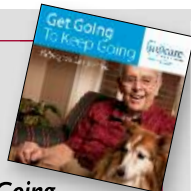


A guide to active living



The We Care **Get Going to Keep Going** guide can be used as a roadmap to take control of your health and live more active lives. Using the guide is simple. If you're online visit www.wecare.ca/getgoing, where you can click on the chapter links and explore each section of the guide. You'll find useful information on topics from healthy eating to creating SMART goals. A hardcopy is also available free of charge. Order it online or call 1-877-853-1195.

Get Going!

A crucial part of learning to live with advancing age is taking charge of your health. It is never too late to develop healthier habits and lead a more active life, in spite of chronic illness, declining health and increased frailty.

In fact, making decisions early on and taking a proactive approach to your overall well-being, or that of your aging spouse or parent, can help keep you out of critical situations and living well and independently for longer.

Enter the concept of "active aging." Adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the late 1990s, there has been a dramatic increase in the use and acceptance of the term "active aging" in the past decade. The WHO defines active aging as "The process of optimizing opportunities



for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age."

Levels of health change over time and differ from person to person. Only 30–35 per cent of those aged 75 years or older feel that their health is very good or excellent. Changing this is possible, and the key is to get the best advice and develop strategies to make sure that you stay well and your level of life satisfaction remains high.

Stay safe!



Statistics show that there are three main drivers of avoidable hospital visits among seniors:

- 1. Falls**—more than a third of people aged 65 years and older fall each year. Those who fall once are more likely to have another fall.
- 2. Misuse of medications**—causes 25 per cent of seniors visits to the emergency room.
- 3. Complications**—the mismanagement of chronic illnesses can result in unnecessary hospital visits.

You can trust We Care

At We Care, our compassionate caregivers understand the importance of family and of living at home for as long as possible. Our staff are specially trained to help with Alzheimer's and dementia, diabetes, acquired brain injury and end-of-life care. Services include:

- Personal Care
- Home Making
- Companion Services
- Nursing
- Foot Care
- Live-in Care
- Caregiver Relief
- Accompanied Visits

**All this 24 hours a day,
7 days a week, 365 days a year**

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Helping you. Live your life.TM
www.wecare.ca

Keep going!

There's a common misconception that as we age, our health is out of our hands. Nothing could be further from the truth! While we may have little control over our genetics, there are many things that can be done to maintain a vital, active life.

Beating chronic illness

Chronic health conditions usually develop slowly. Nearly 80 per cent of adults older than 65 years have at least one chronic condition, and nearly 70 per cent have two or more coexisting conditions.

A chronic health condition may severely limit a person's ability to meet his or her daily needs. However, with the right help and care, most chronic diseases can be managed and long-term side effects can be prevented.

For instance, 60,000 new cases of diabetes are diagnosed each year and it's estimated that many people have diabetes and do not even know it.

Studies show that approximately 40 per cent of people with diabetes will develop long-term complications, even though many are needless. For example, one in two Canadians with diabetes do not have their blood sugar levels under control.

The WHO estimates that 90 per cent of cases of type 2 diabetes can be prevented by eating a healthy diet, taking regular physical exercise and not smoking. This is an important consideration for you and your loved ones—it's never too late to change your habits. Recent surveys have outlined these seven avoidable risks as the most common causes of type 2 diabetes:

1. High blood pressure
2. High cholesterol
3. Obesity
4. Physical inactivity
5. Heavy drinking
6. Smoking
7. Not eating enough fruits and vegetables.

Fight falls

Falls are a leading cause of injury among seniors in Canada and can have a serious impact on your independence and quality of life. Ontario statistics show that in 2008, falls accounted for 71 per cent of major injury hospitalizations for seniors in trauma centres. The risk of falls becomes more dramatic after the age of 65 years, with the number of incidents peaking at age 72 years for men and 86 years for women.

Taking an "it won't happen to me" approach isn't a smart way to stay safe. Fifty per cent of those

A person's ability to function is far more important than chronological age when describing older adults.

who fall and fracture their hips never return to their previous quality of life. Even worse, statistics say that 20 per cent of those people will die as a result of the hip fracture. It is therefore better to play it safe and take action to reduce your risk of falling.

