

## Healthy Aging: Every Day Counts

**O**ur minds and bodies evolve throughout our lifetime, but knowing what is normal and what is not can be important for preventing negative changes and embracing the positive ones. As you get older, you may experience drops in energy, strength, memory, oral health, and libido, and you will likely get wrinkles, gray hair, and gain weight.

You are not alone. Today, older adults (people aged 65 years and older) comprise about 13% of the U.S. population. This number will more than double to about 71.5 million people by 2030. People are living longer now than ever, but aging can be a challenge.

### What can I expect?

There are several measures to determine the quality of your health. Your general health is at risk if you have little physical activity, use tobacco, drink excessive amounts of alcohol, are obese, have high blood pressure, or experience depressive symptoms.

Knowing what to expect can help you be proactive in living a long and healthy life. Some common developments experienced in aging include:

- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Chronic disease
- Constipation
- Decreased bone density
- Depression
- Diabetes, type 2
- Hearing loss
- Heart disease
- Influenza
- Memory loss
- Sexual health problems
- Skin damage
- Tooth decay and recessed gums
- Urinary incontinence
- Vision changes
- Weight gain

### How can I avoid problems?

Many health issues, such as obesity and type 2 diabetes, are avoidable by eating well and remaining active. You can avoid many more health problems by doing the following:

- **Schedule regular checkups.** You should see your primary care doctor at least once a year. He or she will check your general health and make diet and lifestyle recommendations or may prescribe necessary medications. If you are already taking medication prescribed by a specialist or take medication that requires frequent blood work, schedule appointments in advance to keep your health records up-to-date.
- **Get screened.** Screenings, such as colonoscopies, mammograms, and cholesterol tests, can greatly reduce a person's risk of developing chronic diseases and associated disabilities.
- **Get vaccinated.** Even if you received vaccines as a child or as a young adult, you may need one or more vaccines to prevent influenza (flu), shingles, tetanus, whooping cough, and pneumonia. If you are traveling, you may need additional vaccines.
- **Eat a healthful diet.** Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of some cancers and chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Fruits and vegetables provide essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and other substances that are important for good health.
- **Don't smoke.** Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the U.S. In addition, smoking increases your blood pressure and contributes to skin damage, including wrinkling.
- **Manage stress.** Stress can take a toll on your heart. Learning how to deal with stress can keep your heart and your mind healthy.
- **Include physical activity in your daily routine.** Strong evidence shows that regular physical activity, including aerobic and muscle strengthening, is safe and reduces the risk of falls among older

