

# The Fantastic Five of Healthy Aging



Health Matters

By Kerry Sauser

Wow. Suddenly, the cornfields are dry, the beans are golden and the air is cooling. The coming of Fall emphasizes that time is passing, and it nearly thrusts one word right into our faces. Aging.

It's practically a dirty word in our culture. From the fashion and cosmetics industries we get the message that if you're not young and beautiful, you have no value. Many of us fear that getting older means getting sick, experiencing pain or losing our mental vitality, and no one wants to spend our senior years that way. Is it any wonder we've become obsessed with youth? But, if we could maintain our strength, our vitality and our mental focus well into old age, it might be enjoyable. Why is it that some of us age well, and others don't? Is there a secret to staying healthy and vibrant as we age?

Generally speaking, bad things don't suddenly assault your body to cause pain and illness as you get older. Aging is more akin to the old saying about chickens coming home to roost. Genetics weigh in, but undesirable aging conditions are more about the long term effects of wear and tear on our bodies, including things

that we have done to them ourselves—consciously or unconsciously. Things like exposure to chemicals and pollution, smoking, injuries, and poor lifestyle choices (including a diet of highly processed foods) all have detrimental effects on our health that can surface as we get older.

The most frequently asked question by my 45+ patients is, "How can I keep healthy as I get older?" Happily, it's not as complicated or expensive as marketing gurus have led us to believe. These are the top 5 actions I recommend to help you minimize health problems as you age.

1. Eat healthy foods, especially more berries and cruciferous vegetables.

Berries are full of fiber, minerals and vitamins, and are loaded with healing antioxidants. Blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries and pomegranates (yes, they are considered a berry) are rich in antioxidants that can help prevent cancer and heart disease. Blueberries also appear to delay the onset of age-related loss of cognitive function.

Cruciferous vegetables like cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli and Brussels sprouts, contain an antioxidant compound that reduces the risk of breast cancer and other estrogen-sensitive cancers, like cancer of the ovaries and cervix. Some of these same vegetables contain additional protective constituents like beta-carotene, which strengthen the immune system and can help prevent other types of cancers and heart disease.

2. Exercise.

The anti-aging benefits of even mild exercise are substantial. Movement as

simple as rocking back and forth in a chair or bouncing on a rebounder can get lymph and blood circulating to help prevent cardiovascular disease. Exercise also keeps joints lubricated, muscles toned and balance stable to reduce pain and help prevent falls and injuries.

3. Breathe...deeply.

Deep breathing has benefits similar to exercise and it can be done anywhere. Just a few minutes of deep breathing will reduce stress, release endorphins (the body's natural pain killers), increase metabolism, and focus the mind. Regular deep breathing also strengthens weak abdominal and intestinal muscles. Spend three minutes of deep breathing twice a day, and you may notice a difference in how you feel in as little as a week.

4. Take key supplements.

\* Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's) make blood platelets less apt to stick to the walls of blood vessels and thus lower the likelihood of blood clots and strokes. They also lower blood sugar and blood pressure, and help cell membranes stay pliable so they can absorb nutrients.

\* B Vitamins, particularly B6 and B12 help the body process fats and proteins, help reduce the negative effects of stress that accumulate with age, and support brain, cell and nerve health.

\* Vitamin D3 is crucial to support the immune system and bone health.

5. Consider a form of detoxification.

In our modern world, it's virtually impossible to avoid the accumulation of toxins in our bodies. Toxins can contribute to conditions such as fatigue, allergies, arthritis, immune disorders, skin

disorders, migraines, and tumors to name a few. Periodic detoxification removes some of the accumulated toxins and can dramatically improve symptoms caused by them. Weight loss, increased energy, improved digestion and better mental focus are added benefits. Detoxification programs range from very simple to complex; consult your health care professional before beginning if you are new to the concept.

And finally, there actually is a secret weapon. It is smiling. Smiling boosts your immune system, lowers blood pressure, and releases endorphins to boost your mood and reduce pain. According to researchers at Wayne State University, smiling not only makes you look younger, it actually adds to your longevity by an average of five years or more. Even wearing a "fake" smile when you don't necessarily feel happy has benefits.

So if you want to age well, put on a happy face and add these fantastic five to your lifestyle. You'll make getting older child's play!

Until next month...Heal well. Be well...naturally!

K.S.

(Dr. Kerry Sauser, ARNP, ND, PhD, practices functional health care at the Natural Health Center in Atlantic. Her offices are located in the Complementary Care Center at the corner of 2nd and Linn Street. The CCC is open to the public and hosts a natural food store, and health care services including, massage, Ortho-Bionomy, digital thermography, reflexology, hypnosis, and acupuncture.)