

Healthy Aging = Knowledge + Action

Do you know that the only demographic group in our Great Lakes Bay Region that is increasing (in both percent of the total population and in actual numbers) is the group of us 50+ in age? And, do you know that the most significant growth has been in Midland County? The 2010 Census data should provide more specifics but even without the exact numbers we know that life expectancy has been increasing, medical science has positively contributed to the treatment of diseases and illnesses, and some of us have adopted a life style that enhances health living.

There are many, many advertisements for products that claim to cure something, or to prevent something or to make you live longer and almost all of them claim you need to do almost nothing because it will be so easy. Be wary! Most medical experts would tell you not to waste your money or to look for the “magic potion or pill” because healthy aging requires work, it requires actions, it requires participation, and it requires knowledge in addition to your working cooperatively with medical and other professionals, and don’t forget that genetics (what you inherit) also will play an important role.

Lists of the “Top 10” are prevalent and you no doubt can find hundreds of them about health that purport to be the best list. I looked at over 25 reputable internet sites that have lists relating to good health and the aging processes and the following is the list of 10 that I have compiled that represents a consensus by the medical professionals pertaining to healthy aging:

1. Active Brain

- Challenge yourself to learn and try something new every day
- Intentionally expose yourself to new ideas & information (listen to different radio stations, vary your television watching, enroll in seminars, try a new skill, etc.)

2. Move More

- Torturous exercise not necessary but do try to use all major muscle groups
- 20-30 minutes of exercise daily recommended (push your body beyond what it is used to doing) to keep your heart and lungs “tuned up”
- WALK
- Strive for a healthy weight to height ratio

3. Eat Right/Good Nutrition

- Five to seven daily servings of fruits & veggies (the bolder the color the better)
- Cut fat; avoid the obvious such as fried foods, fatty meats, mayonnaise, butter, etc.
- FIBER everyday; Limit junk food
- Stay away from refined sugars (sugar causes your body to release insulin and insulin causes your body to store fat)
- Read food labels

4. Get Your Zzzzz’s

- Aim for 7 to 8 hours each night
- Deep uninterrupted sleep aids cell growth & cell repair
- Avoid alcohol, caffeinated coffee, tea and sodas, chocolate 3 hours before sleep
- No multi hour daytime naps

5. Water

- Clean your insides, help the metabolic processes and your internal organs
- Drink water instead of other beverages (the more yellow your urine, the more dehydrated your body may be....of course some medications also affect color)
- Aim for ½ of your body weight in ounces per day (if you weight 150 pounds try drinking 75 oz. of water per day)

6. No Smoking/Limit Alcohol

- A jug of wine should last a lifetime! But, 4 oz. daily of red wine can help protect against some heart diseases; limit alcohol intake
- There is nothing good about smoke or tobacco – it ages skin, causes heart disease and strokes and certainly negatively affects our lungs

7. Routine Doctor Visits

- Usually recommended are annual physical checkups with your family doctor, your dentist and your optometrist
- Have tests indicated for your age and sex (colonoscopy, blood tests, blood pressure, cholesterol, mammogram, bone density, etc.)
- Know your numbers...aim for blood pressures readings in the 120/80 range; total cholesterol below 200 (LDL cholesterol below 100 mg/dL and HDL cholesterol above 50 mg/dL); triglycerides below 150 mg/dL; fasting glucose level of up to 100 mg/dL
- Become friendly with you pharmacist and when possible have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy so they can look for potential negative interactions; take your medications as prescribed and read the instructions so you know potential side effects
- Keep your inoculations/shots up to date (tetanus, annual flu vaccination, consider pneumonia and shingles protection, etc.)

8. Ditch Bad Habits

- Stop tanning, wear sunscreen but do get some sun as the Vitamin D it provides is good for you
- Wear comfortable shoes with proper support that fit properly and have rubber soles
- Eat slower (it takes about 20 minutes for the message to get to your brain that you are full)
- Stop slouching, lifting with your back, carrying a heavy purse, parking as close as possible

9. Legal and \$\$ Planning

- Learn how you can prevent being a target of identity theft
- Hire an Elder Attorney to draft your Trust (know the difference between a will and a trust) and Power of Attorney
- Protect your Social Security number and only give to professionals (medical and bankers, tax accountant, etc.) who must know it to perform a service for you
- Protecting your money and assets lowers stress/worry and therefore contributes to good health

10. Positive Attitude

- Smile, laugh, sing, look for joy, give hugs, compliment others
- Connect with positive people...avoid the whiners, complainers, negative ones!
- Enhance your spirituality, seek and give LOVE

Would you like to know more about health? Come to the **50+ Health for Life Expo Saturday, May 8th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm** at the Delta College main campus. Major sponsors are the four regional hospitals, Bay Regional Medical Center, Covenant HealthCare, Mid-Michigan Health and St. Mary's of Michigan. There will be educational seminars on a wide range of health topics, interactive activities, demonstrations and many exhibits by a wide variety of vendors showcasing health care products and services which focus on the 50+ population. This is a **FREE event**...invite your friends!

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