

Growing Old? Not Me!

A Guide for Healthy Aging

Yvonne M. Jacobs
Seniors Resource Centre

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Photo Credits: Yvonne Jacobs, Seniors Resource Centre: Phone-A- Thon, Mall Walkers, Lifelong Learners; T'ai Chi; Rita Cranford

Financial Support is acknowledged from the following: the [National Literacy Secretariat](#) (Human Resources Development Canada), and the Literacy Council of Newfoundland and Labrador. Additional financial support was provided by Merck Frosst Canada, Inc. and the Newfoundland Association of Optometrists.

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Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Jacobs, Yvonne M. (Yvonne Marcelle), 1944-

Growing old? Not me!

Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-9685181-1-7

1. Readers for new literates. 2. Aged -- Health and hygiene.
3. Aging. I. Seniors Resource Centre (St. John's, Nfld.)

PE1126.N43J334 2000 428.6'2 COO-950088-X

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to all those who assisted in any way with the production of this book. Special thanks go to all members of the Seniors Resource Centre's Literacy Advisory Committee for their interest and encouragement. Members of the Literacy Committee are as follows:

Author: Garry Cranford
Frontier College: Caroline Vaughan
Memorial University Queen Elizabeth II Library: Suzanne Sexty
Rabbittown Learners Program: Doris Hapgood
Senior's Pride Editorial Board: Brigitta Schmid and Mary Woodruff
Seniors Resource Centre: Rosemary Lester, Executive Director
Teachers on Wheels: Pam Rideout and Janet Goosney

Thanks to Dr. Norah Browne, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, for reviewing the chapter on hearing; to Wynn Browning R.N., Canadian National Institute for the Blind, for reviewing the chapter on vision; to Maureen Leat R.Dt. for reviewing the information on nutrition and to Debbie Pike R.N. for reviewing the material on mental health.

Thanks to Mary Woodruff, Brigitta Schmid, Caroline Vaughan and Janet Goosney for reading the manuscript and offering constructive comments. Thanks to Pam Rideout, Teachers-on-Wheels and Doris Hapgood, Coordinator, Rabbittown Learners, for their expert advice and encouragement. Thanks also to the students and teachers of the Rabbittown Learners Program, St. John's and of the Discovery Centre, Bay Roberts who workshopped the book.

Thanks are also due to Garry Cranford for technical assistance and to Jerry Cranford for his assistance with the design and layout of the book.

Financial support for this project was provided by the [National Literacy Secretariat](#) (Human Resources Development Canada), and the Literacy Development Council of Newfoundland and Labrador. Additional funding was provided by Merck Frosst Canada, Inc. and the Newfoundland Association of Optometrists.

Yvonne M. Jacobs R.N., M.N.

INTRODUCTION

Many of the older adults who attend the Seniors Resource Centre's programs set a wonderful example of healthy aging. They take part in activities and enjoy them to the full. They volunteer their time and talents in many ways. They sit on committees and help organize programs. Some offer advice to government. Many do crafts. A good number entertain others. Many take part in Lifelong Learners courses. Some have become Peer Advocates. This title is given to volunteer seniors who help other seniors. They provide information and help seniors get the services they need.

What all these seniors have in common is that they enjoy life. Some may have to cope with chronic illness, or hearing or vision loss. They may be caregivers or they may have been bereaved. But they do not let things get them down. They face life's challenges and overcome them. They do not feel that they are growing old - they are just growing as they learn new things and keep active.

This book has been written to help other people feel good about growing old. It is not something to dread. It can be something to look forward to and certainly something people can prepare for. While this book is aimed at those who are trying to improve their reading skills, it is hoped that the contents will be of interest to all those who feel they are too busy to grow old.

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GROWING OLD? NOT ME!

Some people just do not want to grow old. That is because they think of it as a time when everything starts to wear out. They think that old people sit around all day, doing nothing. They think old people need looking after. They may also think that, when you get old, you end up in a nursing home.

It is too bad that they think like that because that is not how it is for most people. In fact, only eight out of every one hundred old people live in nursing homes. The rest live on their own or with their families. They do not sit in a rocking chair and watch the world go by. They are busy and active doing things that they enjoy. They are happy that they do not have to go to work anymore. Now they can do things that they never had time to do before.

These people do not let things get them down. Their body parts may be wearing out. Their health may not be very good. They may need a hearing aid or dentures or glasses. They may even need an artificial knee or hip. But they find that they feel a lot better if they can laugh at things that happen to them.

Old Age Is Golden

Old age is golden, I've heard it said,
But sometimes I wonder as I get into bed.
With my ears in a drawer, my teeth in a cup
My eyes on the table until I wake up.
'Ere sleep dims my eyes, I say to myself,
"Is there anything else I should lay on the shelf?"

Anonymous

When we joke about things they often do not seem so bad. There is a saying that it is better to be seventy years young than to be forty years old. In other words, an older person may feel and act young, while a younger person may feel and act old. The number of years does not matter. If you have a positive outlook you can enjoy life at any age.

As you get older, you may face some aging changes and challenges. There is information in this book to help you understand these changes. There are also ideas to help you cope with some of the challenges of aging.

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WHAT DID YOU SAY?

Have you noticed that your hearing is not as good as it used to be? Most people over 50 begin to lose some of their hearing. The loss may be too small to cause much trouble. However, many people over 65 years of age do have a hearing problem. Often they do not realize it because they lose their hearing slowly. Other people may notice it first and complain that the TV is too loud.

Problems Causing Hearing Loss

There are three parts to the ear. There is the outer ear which you can see. Then there is the middle ear and the inner ear which you cannot see. A problem in any of these parts can cause hearing loss.

Problems in the **outer ear** may be due to too much wax or to an infection. Sounds do not seem as loud as usual. This is because the sound is blocked and cannot go through the ear properly. This type of hearing loss is called a **conductive loss**. Usually the problem can be treated. Then hearing will return to normal.



Problems in the **middle ear** can also cause conductive hearing loss. This is because sound cannot get through properly. This could be because there is a hole in the ear drum, or the small bones in the middle ear may be damaged. An operation will often solve the problem.

Infections can also cause hearing loss. Children often have middle ear infections, but older people can have them too. The infections can usually be treated with medication. Sometimes, hearing aids help people who have middle ear problems.

Problems in the **inner ear** cannot usually be treated. This is because there is damage to the nerve. This type of hearing loss is called **nerve deafness**. It can be caused by loud noise like gunfire, noisy machinery or loud music. It is also caused by aging.



People with nerve deafness cannot hear high frequency sounds. They cannot hear high notes and voices, or even bird song. They cannot tell the difference between certain sounds like 's', 'sh', 'f', 'th'. Therefore, they cannot hear speech clearly. They think that people are mumbling. They say "I can hear you, but I cannot understand what you are saying". Damaged nerves cannot be repaired. Hearing aids help many people with this problem.

Problems That May Accompany Hearing Loss

Some people who have a hearing loss also suffer from tinnitus or "ringing in the ears". The sound they hear may be in the ears or in the head. It may be there all the time or it may come and go. It can be hard to treat. People with this problem often find help by joining support groups.

Effects Of Hearing Loss

People with hearing loss often feel very lonely. They feel cut off from other people. This is because they cannot always understand what others are saying. It does not help if people shout, because shouting distorts the sound. If there is background noise, people with nerve deafness find it very difficult to hear. Background noise could be music, or a crowd of people talking, or even rustling paper or jingling keys.

Hard of hearing people strain to hear and understand all the time. That takes a lot of energy. So sometimes people get tired and stop trying to hear. Hard of hearing people may also be afraid that they will not hear correctly what is said. Then they may say the wrong thing in reply. They are afraid they will make fools of themselves. They may feel it is safer and less tiring to stay at home.

Family and friends may get frustrated and say things like "He can hear when he wants to." This is very hurtful and just makes the person feel worse. He or she may become quite depressed.

SOME OF THE SIGNS OF HEARING LOSS

- you have trouble understanding what people are saying in a crowded room
- your TV is so loud that other people say it hurts their ears
- you can hear people speak but the words are not clear
- you keep asking people to repeat what they said
- you can better understand what someone is saying if they are facing you

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU HAVE A HEARING PROBLEM

If you think you have a hearing problem, the first step is to see your family doctor. Ask for a full medical and hearing check-up. Your hearing loss may be caused by something that can be treated. Your doctor will look for the cause of the problem. It could be as simple as wax in the ear. Or it could be caused by a medication that you are taking. Make sure you tell your doctor about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications you are taking. Do not forget to tell him about any herbal drugs you take as well.

If wax or medications are not the problem, ask your doctor to refer you to an Ear, Nose and Throat specialist. This is a doctor who specializes in helping people with hearing problems. He will find out what is causing the hearing problem and will suggest treatment. It could be surgery, a change of medication, or maybe a hearing aid.

Hearing tests are done by **audiologists**. An audiologist is someone who is trained to test hearing. She will find out what type of hearing loss you have and how much you have lost. If she thinks a hearing aid will help, she will choose the right type of hearing aid for you. She will also teach you how to use it and look after it.

George's Story

George lost his hearing in the war. He was in the artillery and had no ear protection from the noise of the guns. After the war, he could hear very little. His friends thought he was being rude because he did not join in their conversations. He began to avoid people. Soon they stopped visiting him or asking him to join them. He became lonely and depressed.

He decided to see his doctor. The first one he went to was no help. But he did not give up. He was finally referred to a specialist and had a hearing test done. Then he got hearing aids for both ears. The first time he wore them he was amazed at all the sounds he could hear once again.

George had some problems getting used to his hearing aids. They whistled if they were not put into his ear properly. If he did not clean them regularly, wax stopped him from hearing. He had to check the batteries and make sure he always had spare ones on hand. Also, his hearing aids made every sound louder- sometimes too loud. But George learned how to deal with all these problems because he was so pleased to hear again. He started going out again and

meeting his old friends. Hearing aids changed his life.

