



PacifiCare[®]
Behavioral Health

Wellness Monthly

Healthy matters to keep in mind.

February 2008

Turning Back the Clock — Tips for Keeping a Young Mind and Body

In a society that seems obsessed with youth, looking and feeling younger has become a national pastime. Consider the explosive increase in cosmetic surgery procedures. Or just turn on the TV to witness the popularity of reality shows that transform people's bodies. Barely a month goes by without another major breakthrough in anti-aging treatment headlining the nightly news.

Staying young has less to do with the potions we use, and more with practical, time-tested strategies that work over the long haul. There may not be a fountain of youth, but we can live longer and more energetically than ever before.



Aging is a complex process marked by gradual changes in our body functions, often brought about by environmental factors or our health habits. Scientists now draw attention to the difference between chronological age and "biological age." Chronological age is simply the number of years

you've lived. But biological age takes into account several factors to determine your personal life span. For instance, it's possible for a 70-year old man to have the biological age of a 55-year old. If you've heard someone say, "He has the body of a 25-year old," you get the picture. What's really going on as we age?

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Tips for Feeling Like a Kid Again

Keep Moving.

aging doesn't only happen at the gym. Opt for the stairs rather than the elevator. Go on a bike ride. During a break from work, take a short walk around the block.

Be Social.

Reconnect with old friends, volunteer, and participate in community activities. Regular social activity helps the mind stay fresh and enhances mood.

Don't Smoke.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in America. It can make you look and feel older, too.

Upcoming Articles

March 2008

Sleepless Nights – How They Affect Your Mood and Health

April 2008

Living Within Your Means

The American Academy of Health and Fitness describes a few central changes to our bodies:

Muscle mass — In a fit young person, about 30% of body weight is muscle. But by age 75, muscle makes up only 15%. Body fat tends to increase as we age, due to slower metabolism. Coupled with loss of muscle mass, this can lead to chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart problems.

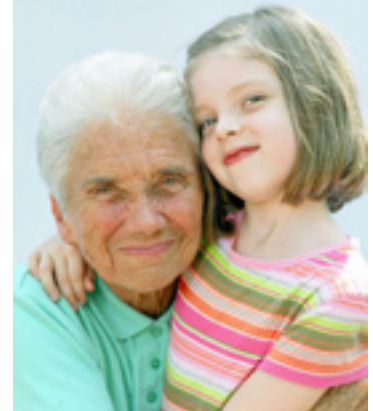
Aerobic capacity — At 80, our ability to process oxygen is 50% lower than when we were young adults.

Bone density — As we age, our bones become weaker and more brittle, a condition called osteoporosis. This makes us more susceptible to breaks and fractures. Each decade, women lose about 8% of their skeletal mass, while men lose about 3%.

Sound hopeless? It's not! Though you can't change your chronological age, you can significantly impact your biological age. Yes, our bodies change as we age, but we can take steps to offset these changes. Knowledge is power. When you learn about the benefits of diet, exercise, and mental activity, you have the keys to a longer, more energized life.

Change often requires some support along the way. If you have questions or

concerns about health and aging, don't hesitate to get in touch. PBH is here to help. Call or log on anytime for help with any of life's challenges.



Slowing the Aging Process

Develop a regular exercise program. To be most effective, your workout should include both aerobic and weight-bearing exercise. Aerobic exercise burns calories and fat, speeds up metabolism, and reduces cholesterol. Weight-bearing exercise strengthens bones and builds muscle mass. Studies show that regular vigorous exercise is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of mental impairment. Before you begin, be sure to talk to your doctor about the exercise program that's right for you.

Start eating well. Fresh fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants such as beta-carotene and vitamins C and E, which neutralize the effect of damaging free radicals, thought to contribute to both physical and mental aging. Conversely, a diet of salty or high-fat foods contributes to high cholesterol and increased body fat. Several studies have also shown that fish — in particular, salmon, mackerel, herring, and other oily fish — contain substances vital to brain activity.



Keep active mentally. The brain is a muscle — either use it or lose it. New research is showing that brain exercises like crossword puzzles, learning a new skill, or mastering a musical instrument helps stimulate activity between neurons in the brain. Without stimulation, a number of these nerve cells die and do not regenerate as you age, contributing to memory loss.

Resources

PacifiCare Behavioral Health

Ask your HR representative for your access code and toll-free number.

www.pbhi.com

Visit the Nutrition & Fitness Center (under the "Life Stages Centers" on the home page). You'll be connected to information about healthy eating, weight management, and how to make exercise a part of your life.