection:

How socially connected to others do you feel?

With an "X", rate yourself on the scale below:



Do you have someone to talk to if you have a problem? _____ If so, who? _____

1. SOCIAL ACTIVITY - WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Over time, we can lose touch with friends and find it harder to make new ones. If you don't socialize much or feel anxious meeting new people, these strategies can help with the first steps:

1. Call a friend for a coffee date or to go for a walk.
2. Change things up in your routine.
3. Get closer with an acquaintance by asking them a few questions.
4. Visit your local community centre.
5. Challenge yourself to say "yes" to something you usually turn down.
6. Make the most of your hobbies or interests and join a group.
7. Try volunteering.
8. Show up at an event alone.
9. Try confiding in someone.

Reach out to a senior you know!



You Are What You Think!

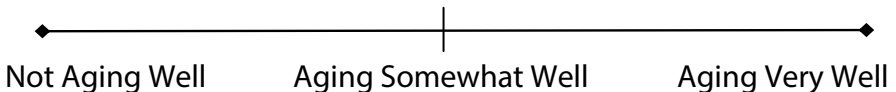
Did you know that our outlook, and how we think about aging impacts the aging process itself?

A positive outlook has been linked to:

- Lower risk of chronic disease and dementia
- Less isolation and loneliness
- Better handling of stress
- Increased help-seeking & illness prevention
- Faster and better recovery from disability
- Increased longevity

Self-Reflection:

How well are you aging? (Place an "X" below)



Self-quiz: Your Views on "Aging" (circle)

As I get older, I am less useful. Y N

Things keep getting worse as I get older. Y N

I am as happy as I expected to be at this age. Y N

2. POSITIVE THINKING - WHAT CAN YOU DO?

When times are tough, you might view things more negatively or talk to yourself in unhelpful ways. Try these tips to improve your outlook:

1. Make a list of things you feel grateful for. Include things you like about yourself. Try to review your list each day.
2. List some of the benefits you can see in your life as you age. How is your life experience helpful?
3. Spend more time with people who are positive and encouraging, and less time with people who are not.
4. Challenge unhelpful thoughts: Are they facts? What would a good friend say to you about this concern?
5. If you are aware of your thoughts, you can change them for the better. To learn more, visit:
www.fountainofhealth.ca



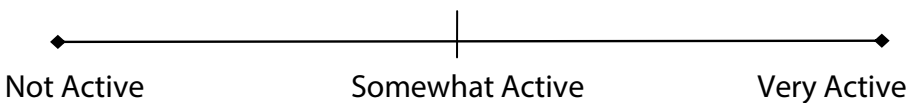
Physical Activity: It Never Gets Old!

Many people think that as they age there is less point to exercising. The truth is that it is never too late! Being active throughout life has a wide range of benefits, including:

- Lower risk of chronic disease, disability & falls
- Lower risk of dementia
- Improved function and independence
- Better quality of sleep
- Improved overall mood
- Increased longevity

Self-reflection:

How physically active are you? (Mark an "X" below)



What do you do for exercise? _____

3. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Keeping fit is key to maintaining your physical, cognitive and mental health, so where should you start?

1. Just move! Sitting for long periods of time can lead to health problems.
2. Do more of what you normally do: increase the time spent being active.
3. Leave the car at home. Walking helps maintain independence.
4. Gardening? Dancing? Choose something you enjoy! You are much more likely to keep doing it.
5. Join your local fitness or community centre. Talk to a fitness instructor for more ideas.
6. Talk to your doctor for advice on increasing your physical activity.

NOTE: The recommended amount of activity is 30 min. x 5 days/week (or 150 minutes/week)



Mind Your Mental Health!

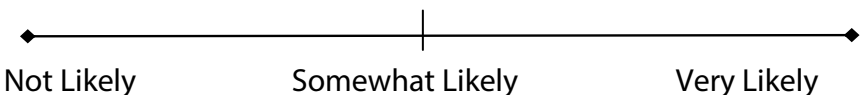
Mental health is key to positive aging. Good mental health helps us enjoy our lives and cope with life's challenges. Growing older does not have to be negative. Sadness and dementia are NOT a usual part of aging. Mental illnesses are treatable disorders. Many will improve or resolve, so:

- Challenge negative thinking
- Know early warning signs of illness
- Be willing to ask for help

To learn more see the "Mental Health Support for Seniors: Myths and Facts" FoH Handbook

Self-Reflection:

How likely are you to seek mental health help if you need it? (Mark with an "X" below)



4. MENTAL HEALTH – DID YOU KNOW?

Like physical illnesses, mental illnesses are treatable disorders that can get better or completely work themselves out. Keep in mind:

1. It is possible to have a mental illness and be mentally healthy in your attitude and ability.
2. Anxiety disorders come in many forms, are common and affect 1 in 5 people.
3. Significant or prolonged depression is not a usual part of aging. It is a medical illness and it is treatable.
4. Dementia results in a loss of memory and function, but if detected early there are treatments that can help.
5. If you need help see your family doctor, call 211 or Mobile Crisis at 1-888-429-8167.

See www.fountainofhealth.ca for more information and resources!



It is Never too Late to Learn Something New!

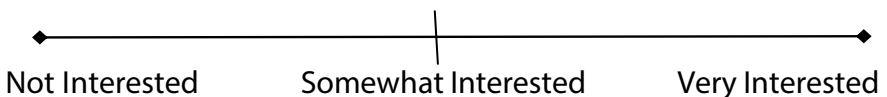
Challenging your brain with mental exercises as you age is just as important as physical activity. Like your muscles, your brain improves with use. Continuing to learn throughout life will:

- Improve general brain function
- Increase memory & concentration
- Lower your risk of dementia

Self-Reflection:

How interested are you in learning new things?

With an "X", rate yourself on the scale below:



What would you like to learn more about?

5. LIFELONG LEARNING - WHAT CAN YOU DO?

All types of mental exercises count, but greater challenges are better! Here are some mental “workouts” you can try:

1. Change your routine. Take a new route home, shop at a different grocery store or meet up with a friend you haven't seen in a while.
2. Read, write, do word or number puzzles. Choose something you like to do!
3. Visit your local public library. Talk to the library staff about lectures, courses or book home-delivery.
4. Make the most of your hobbies and interests by joining a group.
5. Learn how to use a computer.
6. Challenge yourself by learning a new language or instrument.
7. Register for a course through an adult education program.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Nova Scotia has the oldest provincial population in Canada...Let's make it the healthiest!

Tap Into Your Fountain of Health: Take Action!

I agree to set some goals and make at least one positive change or action in the next month:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Self-reflection:

The easiest area for me to improve is:

The toughest area for me to improve is

TAP INTO YOUR FOUNTAIN OF HEALTH!

TAKE THE PLUNGE: SET YOUR GOALS!

1. SOCIAL ACTIVITY

What steps will you take to increase your social activity? _____

2. POSITIVE THINKING

How might you change the way you think about aging? _____

3. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

How will you increase your weekly physical activity? _____

4. MENTAL HEALTH

What will you do to learn more about your mental health? _____

5. LIFELONG LEARNING

What else would you like to learn more about?

For more information, resources,
and references, visit online at:
www.fountainofhealth.ca



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