George helped other people with hearing problems too. One person that he helped was Jim. Jim complained that his hearing aid needed a new battery every day. He had stopped using it because he did not have the money to buy all those batteries. George suggested that Jim take his hearing aid back to where he bought it and have it checked out. Jim did so and was told that there was something wrong with it. He was given a new one and was very pleased to find that the batteries last a week or more. Now Jim wears his hearing aid all the time.

George's friend Hazel did not want to be bothered with a hearing aid. She lived alone so she could turn up the TV as loud as she wished. She had a switch on her phone so she could turn up the volume when anyone called. She did not think she would use a hearing aid very much. George suggested she get a small amplifier with headphones. It cost less than \$50 from the local electronic store. Hazel thought that was a good idea and she decided to get one. She uses it when she has visitors.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A HEARING AID

- do not give up - it takes time to adjust
- hearing aids make everything louder; you will soon be able to pick out the different sounds
- learn how to clean and care for your hearing aid
- if you do not have enough money to buy a hearing aid, you may qualify for a government grant; talk to the local public health nurse about this

OTHER HELP AVAILABLE

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association helps people with hearing problems. They will answer questions and give advice. They also have **assistive hearing devices** or gadgets to help people who cannot hear things such as the door bell or their alarm clock. The association will lend these devices or gadgets to people to try out before they spend their money.

Some examples of assistive hearing devices or gadgets



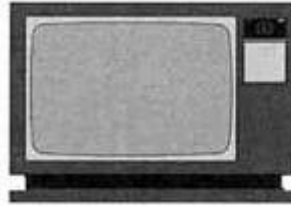
Volume controls on phones



Lights that flash when the phone or the door bell rings



Alarm clocks that shake your pillow



Closed caption TV (words are written at the bottom of the screen)



Head phones and amplifiers that plug in to the TV so that the hard of hearing person can hear through them. Anyone else in the room hears through the regular loudspeaker.

WAYS TO TALK TO SOMEONE WITH A HEARING PROBLEM



Face the person so he can read your lips



Make sure the person knows you are speaking to him. You may need to touch the person to get his attention.



Speak clearly and a little more slowly than usual.



Do not shout as this distorts the sound.



If the person does not understand what you are saying, try using different words.



If you are at a meeting, ask people to use microphones.

LOOK AFTER YOUR HEARING



Loud noise causes hearing loss. Wear ear protection when using machinery such as lawn mowers, vacuum cleaners, snowmobiles and chain saws.



Never put anything smaller than your elbow in your ear! Cotton swabs can damage the ear canal.



Ask your doctor or pharmacist if the medications you are taking could affect your hearing. If so, ask if another medication can be used instead.



Tell your grandchildren about the danger of loud music.

I Can't See As Well As I Used To

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I CAN'T SEE AS WELL AS I USED TO

As people age, they may find that they cannot see as well as they used to. Some vision problems may be due to aging changes. Others may be caused by eye diseases which older people are likely to have. It is very important to have regular check-ups by specialists who will look for any diseases in the eyes. The specialist may find an eye disease long before the person has any symptoms. Early treatment can prevent further loss of vision.

Aging Changes

After the age of 40, many people find it more difficult to focus on near objects. This is because the lens in the eye is not as elastic as it used to be. It cannot focus the light properly in the eye. Eye glasses may be needed. These can help the person to see clearly when reading, or doing close work, like sewing.

Older people may also find that their eyes do not adapt as quickly from light to dark. They have to wait for their eyes to get used to the dark. Therefore, they may find it difficult to drive at night when bright headlights shine in their eyes.

Some older people find it is more difficult to tell one colour from another. This is due to a yellowing of the lens in the eye. This can make it difficult to choose the right coloured clothing.

Others find they have dry itchy eyes and need to use artificial tears. Some older people have the opposite problem. They have teary eyes.



WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A VISION PROBLEM

If you have any problem with your eyes or cannot see clearly, you should see your family doctor. He or she will give you a complete check-up. This is because some diseases can cause eye problems. Two examples are uncontrolled diabetes and high blood pressure.

Some medications can also affect vision. So you should tell the doctor all the prescription medications you are taking. It is important that you also tell him about any over-the-counter drugs and herbal remedies that you are taking.

Your family doctor may send you to a specially trained eye doctor, an **ophthalmologist**. He will try to find the cause of the eye problem and suggest treatments.



EYE PROFESSIONALS

An **ophthalmologist** is a medical doctor who specializes in the treatment of the eye. He can check your vision and diagnose and treat eye diseases. He is also an eye surgeon. He can write prescriptions for eye glasses and contact lenses.

An **optometrist** is not a medical doctor but he is trained to check your vision. He can also diagnose and treat eye diseases. He can write prescriptions for eye glasses and contact lenses and can fit them.

Opticians fill the prescriptions written by the ophthalmologists and optometrists. They fit both eye glasses and contact lenses. They do not test people's eyesight.



SOME DISEASES OF THE EYE

Cataracts

A cataract is a clouding of the lens of the eye. It usually takes a long time to develop. It is not cancer or a growth. The clouding stops light getting through to the back of the eye. If only a

small part of the lens is cloudy, the person may not know they have a cataract. But if the cataract is near the centre of the lens or if it is very large, the person will not see clearly. Some people may also be very sensitive to light and glare. They will find it very hard to see to drive at night. They may need their eyeglasses changed frequently.

The cloudy lens can be removed by an operation. It is done when the cataract makes it difficult for the person to do every day things. After the surgery, the person will need a replacement lens to focus the light. The surgeon may put an artificial lens in the eye, or the person may wear glasses or contact lenses. The operation is very successful for most people.

Glaucoma

Glaucoma is another disease that affects the vision. It is an increased pressure in the eye. The cause is not known. It affects out of every 100 Canadians over the age of 40 years.

There may not be any symptoms at first. The only way to find out if you have glaucoma is to have the pressure in your eye measured. An eye specialist will do this painless test. Everyone should have the pressure checked regularly. If glaucoma is found, treatment must be started right away. This can stop further damage to the eye. Glaucoma cannot be cured but it can be controlled with special eye drops.



Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration sometimes happens as a result of aging. The macular is a small area on the retina at the back of the eye. When it wears out, people lose their central vision. This makes it difficult to see details. Faces may be blurred and distant vision may not be clear. People have to learn to turn their heads so that they can use their side vision. They may also find it hard to tell one colour from another.

Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is an eye disease that can affect people with diabetes. It affects the tiny blood vessels that feed the retina which is at the back of the eye. Early treatment of diabetes can prevent or delay loss of vision.

People who have **diabetes** should have their eyes checked by an eye specialist every year. Then any eye problems will be found early. Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not use sugar properly. If the disease is not controlled properly, a person may have blurred vision and not be able to focus well. Diabetes can also cause cataracts.

SEE YOUR EYE DOCTOR

- for regular checks, especially if you have diabetes
- if you do not see well
- if you have hazy, fuzzy, blurred or double vision
- if you see haloes around objects
- if you have a sudden change in vision
- if you have blurred or distorted central vision
- if faces are blurred and it is hard to make out different colours

Mary's Story

Mary has had poor vision in one eye since, she was 18 years old. Now 65 years old, she manages very well but has to be careful about some things. She never drives at night. Sometimes the glare is too bright for her to drive in the daytime. She enjoys sewing, but lately she has found her eyes get tired very quickly.

One day, Mary saw a friend I using a large magnifying glass which hung around her neck. It balanced against her friend's chest so she had both hands free to sew. Mary thought she would find that very useful. Her friend told her she could get one from the CNIB. Mary went down to the office and got one for herself. She saw lots of other useful gadgets too. She bought a special pair of sunglasses which stopped the light coming in from the side. When she wears these, she can drive on bright sunny days, even with snow on the ground.

Mary met Sara in the laundry room of her apartment building one" day. Sara was very upset. She told Mary that she did not know what was wrong but her washing had come out still soapy. She also told Mary that she was very worried because

the eye doctor had told her that her sight was getting worse. She was afraid she would not be able to continue to live on her own.

Mary soon saw what the problem was. Because Sara's vision was so bad, she had started her washing on the rinse cycle. Mary helped Sara finish her laundry and she told her about the CNIB. She suggested that Sara call them and tell them about the problems she was having. Sara did so and a staff member, Diane, made an appointment to come and see her.

Diane made many suggestions that would help Sara continue to do things for herself. She put bright orange material with raised markings on it on the dials of Sara's stove. This meant that Sara could feel if the stove was on high, low, or off. Diane said she would check with the landlord about putting the special material on the washing machines. She gave Sara ideas to help her organize her kitchen. She helped her rearrange her lights so her rooms were well lit. She also gave her some helpful tips on getting out and about. Sara was really pleased to know that she could call Diane if she needed more help.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PEOPLE WITH VISION PROBLEMS

Let there be light!



- use several lamps around the room so that the whole room is well lit
- read or sew with a good light shining over your shoulder
- have a flashlight handy for use in dark areas such as cupboards

It's too bright! Cut the glare!



- use drapes or blinds to reduce the glare
- if polished floors are too bright, use carpeting
- cover glass or metal furniture that reflect the glare
- when outside, wear sunglasses and a hat with a wide brim

Make it stand out and show up!



- use contrasting colours on walls and floors
- place a coloured bathmat on the side of the bath
- use light coloured dishes on dark tablecloths or dark dishes on light cloths
- put light coloured food on dark plates and vice versa

Watch your step!



