

never use other people's medication—just because they seem to have the same problem as you, doesn't mean a drug prescribed for them is safe for you.

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GROWING OLDER, BUT STAYING WELL

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Life after 60 should be a productive and satisfying time especially as getting older needn't mean poorer health. Many of the health problems once thought to be a normal part of ageing can be prevented in many ways. If you haven't already begun to revitalise your life, why not start now? For continuing good health we all need to take charge of our physical, emotional and mental well being.

Give up smoking. It's never too late to give up and feel the benefits of being a non-smoker (more energy and better health). Besides it may even benefit eye health—everyone knows that smoking contributes to heart disease, stroke and some cancers, but there is also new evidence that smoking may contribute to poorer eyesight. If you don't know how to quit smoking, ask your doctor's advice.

Keep moving. Until scientists invent a pill for eternal youth, we have to use the next best thing - exercise. Regular activity is one of the best things we can do to help ourselves stay mobile and independent as we age. By improving balance, co-ordination and strength, exercise reduce the risk of people falling over as they get older.

Again, it's never too late to become more active by finding ways of exercising that you enjoy - walks with the dog or neighbours and friends, swimming, cycling, gardening, dancing, ta chi or yoga. The more you do, the stronger and more confident you'll feel. Joining in activities with other people is also a good way to make new friends. Why not contact the local community health centre and find out if there are any walking groups, exercise classes or other activities you

can join in?

Keep your mind healthy. Many doctors now say it's a myth that old age always means our brains don't function very well. Although it's true that some problems such as dementia, stroke and heavy use of alcohol, for instance, can affect brain function, ageing itself doesn't stop our ability to learn. In fact learning new things can actually "exercise" the brain and help it stay younger. Learning something new doesn't mean you have to go back to school—it can mean reading about new topics, learning a new skill, doing voluntary work in your community, finding a new hobby, or trying out new recipes.

Have regular health checks. Don't assume that aches and pains or unusual symptoms are just "part of growing older". Ask your doctor to check them out—if there is a problem it can be more successfully treated if it's found early. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure regularly.

Enjoy healthy food. Take a look at what you eat every day. Does it include plenty of bread, pasta, rice or other cereals and grains? Do you eat vegetables and fruit every day and avoid too many rich fatty foods like pies, cakes and sweet biscuits. If you enjoy dairy products, have you tried the low fat varieties?

Be careful with medication. Many older people take medication for medical problems. Used properly, medication can help a lot - but used unwisely, it can cause more health problems. If you take medication regularly, always check with your doctor that you still need to continue taking it. Whenever your doctor prescribes a drug for you, always ask if there's another way of treating your problem without drugs. Always tell your doctor what other medicines you're taking as well. And