



Summer Strategies for Active Aging

active aging



Those lazy, hazy days of summer will soon be here! Here are two strategies that can help you cope during warm weather. First, increase your consumption of liquids during the hot and humid summer months to prevent dehydra-

tion. Second, be aware of strategies to help you cope with "excessive heat events."

Let's start with the need for drinking more liquids. The human body is made up of 60 to 75 percent water, which helps to regulate your body's temperature. It's important to balance water losses with water intake. This is especially true during the summer months when more water may be lost due to sweating. Children and older adults are more susceptible to dehydration, so it's even more important for them to drink extra fluids during the summer months. Other things that may make a person more sensitive to dehydration include changes in body composition due to aging, medications, and other health conditions.

In general, you will need to drink at least two quarts of liquids each day. Nutritionists suggest that you drink fluids before you are thirsty. If you wait until you are thirsty, your body may already be partially dehydrated. Some drinks, including coffee, tea, and other caffeinated beverages, as well as sugary beverages, don't adequately replace fluids. So, choose wisely—water or natural juices are your best choice.

Other strategies include doing outside activities in the morning or evening when it is less hot, and avoiding the heat of mid-day. Drink water before going outside and continue drinking fluids while you are outside.

Good choices for snacks are fresh fruits and vegetables because they contain some fluids; some foods such as lettuce and celery are 80 to 90 percent water!

Now, let's take a closer look at excessive heat events. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in 2003, more people died from "excessive heat events" than from hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined. Excessive heat is defined as, "prolonged periods during which the temperature is 10 degrees Fahrenheit or more than the average high for a region." If we have a period of excessive heat this summer, here are some tips from the Environmental Protection Agency that can help keep you cooler:

- If you don't have air conditioning in your home, go to community centers such as movie theaters, shopping malls, senior centers, or libraries that are air conditioned.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing.
- Take a cool shower or bath.
- Watch for signs of heat-related illness including: hot, dry skin; confusion; or aggression.
- Try to do outside activities in the morning or evening hours and avoid the mid-day sun.
- Call 911 or your local emergency system if attention is needed.

References:

"Don't Sweat Summer Heat: Drink Plenty of Water," *Nebraska University Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources*, July 14, 2005. <http://ianrnews.unl.edu/static/0507141.shtml>.

"Planning for Excessive Heat Events," *Publication Number 100-F-04-008, United States Environmental Protection Agency*, September 2004.

Submitted by Cindy Oliveri, OSU Extension South Centers

Good Nutrition: It's Key to Healthy Aging



Mom always told me that "you are what you eat." And she was right! Good nutrition and eating the right amount of the right kinds of foods both play an important role not only in how well you feel, but in how well you age, too.

Eating a well balanced diet—one that includes a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and fiber—not only helps you meet your need for key vitamins and minerals, it also helps reduce age-related risks for chronic diseases.

When making food choices, be sure you include:

- **Protein**—Choose low fat protein sources like fish, eggs or egg substitutes, poultry, soy, and limited amounts of nuts and low fat meat and dairy products.
- **Carbohydrates**—Choose wholegrain breads and cereals and use a variety of complex carbohydrates that include vegetables. Limit the simple carbohydrates in your diet; these are sugars that break down easily in the body without adding nutritional value.
- **Fats**—Choose heart healthy fats, like those found in olive oil and nuts, rather than the unhealthy fats that are found in beef, pork, veal, butter, shortening, or cheese. Limit trans-fats—those that are found in commercially prepared crackers, candies, cookies, fried foods, baked goods, and other processed foods.
- **Water**—As you age, your kidneys work harder and become less efficient. Drinking 6 to 8 eight-ounce glasses of water daily helps keep your body healthy.

Maintaining a healthy body weight is important. As you age, your need for daily calories decreases. This means you need enough good protein in your diet, but less fat. Exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight, and it makes you feel better too!

As you age, your bones lose minerals. This is especially true if you are post-menopausal. Check with your doctor to see if a calcium supplement to help prevent osteoporosis is right for you.

Take your medications as prescribed by your doctor. Be sure to tell your doctor and other healthcare providers about all the over-the-counter medications, and vitamin and mineral supplements you are taking. Sometimes too much of a vitamin or mineral can make you feel sick.

Source: Bales, C.W., Ritchie, C.S. *Handbook of Clinical Nutrition and Aging*. Towato, New Jersey: Humana Press 2004.

Portions reprinted with permission from *Gerontological Nutrition Newsletter*, Winter 2006, Carol Casey, RD.

By Lisa Gill-Argiro, Consulting Dietitian, Area Agency on Aging 11, Inc.



Ethical Wills: Putting Your Values on Paper

by Barry K. Baines, M.D.

This wonderful book discusses the ancient tradition of passing on personal values, beliefs, blessings, and advice to relatives and future generations. Dr. Baines defines an ethical will as, "a vehicle for clarifying and communicating the meaning in our lives to our families and communities." Ethical wills are an opportunity to pass on one's legacy that will live beyond one's own years.

Although ethical wills are not considered legal documents as compared to last wills and testaments or living wills, they can mean more to friends and family than any material possession one might pass on. *Ethical Wills* outlines simple steps to help the reader create a document that can share their own wisdom, life lessons, and experiences.

This book will stimulate your mind and guide you through the process of putting thoughts, dreams, and wishes in writing for generations to come.