- make sure that stairways and hallways are well lit
- use colour contrasting tape at the edge of steps so that they can be seen
- have hand rails on both sides of the stairs

GET SOME EXPERT HELP

Contact the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). You do not have to be legally blind to use their services. The staff also help people with low vision to stay independent. They may suggest changes people can make to their homes to make life easier. They also have aids and gadgets to help people. Some examples are listed here

Some examples of low vision aids and gadgets



- magnifying glasses
- special marking material for stoves and washing machines
- large print dials for telephones



- special playing cards and bingo cards, as well as special Scrabble and Monopoly games
- "talking books" (books on tape) and Braille books are available from the CNIB
- large print books and books on tape are available from the public library

It's A Good Day If' I Wake Up And Nothing New Hurts!

Margaret's Story
What To Do If You Have Arthritis
Learn All You Can About Arthritis
Exercise
Other Experts Who Can Help

IT'S A GOOD DAY IF I WAKE UP AND NOTHING NEW HURTS!

Some people feel that way as they get older. They begin to have problems with their joints, bones and muscles. It could be because of **arthritis** which makes the joints painful and stiff. Some people with arthritis only have problems now and then. Others have difficulty walking or doing daily tasks. They may find it hard to dress, cook meals, dial the phone, or write.

There are many types of arthritis. One type is **rheumatoid arthritis**. This disease can start at a very young age. The lining of joints become inflamed. The joints look swollen and they feel warm. The inflammation causes pain and damages joints and tissues.

Medication is needed to reduce the inflammation. When the inflammation and swelling go down, the pain becomes less. People with rheumatoid arthritis have learn when to rest their joints and when to exercise them. The disease usually is It as bad as people get older. But the damage done to the bones and joints remains.

Another type of arthritis is **osteoarthritis**. This is more common in older people. Over the years, the cartilage that protects the ends of the bones gets worn away. There may be pain when the ends of the bones grate against each other. Sometimes, over time, the ends of the bones become smooth and move more easily aid with less pain. Some people have a lot of pain but others have very little. Exercise is very important for people with osteoarthritis. Exercise strengthens the joints.

There are many other types of arthritis and each one needs a different treatment. Help is available even though arthritis cannot be cured. Family doctors can help. The doctor may also refer the person to a **rheumatologist**. This is a doctor who specializes in helping people with arthritis.

The Arthritis Society can also help people by giving them information about the disease and treatments. The Society also gives people ideas about how to cope with arthritis.

Margaret's Story

Margaret has suffered with arthritis for many years. She sees her doctor regularly. She tries to be sensible about activities. But it annoys her when she cannot do things she wants to without suffering for it later. She has to pace her activities. She cleans one room each day instead of the whole house. She tries not to do too much work all at once in the garden. But, if the weather is good, she does not want to stop. Then everything hurts next day. She does not like taking pain medication but sometimes she has to.

One thing used to bother her. She could not turn the knob on her front door when her hands were really bad. Sometimes she would stand in front of the door and wonder how she was going to get in. One day, someone told her that she could get a lever handle to fit over the knob. She had never thought of that. She managed to buy one and a friend put it on for her. Now she can easily get in and out of the front door.

Margaret began to wonder what else might help her. She found out that there was an occupational therapist at the local hospital. The therapist had many other aids and gadgets to

help people with arthritis and other problems. She asked Margaret what other things she found difficult to do. Then she made suggestions about what would help her. Margaret found out where she could get kitchen tools with big handles. These were easier for her to hold. She also ordered a special device to help her turn the knobs on her stove and washing machine.

The occupational therapist also told her about the Arthritis Self-Management Program. She suggested that Margaret sign up for the six weekly sessions. Margaret went with one of her friends, who also had arthritis. They found that the sessions told them about the different types of arthritis and how to manage pain. They learned that it was very important to exercise and what exercises to do. There was also information about healthy eating and arthritis medication. They also learned how to cope with stress and depression.

After the sessions, they found it much easier to talk to their doctors about any problems that they had. They even told their doctors about some of the things they had learned. Now they feel that they are in control of their disease.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE ARTHRITIS

- see your family doctor and find out what type of arthritis you have
- ask for a referral to a rheumatologist if more help is needed
- eat a healthy diet
- control your weight
- follow your doctor's advice about exercise
- take any medications as ordered

LEARN ALL YOU CAN ABOUT ARTHRITIS

- talk to someone at the Arthritis Society and find out how they can help
- take part in the Arthritis Self-Management program offered by the Arthritis Society

EXERCISE

- sitting around makes your joints stiff and your muscles become weak
- check with your doctor or a physiotherapist about the best exercise for you
- find out about water fitness programs
- try T'ai Chi, or dancing, or a walking club
- do not over do it - take time to rest and relax too



OTHER EXPERTS WHO CAN HELP

- **pharmacists** can tell you more about your prescription and over-the-counter medication
- **occupational therapists** can help you with every day activities
- **physiotherapists** can help you plan an exercise program
- **massage therapists** can help relieve pain in your muscles
- some people try **acupuncture** or other alternative therapies

Them Bones, Them Bones . . .

Brittle Bones

Calcium

Weight Bearing Exercise

Other Things You Can Do To Make
Your Bones Healthy

THEM BONES, THEM BONES . . .

Brittle Bones

Many older people worry about breaking their bones, especially their hips. They are afraid that the fractures will not heal properly. Then they may lose their independence.

Older people do seem to have more broken bones than younger people. This is because older people are more likely to develop a bone disease called **osteoporosis**. When people have this disease, their bones are not as strong.

All through our lives, old bone is broken down and new bone is built up. In osteoporosis, old bone is broken down faster than new bone is built up. Therefore, the bones become weaker and are more likely to break. People often do not know they have osteoporosis until they break a bone.

Some people are more likely to have osteoporosis than others. There are some things that seem to play a part in causing the disease. People can do something about some of these risk factors. But there are other risk factors that we cannot change.

Osteoporosis is more common in middle aged and older adults, especially women. It also runs in some families. There is nothing anyone can do about those things. But there are some things everyone can do to help to make their bones strong. They can make sure that they eat a healthy diet which contains enough calcium. They can also keep active and do weight bearing exercise. They can stop smoking and take less alcohol and caffeine.

Calcium

Our bodies need calcium to build strong bones. We get calcium from our food. Dairy products, such as milk and cheese, are the best source of calcium. But our bodies cannot use the calcium unless we also have vitamin D in our diet.

Vitamin D is added to dairy products, so our bodies can use the calcium in dairy foods. Vitamin D is in other foods too. Our bodies can also make vitamin D when our skin is exposed to sunshine. But we may not make enough if there is little sunshine, or if we use sun screen creams.

SOME EXAMPLES OF FOODS WHICH CONTAIN CALCIUM

1. milk and milk products such as cheese, yogurt, and ice cream
2. almonds
3. broccoli
4. beans (kidney, navy, pinto, chickpea)
5. tofu
6. canned salmon (including bones)
7. sardines (including bones)

1. *best source*

Sometimes calcium supplements are also needed. It is important to check with your doctor or pharmacist about how much to take and what kind. Do not waste your money on a supplement that your body cannot use.



SOME EXAMPLES OF FOODS WHICH CONTAIN VITAMIN D

- milk products
- margarine
- fish
- liver
- meats

Some people may need to take vitamin D supplements. But be careful. You can have too much, so check with your doctor or pharmacist.



Weight Bearing Exercise

Weight bearing exercises help to keep bones strong. Walking is the best example. Swimming is not a weight bearing exercise because the water supports your weight. You should try to do weight bearing exercise for 30-45 minutes three times a week. But even a little helps.

Some Examples Of Weight Bearing Exercises

- walking
- dancing
- running
- jogging
- aerobics



OTHER THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR BONES HEALTHY

- Do not smoke!
- Take less caffeine (no more than 2-3 cups of coffee each day).
- Drink less alcohol (no more than 2 drinks each day).
- Cut down on salt.

After menopause, women's bodies make less female hormones. The lower level of hormones can make them more likely to develop osteoporosis. That is why some doctors suggest that women take replacement hormones after menopause. There are good point and bad points about these replacement hormones. Therefore, each woman should discuss it with her doctor before she decides.

Keeping Your Spirits Up

Bereavement And Loss
What Happens When Someone
Suffers A Loss
If You Have Suffered A Loss
Depression
Where To Get Help
Different Types Of Treatment

KEEPING YOUR SPIRITS UP

People are living longer now. So if you are going to live a long life, you might as well enjoy it. Of course, it helps if you do not have any illnesses or disabilities. But have you noticed something about people who are happy and living life to the fullest? They do not look at what they cannot do. They look at what they can do. They have a positive outlook on life.

People with a positive outlook accept any help they need to stay independent. They want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. They want to be able to do the things they have always done. They see a walker, eye glasses, a hearing aid, or even a wheel chair, as things to help them. They do not think these things make them seem old and helpless.

A positive outlook is part of being healthy and aging well. People who age well also

- feel good about themselves
- are in charge of their own affairs
- have strong ties with other people and
- have a purpose in life

After they retire, some people are so active that they wonder how they ever had time to work. They feel good about themselves. They may do some volunteer work. This makes them feel needed. Or they may do something they have wanted to do all their lives. They may travel, learn to play a musical instrument, join a choir, learn to paint, or trace their family tree. They have a purpose in life. They are in control of their own affairs and plans. And they are having fun being with other people who enjoy the same things.

Bereavement And Loss

People who age well may not have had easy lives. They may not have always felt so positive. Everyone has to face changes and losses at different times of their lives. These can be very upsetting. For a child, it could be seeing a friend move away or the loss of a pet. For a young adult, it could be the end of a love affair. In mid-life, it could be the death of parents or being laid off from work. Or it could be seeing children suddenly grow up and leave home. It could also be adult children moving back home because of their own problems.

