

Maintaining Independent Living Longer

The value of the simple things in life

What are some of the everyday things people do that help them lead happy, independent lives? They are simple, but they are important and can include working, socializing with friends and family, shopping, running errands, doing household chores, hobbies and volunteer work.

The activities of daily living

There are certain things people need to be able to do to remain independent and stay in their own homes. These are sometimes called the activities of daily living and can include bathing, dressing, using the toilet, feeding oneself, walking, doing light housework, handling money properly, using the phone and more. These activities of daily living are things we often take for granted -- until we have trouble with them for some reason. Then it can get harder to do the everyday things that help us lead happy, independent lives.

Other factors that can affect everyday life

There are other factors that can affect a person's ability to stay independent at home such as:

- Vision
- The ability to understand other people and have them understand you
- Eating right. Getting enough of the right foods.
- Bladder problems
- Feeling sad or depressed too often
- Loss of memory. Feeling confused.
- Understanding medications and using them properly

Some simple tips

Staying healthy is the best way to stay on your own at home. And once again, getting a little help once in a while can make a big difference in your life. Here are some simple tips to help you avoid injury, illness and/or disease.

- Have your blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure can lead to heart problems, the number one health danger in the United States.
- Have your cholesterol checked regularly. High cholesterol can also cause heart problems.
- Don't smoke. Smoking causes a great number of health problems.

- Make sure you eat right and eat regular meals. Eat a balanced, low-fat, low-cholesterol diet. Your doctor or other health care professionals can help you develop a good diet. Not eating regular meals and good foods causes serious health problems.
- Be as active as you safely can. Staying active is good for your health and good for your attitude.
- Understand the medications you take and use them properly. Make sure you talk to your doctor and pharmacist about the possible side effects of any medicine you take. Make sure your doctor and your pharmacist know about all the medications you take -- including over-the-counter drugs. Take your medications only as directed, at the right time, and in just the right doses. If you have any worries or problems, call your doctor.
- Avoid falling. Falls often cause injuries that lead to long-term loss of independence. Things that often cause people to fall and get hurt:

Clutter. Things lying around the floor.

Slippery bathtubs and showers without mats or handrails.

Steps in bad repair or without railings.

Poor lighting. Older people need twice the amount of lighting as a 30-year-old person.

Poor vision.

Wearing bedroom slippers instead of shoes.

How to Ask for Help

Sometimes getting just a little help can make a big difference. If you have trouble with any of the activities of daily living or with any other factors listed, you need to tell someone about it. You can talk to your doctors, friends or family. You may also want to find out about social services and health services in your community.

The important thing is to talk to someone and to not give up - get the help you need. Do not think because something seems like such a simple thing that no one will care or that it is not important. It is important -- because you are important.