Thankfully, falls are the most preventable health risk for seniors in Canada. Most occur at home, so consider these easy ways to increase the safety of you and your loved ones and play an active role in falls prevention.

In the kitchen: Have everything within reach so that you don't need to climb. If your shelves are high up, use a step stool with a



safety rail. Wipe up all spills right away to prevent slipping.

In the bathroom: Many falls occur in the bathroom. Although tempting, towel bars and soap dishes should not be used to steady yourself. These fixtures have not been mounted to support a person's body weight and can easily be pulled from the wall. If you find yourself touching these items to steady yourself, it is time to consider a grab bar. While bathing, have someone else at home if possible. That way if you have any difficulty, there will be someone nearby who can help.

On the stairs: Installing handrails on both sides of the stairs can make a big difference. Use a lamp or a light with a switch at the top and bottom of the stairs to make sure stairs are properly lit at all times. Try not to put things on the stairs, for instance toilet paper or books that you're waiting to take up. They're an accident waiting to happen.

Last, consider investing in an alert system. This type of system usually comes with a pendant or wristband with a button. Unfortunately, accidents do occur in the home. But by considering your health needs, you can purchase the right devices to help you maintain your independence and stay safe in your home for a lot longer.

“Active aging” is living well

The true concept of active living does not define individuals strictly by their health status and embraces the idea that it is never too late to improve your health. The **Get Going to Keep Going** guide offers a number of easy actions you can take to maximize the physical and psychological well-being of you or your loved one.

Get eating

The food you normally choose has been part of your lifestyle for a long time. However, as we age our bodies change and so can our eating habits. Studies have shown that smart consumption can slow the signs of aging by keeping arteries soft and elastic, promoting brain functioning, providing important nutrients to the major organs (e.g., heart, brain, kidneys, liver), keeping us healthy and fuelling our bodies for everyday activities.



Get active

Exercise is one of the most important things you can do to maintain your physical and mental health, as well as your quality of life. Walking, stretching and keeping your muscles in good condition can help you maintain your independence.

Before getting started on your new exercise regime, review the We Care Activities Benefits Checklist online at www.wecare.ca

to determine your end goals. Once you have established what you would like to work toward, consult your healthcare professional to work out an appropriate plan to meet your needs.

Get involved

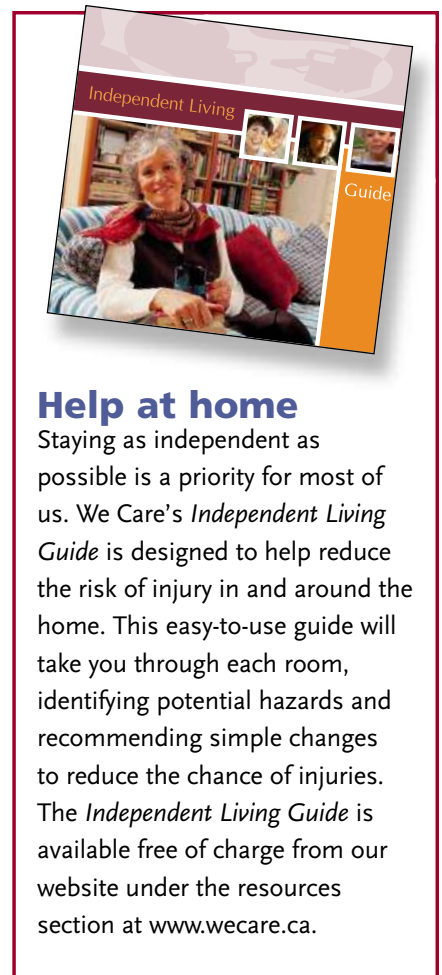
Getting involved in regular volunteer activities is a winning proposition for everyone: You, those you help and the community around you. Whether you are housebound or able to get out and about, reaching out to your community is a great way to stay connected and keep your mental and emotional health strong. It's been shown that people who volunteer for just two hours every week live longer than those who don't. Not to mention that volunteering can lessen the symptoms of chronic pain and heart disease.