We cope as best we can with each change and loss. But they all add up and, as we get older, there seem to be so many losses. Some examples of these losses are:

- loss of work through retirement
- loss of health due to a chronic illness
- loss of freedom due to having to look after an old or sick relative
- death of friends
- death of a spouse, which is one of the most devastating losses to deal with.

We grieve whenever we suffer any type of loss. Grieving is natural after any crisis in our lives. There are several stages in the grieving process. Each person goes through these stages in their own way and in their own time. In this way people gradually heal. But healing takes time. If people do not grieve at the time of a loss, they "bottle up" their feelings. But sooner or later they will have to deal with those feelings and that loss. This may be when they suffer another loss. Then they will have to deal with both losses at once.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE SUFFERS A LOSS?

Shock And Denial

People usually feel numb at first. Everything feels unreal. They cannot believe what has happened. They do things that have to be done as if they are in a dream.

Physical And Emotional Reaction

When the shock begins to wear off, people may feel very tired but not be able to sleep. They may have general aches and pains. They may have chest pain or feel short of breath. They may not feel like eating.

Their feelings start to come out. They may feel angry that the person has died. Then they feel guilty for feeling that way. They may feel glad that the person is no longer suffering. Then they feel guilty about that too. They may start thinking "if only I had done this or that". They may cry a lot. They may worry that they are losing control. But all of this is a normal part of grieving. Feelings need to come out. Going through the pain helps the healing.

Acceptance And Moving On

Gradually, grieving people are able to accept the loss. They begin to think about everyday things. They start to put their lives back together. The pain is less, but it may come back every now and then. It may come back on birthdays, or holidays, or at Christmas.

IF YOU HAVE SUFFERED A LOSS

It helps to talk about your feelings. Talk to people who have also suffered a loss. They have 'been there' and know how you feel. Sometimes people think they are going crazy. If they talk with others, they find out that what is happening to them is normal. Some people find it helps to join a Bereavement Support Group.

Ask for help. Friends and family may not know what to do. Let them know when you want company or help, and when you want to be alone.

Take care of your health. Make sure you eat properly and get enough sleep. See your doctor if you are having medical problems or if you think your grief is affecting your health.

Exercise will help you feel better. Even a walk round the block helps.

Wait at least a year before you make any big changes, such as selling your house or moving. You may not be thinking clearly enough to make such big decisions. Later on, you might be sorry you acted hastily.

Enjoy your memories. Remember the good times.



DEPRESSION

People of any age can get depressed. There are times when everyone feels "down" or "blue" but this feeling goes away after a day or two. People may feel depressed for a while after someone dies or after some other loss. Some people get depressed and they cannot think of a reason for it. Whatever the cause, usually the depression lifts after a short time. However, sometimes the depression does not go away and the person cannot get on with his life. Then the depression may have become an illness. This needs treatment.

Often people do not realize that an elderly person is depressed. They put it down to growing old. Or they think the person has Alzheimer disease. But people who are depressed need help. They may feel so low that they are unable to do everyday things. They may not feel able to cope. They need to know that there is help for them. Treatment will make the person feel better.

People who are depressed may:

- feel very sad
- be irritable
- not be interested in things they used to enjoy
- have a change in eating habits
- have a change in sleep habits
- feel bad about themselves
- forget things
- not be able to make up their minds about anything
- feel tired

- feel helpless and hopeless
- just sit around, or they may be on the go all the time
- have lots of aches and pains
- think about suicide or death

People with several of these signs that do not go away, and get worse, should get help quickly. If they have thoughts of suicide or death they should seek help at once. They will get better if they get treatment.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Family Doctor

People can get help from their family doctor. The doctor will give the person a complete check-up. He may find something that needs treatment. When that is treated the depression may lift.

Sometimes medications, or a mixture of medications, can make a person depressed. So the doctor will look at all the prescription and over-the-counter drugs the person is taking.

The doctor will help the person get the treatment and professional help he needs.

Crisis Line

In Newfoundland, people can also get help from the Mental Health Crisis Line. They can call any time of the day or night. The people who answer the phone help callers work out ways to deal with their problems. The number to call is 1-888-737-4668.

Mental Health Association

The Canadian Mental Health Association can also help. They have facts about depression and mental health problems. They can tell people about the different treatments. They also know about the self-help groups around the province.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TREATMENT

There are different types of treatment to help people lead normal lives. Sometimes only one treatment is used, sometimes more than one helps. Counselling can help people cope with problems and stress. Medications can help people with depression. Some people find that self-help groups are helpful. The support of family and friends is very important for people who are depressed.

There is hope. People with depression need help and help is there for them. If they do not reach out themselves, then others need to give them a helping hand.

Do You Remember . . .

Causes Of Memory Problems

If You Are Worried About Memory Problems

Exercise Your Brain

Exercise Your Body

DO YOU REMEMBER . . .

As people get older, they often say they have a word on the 'tip of the tongue'. They really feel bad if that word is the name of someone they know well. They may have had the same problem all their lives. But now they worry about it.

Younger people usually do not panic if they lose their keys, or their glasses, or forget where they parked the car. But older people worry that they may have Alzheimer disease. If you eventually remember what you forgot, don't worry. You have lost your glasses, not your mind.

Some people call these moments of forgetfulness 'senior moments'. If anyone feels they are having too many senior moments, then they should see their doctor. The doctor may find that the memory problem is caused by something that can be treated.

Causes Of Memory Problems

Different things cause memory problems. A person may have a lot of pain from arthritis and simply cannot think about anything else. Or the medications the person is taking could be causing memory problems. Alcohol affects memory too.

Some older people get confused and forgetful if they get sick. When the illness is treated, everything returns to normal. A person may also have memory problems when they are grieving.

Sometimes a poor diet can be the cause of a memory problem. Tea and toast will not keep the brain, or any other part of the body, working well.

Alzheimer disease is another reason for memory problems. The doctor will check to make sure nothing else is causing the problem first. If it is Alzheimer disease, he may suggest medications that may help the person. The person and the family can also get information and help from the Alzheimer Society.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT MEMORY PROBLEMS:

- see your family doctor and ask for a complete check-up
- ask your doctor or pharmacist if any of your medications (prescribed and over-the-counter) could be affecting your memory
- check your diet - make sure you are feeding your brain and body properly
- check your alcohol intake (no more than 2 drinks in one day - see [Effect of Alcohol](#))
- exercise your brain exercise your body

Exercise Your Brain

Talking is good exercise for the brain. Talking helps to keep part of your brain in shape, the part that remembers words and names.

Reading, writing, doing crosswords and word games all exercise your brain so that it stays in shape. This will also help you to find the words you need.

Write down things you want to remember. Make sure you put the paper where you can find it. Always put things, like your keys, in the same place.

Learn something new. Older people can learn new things. Learning exercises the brain and keeps it in shape.

Exercise Your Body

If you exercise your body, this helps both your body and your brain. You will feel better. You will sleep better. You will feel more alert. It all helps your memory.

One way to exercise your body and your brain is to dance. It could be line dancing, square dancing, or ballroom dancing. You exercise your brain when you learn the steps. You exercise your body when you dance. You have fun and you are with other people. That makes it a really healthy exercise.

There are more ideas about exercise later on in this book.

Staying Healthy - Keeping Fit

Keep Active

How To Start Getting Active

Exercise Ideas

Special Programs

Some Benefits Of Being Active

STAYING HEALTHY - KEEPING FIT

The best way to be healthy is to be active. There is an old saying "use it or lose it." This applies to all parts of our bodies. If you do not use your muscles they become weak. If you are active, your muscles will be stronger and so will your bones. Your heart and lungs will be in better shape too. Do not forget your brain. You need to use it to think and remember things or it will waste away.

Keep Active

If you want to be healthy, you need to keep active. The more you move your body, the better you will feel. You will not have so many aches and pains. You are less likely to fall because your balance is better. You should sleep better too. You will enjoy life more.

PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTIVE HAVE FEWER PROBLEMS WITH:

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- osteoporosis (brittle bones)
- diabetes
- falls



How To Start Getting Active

If you have any medical problems, check with your doctor first. Everyone should start slowly. A 10 minute walk is something most people can do. Once you can do that without problems, you can add another 10 minutes exercise. But do not rush it.

The goal is to have a total of 30 to 60 minutes of exercise each day. It does not have to be done all at once. You can exercise 10 minutes in the morning, 20 minutes in the afternoon and 30 minutes at night. Choose something you enjoy doing. It could be walking, dancing, gardening or swimming.

Even everyday chores count as physical activity. You can count the time you spend mopping the floor, vacuuming, and washing the car. Activities like these make you bend and stretch. So does dancing and bowling. Bending and stretching helps your body to be flexible so that it moves more easily.



If you want your muscles to be stronger, you can do some weight lifting exercises. These could be as simple as lifting a soup can in each hand. Or you could go to weight training classes. You are weight lifting when you carry the laundry or your groceries. Learn how to lift properly so that you do not hurt your back or joints.

You can make your leg muscles stronger and exercise your heart if you walk upstairs. Even standing up and sitting down several times is good exercise. These activities help your balance. Your bones get stronger too if you do weight bearing exercises like walking and dancing.

Exercise Ideas

- exercise with a friend
- join a walking club
- swim
- cycle
- dance
- learn T'ai Chi



Special Programs

People who have **medical problems** may want to talk to their doctors about special exercise programs. Physiotherapists can also help people decide the best exercises for them to do.

Exercise is very important for people with **heart problems**. But often they are afraid to exercise. Therefore, there are special programs for them where they learn what they can do.

People with **arthritis** need to exercise or they will find that their joints become really stiff. They can go to special exercise programs for people with arthritis. Some of these programs are water fitness programs. The water makes it easier to move painful joints.

Many towns have fitness programs for people **over 50 years**. There may be exercise classes, swimming lessons, or dancing programs where you live.

