



HealthbyDesign

Ageing and Weight Management

Keys to ageing well

- Age and play
- Slow the process
- The battle of the bulge
- The apple versus the pear
- The ten commandments
- The radical ageing theory
- The dangers of dieting
- Make the move to combat weight gain
- Common ageing myths
- Staying lean for life



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Age and play

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing”



Ageing, one of the few certainties of life is an ever-evolving process of change in mind, body and spirit.

As you age, your body goes through a number of changes. Some find that they might put on weight, some might participate in less physical activity and others may see a reduction in strength.

Your lifestyle habits and behaviours can affect how you age. You don’t have any say in how old you *are* but you can change how old you *feel*...it’s up to you.

It’s not just the number of years you live it’s how well you live them!

About Ageing

Ageing is a biological process that happens to everyone.

As you age, you may be more susceptible to:

- Brittle bones
- Increased body fat
- Weight gain or loss
- Increased blood pressure
- Reduced muscle mass and strength
- Reduced coordination and balance
- Reduced joint flexibility and mobility
- Increase risk of various diseases, including heart disease and stroke

It is inevitable that you will encounter some of the effects of ageing but most can be avoided or at least slowed down through healthy lifestyle choices.

Keeping healthy as you age enhances your quality of life.

Simple changes like increasing physical activity and eating healthy foods can have a huge influence on how well you age.

Enjoy a balanced lifestyle and maintain your health as you grow older.

Slow the process

You can slow down the ageing process by avoiding unhealthy behaviours.

Many of the following factors can help accelerate the ageing process. Try to minimise or avoid these behaviours to help slow the rate at which your body and mind age.

- Excess stress
- Smoking
- High fat diet
- Lack of sufficient fruit and vegetables in diet
- Inactive lifestyle
- Lack of adequate sleep
- Excessive exposure to sun



Keep active and slow the rate at which you age.

The battle of the bulge

One of the hardest battles you can face with ageing is the “battle of the bulge”.

Ever wanted to know why you tend to put on weight as you age?

By the time you are 50 years old your daily energy expenditure has reduced by about 25%. 10% of this decline is from a slower BMR and 15% is from a lower energy output.

1. Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR)

Your BMR is the rate at which you burn energy (calories) when you are at rest.

One of the major factors affecting BMR is age. On average, your BMR slows by about 2% per decade after the age of 30.

Therefore as you age you tend to burn less energy and are therefore more prone to weight gain.

2. Energy output

As people grow older there is a trend towards reducing energy output.

Any form of movement or activity “burns” energy. Competing demands such as family and work may cut into your activity time resulting in a lower energy output.

As you age, increase your daily activity levels and moderate the amount of food you eat.

The apple versus the pear

Storing fat around your mid section increases your risk of heart disease.

Excess fat around the abdominal region is a risk factor for diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and some form of cancers. It is very easy to keep excess weight under control through healthy eating and exercise.

An effective way to identify whether you are carrying too much weight around your stomach is to measure your waist to hip ratio. This provides you with a ratio that reflects your waist girth in proportion to your hip girth (waist cm/hip cm).

If your waist to hip ratio is high, this could mean that you need to adopt some strategies to lose weight.

Am I healthy?

- Males 0.94 or below
- Women 0.8 or below



If your Waist-Hip Ratio is above these figures, you are carrying too much abdominal fat and may need to consider a weight loss plan.

A healthy diet low in fat and high in fibre is ideal for keeping your weight under control.

The ten commandments

A healthy balanced diet is essential for weight maintenance and provides your body with the vitamins and minerals it needs to optimally function.

A healthy diet is the key ingredient to keeping your body trim and healthy. Eating the right food not only keeps you looking good on the outside but makes you feel fantastic on the inside.

Here are the dietary recommendations for older Australians from the National Health & Medical Research Council:

1. Enjoy a variety of nutritious foods
2. Eat at least three meals a day
3. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit
4. Eat plenty of grains and pasta
5. Eat a diet low in saturated fat
6. Drink water every day
7. Limit your alcohol intake
8. Choose foods low in salt
9. Enjoy calcium rich foods
10. Eat sugar in moderation

Watch what you put into your body and look and feel great!

The radical ageing theory

Antioxidants help to minimize the effects of ageing.