Get happy

As we age, it is not uncommon for us to feel afraid, anxious, lonely or even depressed. Life-changing events such as the death of a partner or close friend, physical illnesses and operations, and even certain medications can trigger these feelings. Although depression and loneliness are quite common in later life, depression is not a typical part of aging and loneliness should not be taken lightly. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help.

Get talking

Knowledge is the best medicine, so get to know what medications you are taking and ask your doctor lots of questions. This can be a very important way to stay healthy, prevent complications and slow the progression of your condition. Communicating effectively with your healthcare providers is an essential element in receiving good medical care and the proper use of your medications, which can in turn prevent falls and emergency hospitalizations.



Help at home

Staying as independent as possible is a priority for most of us. We Care's *Independent Living Guide* is designed to help reduce the risk of injury in and around the home. This easy-to-use guide will take you through each room, identifying potential hazards and recommending simple changes to reduce the chance of injuries. The *Independent Living Guide* is available free of charge from our website under the resources section at www.wecare.ca.

Get safe and get help

The old adage 'if you snooze, you lose' is very true, so don't wait when a new symptom arises. Take action while you can to prevent the problem from becoming urgent and critical and get reacquainted with your body signals.

Everyone is different

People are, by nature, a heterogeneous group and as such there is not one optimal formula for aging well. The diversity in activity patterns results from the fact that older adults are navigating through a range of major transitions in their lives, such as retirement, home downsizing, widowhood and/or declining health at varying times.

With a little help and the right attitude, even those with diminished health or a chronic illness can optimize their quality of life by finding the individual activity level and environment that best suits their needs.



Keep track!

Taking your medication appropriately is one of the best ways to minimize health risks. The *We Care Daily Medication Record* is an easy way to make sure you take your medications at the right times each day. Start by recording all your medications and other health information and personalize it with your family history, current health status, tests, procedures and specialists. Simply call 1-877-853-1195 to request a complimentary medication record booklet.

Visit these websites for this information and more on active aging and living well:

www.hc-sc.gc.ca
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca
www.icaa.cc/index.asp
www.uwo.ca/actage
www.vac-acc.gc.ca
www.wecare.ca/getgoing

Ask our experts

Forward your questions or comments, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.

My mother is wobbly on her feet and has recently fallen a few times. Would a cane or a walker help her?

A cane or walker would be helpful, but of course only if she will use it. You should first have your mother assessed for any physical condition that may be causing her to fall. In addition, an assessment by a physiotherapist will be extremely beneficial. The physiotherapist will be able to recommend the best equipment for your mother.

www.wecare.ca/getactive.

I am a 75-year-old man with diabetes, living on my own. How often should I exercise and what should I be doing?

Have you recently been diagnosed with diabetes? Have you met with a diabetes educator who can help you with your diet? Exercise alone won't help if you are unaware of your food intake. You should be exercising as much as your body can handle, but you should first be assessed by your physician to ensure you do not have any outstanding medical issues that need to be addressed. If you have never exercised before, don't start without speaking with your physician first. Many exercise programs are available for people who are suffering from chronic diseases and you should take advantage of the ones that are best suited to your situation.

www.wecare.ca/getactive.

I am finding it hard to cook for just myself now that I'm widowed and tend to just snack. Any suggestions?

It is very difficult to cook for one, especially if you have been used to cooking for two for a while. One suggestion is to spend some time cooking larger portions of foods such as stews, spaghetti sauces and soups, and then freezing them so they are available at a later time for your meals. If you are going to be snacking, ensure you have healthy snacks around, not unhealthy ones. Display fruits and vegetables on a table or countertop for easy access. Do you have friends in a similar situation? Could you take turns cooking for each other? This is a great way to make meals more enjoyable.

www.wecare.ca/geteating.

For a copy of the We Care Get Going to Keep Going guide, call 1-877-853-1195 or visit www.wecare.ca to find the We Care office nearest you.

Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of *Solutions*® magazine, courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location. Visit www.wecare.ca or call 1-877-853-1195.



Send your questions to Julia Sommers at julia_sommers@wecare.ca



Helping you. Live your life.™

1-877-853-1195
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