SOME BENEFITS OF BEING ACTIVE

- you feel better
- your body is more flexible
- your muscles get stronger
- your bones get stronger
- your heart and lungs are in better shape
- your bowels will be more regular
- you will sleep better

It is never too late to start. Some people over 90 years old and living in a nursing home became stronger when they were taught to lift weights. Start getting active today!

These Feet Were Made For Walking

Take A Look
Foot Alert
How To Help Your Feet
Daily Care
Nail Care
Footwear Tips
Safety First
What Is Next?

THESE FEET WERE MADE FOR WALKING!

Just think how much we use our feet every day. And yet we usually do not take any notice of them unless they hurt. Here are some hints on how to look after your feet. They will thank you and be your friends for life!

Take A Look

Take a look at your feet. Ask a family member or a nurse to check them for you if you have trouble bending or if you cannot see very well.

Check your nails. Some of the problems you may see are thick, hard or curled nails. Or the nails may be long. You may need help to cut them.

Look for any swelling. Look for pale or blue colouring. Check for thick, dry, or cracked skin and for sores that are not healing. These are all signs of poor circulation.



Foot Alert

Poor circulation means that the blood flow to and from your feet is not enough. The blood flow may not be good because your blood vessels have become hard. The vessels may also be blocked with fatty deposits. Therefore, your feet are not getting the food and oxygen they need to keep them healthy.

Anyone who has diabetes should be extra careful with their feet. This is because diabetes can cause the blood vessels to harden more quickly. It can also damage nerves so a person may not have much feeling in their feet. Their feet may not be able to feel hot and cold temperatures or even scrapes and cuts. So the feet can be injured and the person does not know. Also, these injuries may not heal well if the diabetes is not controlled properly.

HOW TO HELP YOUR FEET

Daily care

- Wash your feet daily in warm water. Check the temperature of the water carefully to make sure the water is not too hot or cold. Use your elbow as your hand is usually not very sensitive to temperature.
- Do not soak your feet for more than 5 to 10 minutes.

- Use a mild soap. A wet pumice stone can rub off dead skin.
- Dry your feet well especially between the toes. Do not rub hard.
- Check your feet for any changes and any of the problems noted above.
- Use a skin cream on your feet. The cream will soften rough and hard skin. Do not put cream between the toes or on open sores.

Nail Care

Have a specially trained nurse or other professional to cut your toes nails

- if you have diabetes
- if you do not have much feeling in your feet
- if you cannot see very well

If you try to do it yourself, you might cut yourself and get an infection. The nurses have special tools that can deal with thick or curled toe nails. They can also help with callouses or corns.

If you cut your own toe nails

- Use nail clippers as scissors are not usually strong enough.
- Cut the nail straight across. This prevents the edges of the nail from growing down into the toe and causing pain and infections.

Footwear Tips

- Wear shoes that fit well and feel good, then you will not get blisters or callouses.
- Make sure that the shoes you wear protect your feet. Do not go around barefoot in case you step on something and injure your foot.
- Buy shoes at the end of the day when your feet are largest. Try on both shoes and walk around in the store. If the shoes do not feel comfortable, do not buy them. They will not get better with time.
- Buy shoes that are the same shape as your foot. Your toes do not come to a point!
- You should not have pain in your feet at the end of the day. If you do, you may need different shoes. Or you may need special inserts or supports in your shoes. These should be made to measure specially for you. Check with your doctor.
- Check inside your shoes before you put them on. A tiny stone can do a lot of damage.
- Wear socks that fit well and absorb moisture.

Safety First

These tips are for everyone but especially for people with diabetes or poor circulation.

- Remember, your feet can get sunburned too. Protect them from the Sun.
- Be very careful if you use heating pads or hot water bottles on your feet. You could burn your feet. Check the temperature carefully first.
- Check the temperature of water before stepping in.

- Keep your feet warm in winter with warm socks and insulated boots.
- Do not wear tight socks, panty hose or garters. They can cut off the blood circulation to your feet. Try not to cross your legs either as this can also cut off the blood flow to your feet.
- Do not try to remove corns and callouses yourself. You could cut yourself. Products for corn and callous removal may burn the skin. Ask your doctor or a specially trained nurse for help.

What Is Next?

Now that you have taken care of your feet, they will take care of you. Use them - walk. Walking is probably the safest and the best exercise. It is natural and it is free. All you need are comfortable clothes and a good pair of walking shoes.



Walking can reduce the pain of arthritis. It helps to keep leg muscles strong and flexible. It is a weight bearing exercise so it helps to keep your bones strong. It improves your blood circulation. It can improve your digestion and help to keep your bowels regular. It also makes you feel good.



Eat Well To Live Well

Healthy Eating
Food Groups
Add Some Fibre
Watch The Fat
Special Diets
Cooking For One Or Two
Healthy Living

EAT WELL TO LIVE WELL

We have to eat well if we want to live well. Every part of our body needs food to work properly. When we eat good food we also have more energy. We feel good. We are less likely to get sick too, as our bodies can fight disease better. To stay healthy, we also have to be active.

Healthy Eating

Sometimes it is hard to know what food we should eat. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating is meant to help people choose the right foods.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating suggests that people

- eat a variety of foods
- choose more cereals, breads and other grain products
- eat lots of fruit and vegetables
- eat less fat
- use less salt
- take less alcohol
- take less caffeine (in tea, coffee, cola drinks, cocoa and chocolate)
- keep physically active
- drink more water, especially in hot weather

It is important to eat a lot of different foods because each food gives us different nutrients. There is no one food that gives us everything we need. Nor is there is a pill or drink that you can buy to take the place of a variety of foods.

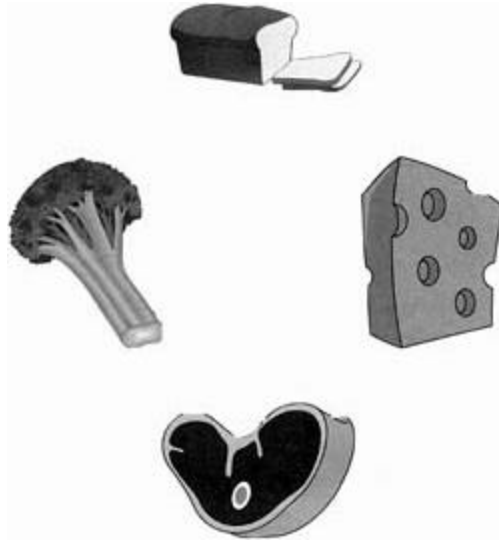
Some foods give us protein. Some give us fat. We need some fat but not too much. Some foods give us carbohydrates. Some foods give us fibre. Different foods give us different vitamins, like vitamins A, B, C, D, E and K. We also need minerals like calcium, iron, and zinc. When we eat lots of different foods we should get everything we need to be healthy.

FOOD GROUPS

The Canada Food Guide to Healthy Eating divides foods into four groups. We need to eat food from each of the four groups every day.

Grain products	such as bread, cereal, pasta and rice choose more whole grain products
Vegetables and fruits	choose more dark green and orange vegetables choose more orange fruit
Milk products	milk, cheese, yogurt choose more low fat products
Meat and alternatives	lean meat, poultry, and fish; alternatives like tofu, peanut butter, dried peas, beans, and lentils

We can also have "other foods." These do not fit in to the four food groups but we can enjoy them in small amounts. Examples are things like butter, margarine, sugar, jam, honey, salt, potato chips, pickles and ketchup. We can eat them in small amounts as long as we are eating enough foods from the four food groups.



ADD SOME FIBRE

Some foods contain fibre. Fibre is good for us even though we cannot digest some of it. There are two types of fibre. One is soluble fibre and the other is insoluble.

Insoluble fibre adds bulk to our diet. It helps to keep our bowels regular. It also helps prevent certain cancers. Soluble fibre helps to control blood sugar. It also helps to lower high cholesterol.

SOURCES OF INSOLUBLE FIBRE

- wheat bran and wheat bran cereals
- whole grain breads, brown rice, whole wheat pasta
- fruit and vegetables, eat with skins and seeds if possible

SOURCES OF SOLUBLE FIBRE

- oat bran and oat meal
- dried peas and beans and lentils
- fruit that contain pectin like apples, strawberries, and citrus fruit

We need to eat both types of fibre. Most people do not eat enough. But when you increase the amount of fibre you eat, do it slowly. If you increase it too fast, you may feel bloated and have a lot of gas. It is important to drink a lot of fluids, especially water, each day too. Try to drink about 8 glasses of water every day. This will keep your system healthy and keep your bowels regular.



WATCH THE FAT

Many people know that they should eat less fat and eat more vegetables, fruit and grains. This is because people who eat less fat and choose low fat foods are less likely to have heart attacks than people who have high fat diets. Fruit, vegetables and grains have a lot of fibre and vitamins. They help to protect us from heart disease and some forms of cancer.

Fatty foods have a lot of calories. Low fat foods have fewer calories so it is easier to keep your weight as you want it. We do need some fat in our diet but some fats are better for us than others. So it helps to understand the different types of fats. But remember, even if it is the better type of fat, do not eat too much.

Saturated Fats

Saturated fats can help to cause hardening of the arteries. Hardening of the arteries can lead to heart attacks or strokes. Saturated fats are found in animal foods - meat, poultry and dairy products. Here are some ideas of ways to eat less saturated fat.

If you usually buy	Try
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• whole milk• whole milk products such as cheese and ice cream	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2%, 1 %, or skim milk• low fat cheese and yogurt
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fatty meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lean meat with all the fat trimmed off• smaller portions of meat (2-4 ounces)• skinless turkey or chicken more often• more fish• dried beans, lentils or tofu instead of meat for some meals

You will also cut the fat if you bake, poach, broil, or microwave food instead of frying it.

Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats come from vegetable oils and are also found in fish. Safflower, sunflower, corn, and soybean oils are called poly-unsaturated oils. They are good but you should not eat too much of them. It is better to use olive oil and canola oil. These are mono-unsaturated fats. They also help to lower 'bad' cholesterol. They are the best choice. Use them instead of butter, lard, margarine and mayonnaise when cooking or baking. You can also use them in salad dressing.

Another good fat is the fat in fish like salmon, trout, sardines, and herring. The fat in these fish is called omega-3 fat. Omega-3 fat helps to prevent heart attacks, strokes, arthritis, some cancers and even depression.

Beware Of These Vegetable Oils

Some vegetable oils do contain saturated fats and are not good for you. Try to avoid these vegetable oils:

- palm oil
- coconut oil
- hardened vegetable oils such as stick margarine
- hydrogenated vegetable oils

Check the labels on foods that you buy, such as crackers, cookies and pastries. If they list any of those oils, they are not good for your heart, so eat less of them.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a fat which everyone makes in their liver. We all need some cholesterol, but some people have too much. This can help to cause hardening of the arteries or the fat may block the arteries. That can cause heart attack or stroke.

Cholesterol is found in the same foods as saturated fats. If you eat less saturated fat, you will also take in less cholesterol. Cholesterol is also in egg yolks, liver and kidney. If your cholesterol is high, it is a good idea to eat less of these foods too.

SPECIAL DIETS

Sometimes doctors tell people to eat special diets. These diets could be low, j fat, low salt or diabetic diets. Sometimes it is difficult to understand what you should and should not eat.

Dietitians are specially trained to help people eat healthy diets. They also help people who have to eat special diets. Anyone who has to have a special diet can ask their doctor to arrange for them to see a dietitian. The dietitian will answer their questions and help them plan a diet they can enjoy. The dietitian will also see family members and help the person who does most of the cooking.

Low Fat Diets

People who have heart problems or high cholesterol have to be extra careful about how much fat they eat. Some suggestions are listed above. But they will get a lot more help if they talk to a dietitian.

Low Salt Diet

Salt makes food taste good, but too much salt is bad for our bodies. Doctors: often tell people with high blood pressure to cut back on salt. There are many ways to do that. One way is to use less salt in cooking and not to add salt at the table. Try using herbs instead. Another way is to eat fewer salted chips and crackers, canned foods, processed meats, and fast foods. If people need more help, they can ask to see a dietitian.

Diabetic Diet

People who have diabetes have to learn to eat a healthy diet. They also have to plan when and how much they should eat. This is because when we eat all our food is broken down into sugar. People with diabetes cannot store and use this sugar properly. Too much sugar stays in their blood instead of going to the cells in their muscles and organs.

Sugar needs the help of insulin to get into the cells in the body. People who have diabetes do not make enough insulin, or the insulin they do make does not work properly. Over time, uncontrolled diabetes can cause damage to the heart, kidneys, nerves, and eyes.

It is very important that people with diabetes learn how to control the level of sugar in their blood. They do this by eating regular, healthy meals and by having some physical activity every day. Some people also have to take pills. Others have to take insulin injections every day. They must make sure that they take their pills or insulin injections at the right time every day. Taking care of themselves in this way helps to delay or prevent any damage the disease may cause.

It is a good idea to go to the special classes that are held to help people understand diabetes and how to manage it. People who have diabetes should also ask for an appointment with a dietitian. The dietitian will help them plan healthy meals. People can also get information from the Canadian Diabetes Association.

Cooking For One Or Two

Do not give up on cooking or eating good food just because you are on your own. You need good food to keep up your strength and to stay healthy. Here are some ideas to make it easier to cook for one or two:

- cook your usual recipe then freeze small portions to eat another time
- cook one-dish meals to save washing up
- invite a friend to share your meal
- ask the store for smaller packages of food or freeze some to cook later
- watch for discounts

Or you might like to

- check out meals-on-wheels
- dine out with a friend once in a while

HEALTHY LIVING

The best way to stay healthy is to eat a variety of foods. This means you should eat foods from all four food groups every day.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating suggests that every day you eat:

- lots of different types of vegetables and fruits
- lots of grain products like breads, cereals, pasta and rice (especially whole grain)
- 2 - 4 servings of milk products (low fat)
- 2 - 3 servings of lean meat, poultry, fish and alternatives (such as tofu, dried peas, beans, lentils, and peanut butter)

If you follow this advice your body will get all the different vitamins and nutrients that it needs. Remember to choose low fat foods more often. Do not forget to cut down on salt, alcohol and caffeine.

It is all right to have something like chocolate cake if you fancy it. But not every day! Have one slice and do not overdo it. The key to living well is to eat a healthy and varied diet. Enjoy what you eat and do not forget to exercise.

Don't Forget To Look After Your Mouth

Dental Health
See Your Dentist
To Keep Your Mouth Healthy

DON'T FORGET TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MOUTH

It is really important to look after your mouth. If your mouth is healthy, you can enjoy your food. If you eat well, your whole body will feel healthy.

Sometimes older people find that their mouths seem dry. They may also say that their food does not seem to have much taste. If people have these problems, they should see their doctor to rule out any disease. It is also a good idea to talk to their dentist.

If the doctor does not find any problem, people may find it helps if they

- suck hard candy for dry mouth
- drink more fluids, especially water
- use herbs and spices to improve taste

Dental Health

As they age, some people have problems with their teeth or dentures. If their teeth or gums hurt, they will not eat right and this can affect their health. Some people find that their teeth are very sensitive to hot and cold, sweetness and pressure. Sometimes medications can cause problems in the mouth. So can stress and changes in eating habits.

Some people are not able to clean their teeth as well as they used to. Or they may have trouble using dental floss. This may mean that their teeth and gums are not as healthy any more.

Therefore, it is a good idea to see the dentist regularly. A dentist will check for gum disease and look for cavities. He will arrange for a professional cleaning. He will also make sure dentures fit properly. Regular check-ups help to prevent pain and loss of teeth.

See Your Dentist

- if your gums bleed
- if your teeth are very sensitive to hot, cold, sweetness and pressure
- if you notice any changes in your mouth or on your lips (such as sores or swellings)
- if you have a dry mouth
- if you have loose teeth
- if your dentures are loose or uncomfortable

TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH HEALTHY

- see your dentist regularly for check-ups and cleaning
- check your mouth daily for changes such as sores or swellings
- brush all surfaces of each tooth every day
- floss every day
- have a new tooth brush every 3-4 months

If you have dentures

- soak your dentures overnight
- scrub your dentures every day
- massage and rinse your gums every day

Remember

If your mouth is healthy, you will be able to eat well. If you eat well, your whole body feels better.



Do You Know What You Are Taking?

What You Need To Know About Medications
Side Effects
Body Changes
Drug Interactions
Food And Drug Interactions
Effect Of Alcohol
Taking Medications
Questions To Ask Your Doctor And Pharmacist
Safe Storage Of Medications
Safe Disposal Of Medications
An Apple A Day. . .

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TAKING?

Most people take some kind of medication once in a while. It could be for arthritis pain or for a sore throat. Some people have to take medication every day. They may have to take heart medication, or pills to control their blood pressure or diabetes.

Older people are more likely to need medications than younger people. This is because they often have chronic diseases like arthritis or heart disease. But some older people, even those in their nineties, never take medications. It all depends on their state of health.

All medications are drugs. There are prescription drugs which can only be bought from a pharmacy if your doctor writes a prescription. There are also over-the-counter drugs which you can buy without a prescription. You can also buy "natural products" or herbal remedies without a prescription. Remember, these products contain drugs too and some are quite strong.

Anything that changes how your mind or body works is a drug and drugs must be used with care. Make sure you know what you are taking in to your body and why. Ask questions. When you are satisfied with the answers you get, be sure to follow the directions you are given.

If you are worried about asking the doctor questions, take a friend or family member with you. This person could also write down the answers and the instructions in case you forget them.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MEDICATIONS

Side Effects

All medications are made to treat a certain problem, such as a painful knee or an infection. When the medication does what it is supposed to do, we get better. But medications can affect our bodies in other ways too. The medications can have unwanted effects on our bodies. These are called side effects.

Side effects can be a mild headache or a stomach upset. But some side effects can be serious, like difficulty breathing. It is important to ask your doctor what side effects you can expect from the

medication you are taking. You also need to ask him which side effects are serious and which are not.

Let your doctor know if you are worried about the possible side effects of the medication. There may be a different medication that she can give you instead. Do not be afraid to ask your doctor any questions you have about your medication. After all, it is your body which will be affected.

Body Changes

When you take medications, your liver and kidneys break down the drugs so they can be removed from the body. As people get older, their liver and kidneys may not work as well as before. This means the medication can build up in the body.

An older person's weight and blood circulation may also change. This may mean that more of the drug stays in the body, or it may stay longer. Also, as people age, their bodies may not be able to absorb medications in the same way. For these reasons, the doctor may decide to change the dose of the drugs she orders for an older person.

As people get older, they should ask their doctor to look at all the medications they are taking at least once a year. They should ask if they still need to take them all. They should also ask if the dosage is still right for them. **Warning:** Do not stop taking a medication or change the dose without talking to your doctor. Some medications must be taken for life. Other medications must not be stopped suddenly. So talk to your doctor.

Drug Interactions

Medications do not always agree with each other when inside our bodies. Sometimes one medication will work with another and make it stronger. This can have the same effect as taking an over-dose and can be dangerous. Sometimes one medication will block the action of another. Then the medication will not help the person at all. These effects are called drug interactions.

There are some things you can do to avoid drug interactions. When your doctor tells you to take a new medication, ask him if it can be taken with the medications that you are already taking. Do not forget to tell him about any over-the-counter medications you are taking. The doctor will check to make sure there are no interactions.