Reviewed by: Lynn Dobb, Education Manager, COAAA

Emily



Emily's soft-spoken, southern drawl belies the fact that she has been a Yankee for more than half a century. Her genteel mannerisms hide the fact that this thin, wispy, over 90-year-old is made of a strong mettle. Trained as a nurse in World War II, Emily met her future husband, a doctor, at Union Station in Washington, D.C. as they were shipping out to various corners of the world.

When Doc brought her to Ohio as his bride, little did she suspect

what responsibilities being a doctor's wife would entail—at least Doc's wife! He took her to the dairy farm that he bought on the outskirts of the town where he would set up his practice, and she learned to milk cows and drive a tractor. Between farming, nursing, and substituting as an English teacher at the local school, she raised three sons to advocate for civil justice, social responsibility, and to be environmentally aware of the world.

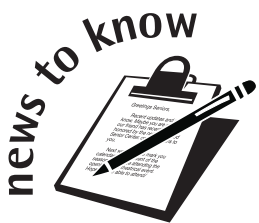
And Emily practices what she preaches! When her sons and husband authored books, she edited, advised, and critiqued, then

helped to promote the books. She recycles, composts, advocates, and works circles around her younger counterparts. She never passes the opportunity to discuss how important it is to exercise the right to vote, and has led voter registration drives in her town. She was personally responsible for registering thousands of new voters during the last Presidential election.

I am proud to have this tireless woman as my friend.

Contributed by Cindy Clark, Special Projects Manager, Ohio Department of Aging

Take Control of Osteoarthritis



Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, with many of those afflicted being seniors. According to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), osteoarthritis, also known as degenerative joint disease, is a breaking down of the top layer of cartilage covering the ends of bones where joints are formed. Over time, the bones rub together, causing pain, swelling, and limited motion. Because osteoarthritis is more prevalent in the older population, the numbers affected will only increase as our senior population grows.

Most of us have days when we are stiff and achy, but the person with osteoarthritis experiences these symptoms frequently, and sometimes quite severely. And while we can often make it through the day with just a complaint or two, for some with osteoarthritis the challenges impact their everyday lives. In addition

to physical challenges, individuals often experience anxiety, depression, financial constraints, and limitations with work and family responsibilities.

For those without osteoarthritis, the key is prevention. For those with osteoarthritis, the key is management. Oddly enough, the solutions for both are the same—a healthy diet, weight loss or maintaining a healthy weight, and a regular exercise program. Even the smallest weight loss minimizes stress on your joints. And as painful as it may sound, exercise really does help!

Unfortunately, osteoarthritis is not avoidable for many, but anything we can do to delay the onset and/or lessen the challenges equates to a higher quality of life for you and your loved ones.

Sources:

www.niams.nih.gov/hi/topics/arthritis/oahandout.htm#1

www.mayoclinic.com/health/osteoarthritis/DS00019

Contributed by Karen Puterbaugh, Executive Director, Greene County Council on Aging

Humor and Caregiving



The stress and strain of taking care of someone can make for a tiring and emotionally draining experience for any caregiver. Caregivers are at risk not only for physical problems, but are also at risk for burnout and stress-related illnesses. It may seem inappropriate to discuss laughter and

humor in serious caregiving situations, but studies have shown that finding humor in everyday life actually helps reduce stress!

Research has shown that caregivers are more likely to suffer from anxiety, bouts of depression, and physical illness. The stress and isolation often encountered by the caregiver can lead to feelings of resentment, anger, and grief. Using your sense of humor is one of the best methods for reducing these risks and helping you have a healthier life (and it's free!).

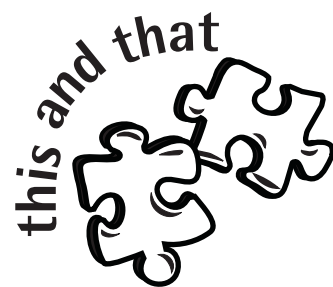
How do laughter and humor help? Finding the humor in everyday situations helps you ease tensions, get control, and reduce embarrassment in awkward moments. When you laugh, your body relaxes and tension decreases. The combination of laughter and relaxation may give the caregiver relief from headaches, backaches, insomnia, and panic attacks. When you laugh, your whole body is involved. Laughter stimulates your heart and digestion rate and benefits the entire cardiovascular system because of increased oxygen in the blood stream.

It may be difficult to find much to laugh about, especially if your care receiver is a difficult patient. It's easy to get frustrated, but using your sense of humor can turn many difficult situations around and make you a better companion. Bill Cosby once said, "If you can find humor in it, you can survive it."

So how should you get started if you're struggling with your sense of humor?

- Lighten up. Find something to laugh at, no matter how serious the situation. Change the "disasters" into something funny.
- Smile! A smile not only helps others feel better, but also helps you feel better.
- Look for the funny side no matter how painful the situation may be.
- Keep a humor journal and refer to it when you need a lift.
- Look for humor in stressful situations.
- Above all, start laughing! The sooner you begin, the sooner you will start to feel better.

Submitted by Nancy Recker, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Allen County



10 Steps to Healthier Aging

1. Start today.
2. Choose physical activities you enjoy.
3. Eat sensible portion sizes.
4. Set realistic goals to eat better and move more.
5. Walking is a safe way to become more active.
6. Make wise food choices.
7. Record your progress.
8. Find an indoor place to be active in bad weather.
9. Plan ahead what you will eat or drink today to reach your nutrition goal.
10. Ask a buddy or family member to join you.

Steps to a HealthierUS is a new initiative from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services designed to help Americans live longer, better, and healthier lives. Visit www.healthierus.gov/steps/index.html to learn more.

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