



Plan for a Healthy Retirement

Although most middle-aged people say that after retirement, they hope to be physically active, a great many follow a lifestyle that almost certainly sabotages that goal. Here are a few basic, medically sound strategies for improving your odds of living to retirement age and enjoying it once you get there.

- **Stop Smoking.** Smoking often brings on potentially life-shortening and life-degrading health problems, including cancer, emphysema, heart disease and ulcers. Kicking the habit will very likely have a more positive influence on a smoker's retirement years than any other single act.
- **Control Blood Pressure.** According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, by age 60, 60% of Americans have blood pressure so high that it should be medically treated, and millions more with elevated blood pressure are at substantial increased risk of heart attack and stroke (including the strokes that can cause senility).
- **Clean Up Your Diet.** Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and cut back on fatty, salty, and calorie-laden foods.
- **Watch Your Weight.** One-third of American adults are significantly overweight. As a result, they are at a much higher risk for a number of diseases, including heart attack, cancer and diabetes.
- **Control Cholesterol.** Excess cholesterol (actually, "bad" cholesterol, or LDL) means fatty gunk is building up in your blood vessels. For people in midlife with high LDL cholesterol, a drop of one percent reduces the risk of heart disease by two or three percent. For most people, the best way to bring down cholesterol is to lose weight and exercise fairly strenuously.
- **Get an Annual Physical.** Forty years ago, an annual physical exam rarely did much good, because tests couldn't spot more than a few serious health problems early enough to help. That's no longer true. Some important checks: cholesterol tests, colon examinations, mammograms, pap smears (to detect cervical cancer) and prostate exams.

For more information about planning for a healthy retirement, contact your Work/Life Services.

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