Free radicals are toxic forms of oxygen produced by the body which damage your tissues and cells, stimulating the ageing process.



Antioxidants are natural compounds that defend the body against free radical damage. Vitamins A, C and E are the most common forms of anti-oxidants and are found naturally in a wide variety of foods.

By eating foods rich in anti-oxidants you give your body the best opportunity to kill damaging free radicals.

Here are some great food sources which contain anti-oxidants.

Vitamin A	Vitamin C	Vitamin E
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green leafy vegetables E.g. broccoli & spinach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green vegetables E.g. capsicum & asparagus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green leafy vegetables E.g. lettuce & cabbage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orange vegetables E.g. carrots & pumpkin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Citrus fruits E.g. oranges & grapefruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant oils E.g. olive oil & grapeseed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yellow fruit E.g. apricots & peach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Red fruits E.g. tomatoes & cherries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grains E.g. nuts & legumes

Keep the ageing process at bay by eating foods high in antioxidants.

The dangers of dieting

Diets are difficult to follow over a long-term period.

Following fad diets tend to result in “yo-yo dieting”. This is where you lose weight over a 2-3 month period while the diet is maintained, but once the diet is finished the weight is regained (and often more!).

The key to successful weight loss is not to make any changes you can't maintain for life.

Begin with small steps and build from there. Aim to maintain a balanced, healthy diet for life; rather than over a short-term period.

View healthy eating as a lifestyle, not simply a temporary phase in your life.

Look for a lifestyle change – not a quick fix.

Make the move to combat weight gain

Regular physical activity is the best way to minimise weight gain as you get older.

Exercise can help maintain your quality of life as well as your independence. Regular physical activity can help minimize the affects of the ageing process on your body.

Benefits of physical activity include:

- Increased life expectancy
- Increased immunity
- Improved mental ability and alertness
- Maintain muscle strength and a healthy body weight
- Build a social network

Exercise can help keep you young in body and spirit.

Exercise tips for ageing gracefully

Find a form of exercise that you enjoy and be active for life.

The only way to motivate yourself to keep active for life is by finding activities that you ENJOY. Make it a social occasion too; involve your family or friends. Don't view exercise as a chore – find ways to make it fun!

Here are some suggestions:

- Ballroom dancing
- Golf
- Beach walking
- Yoga or Tai Chi
- Circuit Classes



Any type of movement will burn energy.

- Walk wherever possible
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Garden on the weekends
- Volunteer to do the grocery shopping

Fill your social calendar with activity related outings. Go for a walk with friends instead of going out for a coffee, or take the kids to the park instead of going to the movies.

Get moving today; make your life as active as possible.

Common ageing myths

There are a number of misconceptions associated with ageing.

1. “Older people are frail and physically weak”

It is more common for people to suffer osteoporosis, or be physically weak later in life. However, this is a *preventable* disease. With regular exercise and a healthy diet, it is possible to maintain your bone health.

2. “I’m too old to....”

It’s never too late to get the benefits of regular exercise or healthy eating. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important for all ages to prevent cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other forms of cancer.

3. “Ageing is inevitable”

Well maybe grey hair and wrinkles are! However, not all signs of ageing are inevitable, such as reduced muscle strength and high blood pressure. Lifestyle factors can help reduce the signs of ageing.

4. “I was a size 12 when I was 21, but now...”

Maintaining a healthy weight does become more difficult as you get older. However, by eating a healthy diet and doing regular physical activity you can keep in control of your weight.

Don’t become a victim to the ageing stereotypes!

Staying lean for life

Staying lean for life can add years to your life and help you get the most out of every day.

Moderate weight gain as you get older doesn’t have a large impact on health and longevity.

Large weight gains however, are associated with increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and some form of cancers.

By being conscious of you’re eating and exercise habits you can win the “battle of the bulge” and achieve your goal of staying lean for life!

Balance your life; participate in regular exercise and enjoy a variety of healthy food!

References: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au, www.makingtheconnection.ca, www.mercksource.com. The information in this publication does not provide medical advice for individual problems. For advice and treatment, consult your doctor or health care professional. Please seek permission from Health By Design if you wish to reproduce this material. ©Health by Design 2005

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