There is another reason to tell your doctor about any over-the-counter medications you are taking. Sometimes you can get a medication by prescription but you can also buy it over-the-counter under a different name. If you take both at the same time you could take an overdose.

If you see more than one doctor, tell each one about all the medications you are taking. Do not forget to tell them about the over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies too. This is very important as it will prevent drug interactions. Remember, you are the one who is taking the medication and it will affect your body. So do not be afraid to ask questions.

Talk to your pharmacist too. Ask her to check your medications to make sure there are no harmful interactions. It is best to use just one pharmacy or drug store. The pharmacist will then have a record of all your medications and will be able to warn you if there is a problem. You should also ask her about any over-the-counter drugs you plan to buy. She will check your records and tell you if it is safe to take it with your other medications or not.

Food And Drug Interactions

There are questions that you should ask your doctor and pharmacist about how your medication reacts with food. Some medications should be taken on an empty stomach or else they will not be absorbed properly. Other medications should be taken with food. This is usually because they cause a stomach upset unless there is food in the stomach. Some medications can be taken either on an empty stomach or with food. So ask if your medication should be taken with food or not.

If a medication should be taken on an empty stomach, take it one hour before you eat or two hours afterwards.

Sometimes food can cause problems for people taking certain medications. People who take blood thinners and anti-depressants should ask their doctor and pharmacist which foods they should not eat. Some antibiotics do not work when taken at the same time as milk products. Sometimes foods help the body to absorb certain drugs. One example is orange juice which helps the body to absorb iron.

So talk to your pharmacist. Find out if there is anything you should know about food and the medications you are taking.

Effect Of Alcohol

Alcohol can cause problems if it is taken with some medications. It is important to ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is all right to drink alcohol with your medications.

As people get older, alcohol has a greater effect on their bodies. They cannot cope with the same amount of alcohol. Safe-drinking guidelines for older people are:

- no more than 8 standard drinks a week
- for men, no more than 2 or 3 standard drinks in one day
- for women, no more than 1 or 2 standard drinks in one day

A standard drink is: 12 ounces of beer
5 ounces of table wine
3 ounces of fortified wine
1/2 ounces of liquor

Taking Medications

Once you have found out all about the medication you are going to take, make sure that you follow the directions. Read the label on the bottle. The writing is often small, so put on your glasses or use a magnifying glass.

Do not take more of the medication than the label says. Taking too much or taking it too often can do you more harm than good. It could lead to an overdose.

Do not take less than the label says. You will not be taking enough medication for it to work properly.

Ask when you should take your medications. If you are told to take the medication three times a day, ask if this means that you have to take it eight hours apart. If the label says four times a day, ask if you have to wake up in the night to take it.

Make sure you know if you have to finish all the medication or just take it till you feel better. If you are given an antibiotic for an infection, it is important to finish it all. Otherwise the infection will come back and you may need much stronger medication to treat it.

Do not lend any of your medications to anyone else. Do not borrow medications from anyone else. This is not a safe thing to do. When the doctor gives a person a prescription, he checks for allergies and looks at other medications the person is taking. He also makes sure the dose is right for that person. If other people take that medication, they could become very sick.

If you have trouble remembering when to take your medications, talk to your pharmacist. She will give you some ideas to help you.



SAFE STORAGE OF MEDICATIONS

- Keep medications in the original containers with the original labels.
- Ask if your medication should be stored in the fridge or at room temperature.
- Medications can be affected by light and air, so store them away from the light and keep the lids on tightly.
- Do not store medications in the bathroom. Heat and dampness may damage them.
- Keep all medications locked up, out of the reach of children.
- If you have trouble opening child-proof containers, ask your pharmacist for regular containers. Be very careful to keep these locked up and out of reach of children.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR AND PHARMACIST

- What is the medication called?
- What is it for?
- How does it work?
- What side effects can I expect?
- Which side effects should be reported?
- When should I take the medication? How often?
- Should I take the medication with food or on an empty stomach?
- Will this medication affect the other prescription medications I am taking?
- Are there any over-the-counter medications which should not be taken with this medication?
- Are there any foods or drinks which I should not eat while taking this medication?
- How long should I take the medication? Until it is all gone or until I feel better?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Can I drink alcohol while taking this medication?

Safe Disposal Of Medications

When medications are out-of-date they may not work properly. Some medications may even become toxic or poisonous when they get old. Check your medication cupboard at least once a year. Take out all out-of-date medications. The safest way to get rid of them is to take them back to the pharmacy.

Check your medication cupboard for medications that you are no longer using. If you leave them in the cupboard they may get mixed up by accident with medications that you are using. For safety, take them back to the pharmacy.

An Apple A Day...

There is an old saying that an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Sometimes the old ways work well and medications are not needed. Homemade soup, plenty of rest, and lots of fluids make you feel better when you have a cold. A walk in the fresh air and a soak in the tub should help you sleep better.

But sometimes you do need medications. They can help you if they are used properly. Find out all you can about the medications you are taking. Work with your doctor and pharmacist and do not be afraid to ask questions.

Is It High?

Blood Pressure
Lifestyle Changes
Blood Pressure Checks

Is It High?

Blood Pressure

We all have blood pressure. We cannot live without it. Blood pressure is the force that moves blood around our bodies. The blood takes food and oxygen to every part of the body.

Your heart acts as a pump. Every time your heart beats, it pumps blood through your blood vessels. If your blood pressure is high, it means your heart has to work harder to push blood around your body.

There is only one way to know what your blood pressure is and that is to have it measured. A cuff is put around your arm. It is pumped up until it stops the blood flow in the artery in your arm. Then the cuff is released. The doctor or nurse listens with a stethoscope and records the blood pressure.

Blood pressure is recorded as two numbers. The first number is the systolic pressure. It is the pressure when your heart is pumping. This is the highest number.

The second number is the diastolic pressure. It is the pressure when your heart is at rest. This is the lower number.

Blood pressure changes all the time. Your blood pressure will be lower when you are resting. It will be higher when you have just climbed the stairs. Your blood pressure also changes if you are upset or angry. Some people are so worried about their blood pressure that it goes up every time they go to see the doctor.

That is why one blood pressure reading is not enough to say someone has high blood pressure. Blood pressure should be checked several times over several weeks. In this way, the doctor will find out the normal range of blood pressure for that person. The range for each person is different.

The doctor will decide if the person has high blood pressure. She will also decide on treatment. Some people will need to take medication. There are many different types and the doctor will try to find the one that suits the person best. People may also need to make lifestyle changes.

Lifestyle Changes

These are some of the lifestyle changes people may need to make:

- eat a healthy diet
- keep a healthy weight
- exercise as advised by your doctor
- quit smoking
- drink no more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day
- relax and reduce stress



Blood Pressure Checks

You should have your blood pressure checked once a year to make sure it is all right. If you have high blood pressure, your doctor will tell you how often it should be checked.

Remember, there is only one way to know what your blood pressure is and that is to measure it. It is important to have it checked so that it can be treated if it is high. Untreated high blood pressure can cause heart attacks and strokes.



I Can't Talk To My Doctor
About That

I CAN'T TALK TO MY DOCTOR ABOUT THAT

Some people are too shy or embarrassed to talk to their doctors about some of the problems they have. Or they may think nothing can be done to help them so there is no point talking about it. That is a pity because often the doctor can help if he or she knows about the problem.

One thing people do not like to talk about is incontinence. Incontinence is when someone has trouble controlling their bladder or bowels. They feel really bad about this. They are afraid to go out in case they have an accident. Often they suffer for years without knowing that they can get help. They may spend a lot of money on pads.

There are many different causes of incontinence. It could be a bladder infection which needs treatment. Women may have the problem because of injury during childbirth or because of loss of hormones after menopause. Men may have the problem because of an enlarged prostate gland.

Whatever the cause, there is help. Sometimes surgery cures the problem. Sometimes special exercises will help. Sometimes medication helps. The important thing is to talk to the doctor. He or she will find out what is causing the problem. Then the doctor will suggest treatment to help.

If you find it hard to talk about your problem, you could tell your doctor that you have to wear pads all the time. Then he will know the kind of problem you have. Or you could write it down. Then when you see your doctor, you can give him or her the piece of paper. This should make it easier for you to talk about the problem and to get help.

You can also call the Canadian Continence Foundation. They have a toll-free number, 1-800-265-9575. They will answer your questions and can send you information.

Protect Yourself

Protect Yourself From Hidden Diseases
Protect Yourself From The Sun
Protect Yourself From Falls
Protect Yourself From Germs
Protect Yourself From Unsafe Food
Other Food Safety Tips

PROTECT YOURSELF

Protect Yourself From Hidden Diseases

It is a good idea to have regular check-ups by your doctor as you get older. This is because you may have a hidden problem and not know it. Simple tests will tell the doctor if all is well. If not, early treatment can prevent health problems later.

These are some of the things everyone should have checked:

- blood pressure
- blood sugar
- vision
- hearing
- feet
- mouth and teeth or dentures



Women Only

Women should also have:

- a Pap test
- a breast examination

A Pap test is a test done by the doctor to check for cancer in the neck of the womb. Every woman should have a Pap test every year or as often as the doctor suggests.

Women should also have their breasts examined by the doctor every year to check for lumps. The Cancer Society also recommends that women over 50 years have a special x-ray of their breasts every 2 years or more often if they are at high risk. This x-ray is called a mammogram. It can find very small lumps even before they can be felt.

It is very important that all women also check their own breasts every month. They need to learn the right way to do this. The doctor or a nurse will teach them. When a woman checks her breasts every month, she gets to know what her breasts feel like. Then she is more likely to find small lumps or changes as soon as they appear. If she notices anything, she should see her doctor right away for more tests. It may be nothing to worry about. But, if it is cancer, the earlier treatment is started the better.

Men Only

Men should have regular checks to test for cancer of the testicles or the prostate gland. The doctor does the examination. He may also order a blood test. Men can also learn how to check themselves each month. If they notice a problem they should see their doctor at once. If problems are treated early, there is a good chance of a cure.

Protect Yourself From The Sun

It is good to be out in the fresh air and sunshine but we also need to protect ourselves from the sun's harmful rays. Too much sun on the skin can cause skin cancer so you need to protect yourself.

The Cancer Society suggests that people:

- cover up with clothing to keep out the sun
- use sun screen
- wear a wide brimmed hat
- wear sun glasses
- stay in the shade

Make sure your grandchildren follow these rules too. Bad sunburns in childhood can lead to skin cancer in later life.

Older people need to check themselves for signs of cancer. Both men and women can get skin cancer. They should look for marks, or sores, or changes in moles. If they see any, they should ask their doctor to check them. They may be harmless or they may need treatment. Once again, the sooner treatment is started the better.



Protect Yourself From Falls

Many older people are afraid of falling. They are afraid of breaking a bone which may not heal properly. Then they may lose their independence.

Some causes of falls

- poor balance
- weak muscles due to lack of exercise
- poor blood circulation
- vision problems
- medications that cause drowsiness or dizziness
- slippery floors
- uneven or icy sidewalks

Some ways to prevent falls

- strengthen muscles through exercise
- use a cane or walker if your doctor advises one
- use grab bars in the bath or shower
- use non-slip rubber mats in the tub
- fix rugs and runners so they will not slip
- use bright lights in dangerous areas like stairways
- see the doctor about medical problems that may cause falls



Protect Yourself From Germs

There are many ways to protect yourself from germs. One way is to eat well. Another is to exercise and get plenty of fresh air. Have a flu shot if your doctor advises it. When flu is on the go, stay away from places where you might pick up germs.

What else can you do? Coughs and sneezes spread diseases. But many germs are spread through touching and not through the air. Chest colds and stomach flu are spread this way. Germs live on surfaces which are touched by people. Some examples are door knobs, telephones, and faucets.

One of the best ways to protect yourself is to wash your hands. You do not need expensive soap. Any soap will do as long as you use it right.

How to wash:

- remove your jewellery
- rinse your hands with water
- lather with soap for 15 - 20 seconds - this is important
- rinse well with warm water
- dry well with a clean towel or a paper one



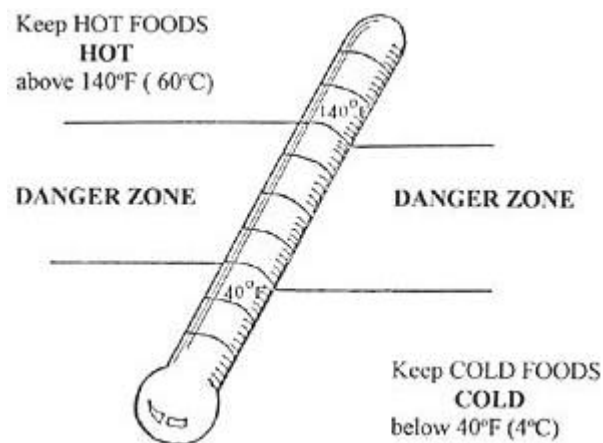
When to wash:

- after using the toilet
- before preparing food
- before eating food
- after blowing your nose
- after touching elevator buttons, door knobs, faucets, telephones etc.

Protect Yourself From Unsafe Food

Many people suffer from food poisoning each year. Sometimes they say they have stomach flu. But really they have food poisoning. Food poisoning can make you very ill. It can even be fatal.

GOLDEN RULE for Food safety



Other Food Safety Tips

- thaw frozen foods in the fridge or in the microwave, not at room temperature
- wash your hands before preparing food
- keep utensils and work surfaces clean
- wash your hands after handling raw meat or chicken
- clean surfaces and utensils with bleach after preparing raw meat or chicken
- use one set of utensils and cutting boards for uncooked food and another set for cooked food
- use a meat thermometer to make sure meat and poultry are thoroughly cooked
- use foods before the "best before" date
- wash your hands before eating

How To Age Well

How To Age Well

In this book you have read about some of the changes that happen to us as we age. You have also learned that there are things you can do to help you cope with the challenges of aging.

Some people never seem to grow old. They are still busy and active into their eighties and nineties. This seems to run in families. The rest of us have to work at making sure we age well. This book has given you suggestions about things you can do to have a healthy, enjoyable old age.

Some of the main suggestions are to:

- keep your body active
- keep your brain active
- eat a variety of healthy foods
- work with your doctor and pharmacist
- protect yourself
- have a positive outlook
- accept any help you need

It is never too early to start preparing ourselves for growing old. Someone once said, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself." So start taking care of yourself now. It is not too late.

Resources And References

Helpful Phone Numbers

Pamphlets

Books

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Organization	Nfld & Labrador	National
Alzheimer Society	709-576-0608	-----
Arthritis Society	709-579-8190 or 1-800-321-1433	-----
Canadian Cancer Society	709- 753-6520 or 1-888-753-6520	1-888-939-3333
Canadian Continen- ce Foundation .	-----	1-800-265-9575
Canadian Diabetes Assoc	709-754-0953	1-800-226-8464
Canadian Hard of Hearing Assoc.	709-753-3224	-----
Canadian Mental Health Assoc.	709-753-8550	-----
Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)	709-754-1180 or 1-800-334-2642	-----
Heart and Stroke Foundation	709-753-8521 or 1-888-473-4636	-----
Mental Health Crisis Line	709- 737-4668 or 1-888-737-4668	-----
Osteoporosis Society of Canada	-----	1-800-463-6842
Parkinson Foundation	709- 754-4428 or 1-800-567-7020	1-800-565-3000
Seniors Resource Centre	709- 737-2333 or 1-800-563-5599	-----

<p>In Newfoundland and Labrador, call Seniors Resource Centre at (709) 737-2333 or 1-800-563-5599 if you have a question, need a service, or do not know where to turn for help.</p>
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PAMPHLETS

Alzheimer Society pamphlets:

- Is it Alzheimer Disease?
- Getting a Diagnosis
- Are You providing Alzheimer Care?
- Reducing Caregiver Stress

Arthritis Society pamphlets

- Arthritis
- Coping with osteoarthritis
- Exercise and your arthritis
- Booklet: Breaking down the barriers: Tools for living independently with arthritis

Canadian Cancer Society pamphlets:

- Facts on prostate cancer
- Facts on breast cancer
- The Pap test

Canadian Continence Foundation pamphlets:

- The impact of aging on bladder control
- Bladder control for women
- Incontinence after prostate surgery
- Pelvic muscle exercises - Kegel exercises - for urinary incontinence

Canadian Dental Association and City of Toronto Department of Public Health:

- Dental Health Facts for Seniors

Canadian Diabetes Association pamphlets:

- Things you should know about type 2 diabetes
- What every Canadian needs to know: Diabetes
- What every Canadian needs to know: Seriousness of diabetes
- What every Canadian needs to know: Prevalence of diabetes
- Diabetes Facts: Taking care of your feet

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association pamphlets:

Hard of Hearing: What does it mean?
You know you are losing your hearing when...
Consumer advice for buying hearing aid

Canadian Mental Health Association pamphlets:

Growing Older
Depression: Help can make a Difference
Getting Help: When and How
Preventing Suicide

CNIB pamphlets

I can't see as well as I used to
Diabetes and the eye
Macular Degeneration
Glaucoma
Cataracts

Government of NF and Lab: Department of Health and Community Services:

Fast Facts: Drugs and Seniors
Fast Facts: Prescription drugs
Fast Facts: Over-the-counter drugs
Fast Facts: Alcohol and Seniors

Health and Welfare Canada:

Food Safety - It's All in Your Hands

Health Canada:

Canada Food Guide to Healthy Eating (1997)
Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living for Older Adults

Heart and Stroke Foundation:

Healthy Eating
Fibre Facts
Cholesterol Facts
Dietary fat
Know your Blood Pressure by Heart
Strokeline

Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada:
Knowledge is the Best Medicine

Prince Edward Island Senior Citizens' Federation Inc.:
Medication Awareness

BOOKS

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Newfoundland Chapter (1997).
Training Manual for Volunteer Hearing Helpers (vol. 2 & 4).

Chenitz, Carole, W., Stone, Joyce T., and Salisbury, Sally A. (1991).
Clinical Gerontological Nursing. W. B. Saunders Company.

Lorig, Kate and Fries, James F. (1990). The Arthritis Helpbook. A
Tested Self- Management Program for Coping with your Arthritis.
Addison-Wesley Publishing Company

Seniors Resource Centre (1997). Peer Advocate Program: Manual of
Information Sharing/Training

Growing Old? Not Me!

A Guide For Healthy Aging

Comments from Readers

"Very easy to read, interesting, informative. A lot of people will benefit from reading it."

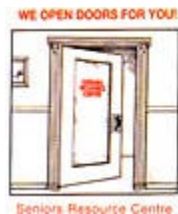
"I read the chapter on Keeping Your Spirits Up and found it was really good. You can understand it very clearly. I myself had suffered a big loss and some of what I read helped me a lot."

"It gives you a lot of advice on how to take medication. You should always make sure of what you are taking and the effect that it has on you."

"There was a lot of good information about keeping fit. They got right to the point and listed what you should do to keep fit. It was very easy to understand and follow along. It was put in good order. I liked the tips that they gave you to do."

"Everything in this [chapter] is so informative it tells you what to do if you ever have problems with your eyes or sight."

"Your tips on lifestyle changes that could dramatically decrease the probability of serious illness in my immediate family have not been taken lightly."



A Seniors Resource Centre Publication
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