

Own Your Future

Aging Well: **Physical Wellness**

Title Graphic: Physical Wellness

Narrator:

Staying healthy as you age includes physical, mental, social and emotional wellness. To stay physically healthy, you must be proactive about your health, maintaining or even improving your physical wellness through exercise, healthy eating habits and regular health screenings.

Brad Willcox, MD, MSc Healthy Aging Expert:

As we get older, and as this generation of baby boomers moves through life, we have certain expectations about how well we want to feel at older ages, very high expectations. So the issue of healthy aging, remaining in good health right until the end, has become very important. It's about balance and it's about paying attention to what we call the four legs of the chair: the dietary, the physical activity, the psycho-spiritual and the social.

We all know from the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society that you should—you should get your 10 servings a day of veggies and fruits. Now we advocate also a policy called—or a way of thinking about food called caloric density.

And it stems from our research in Okinawa where we know that people in general, whether they're in America or in Japan or wherever, people eat two or three pounds of food a day.

Now your two or three pounds of food could have 1500 calories if you make the right food choices that are water-rich, fiber-rich, lower in fat... You can eat grapes or strawberries or any water-containing vegetable, you can eat all you want. You'll never ever get fat.

You get pretty full, but you'll never get fat. Now, of course, you need a well-balanced diet but that's just an illustration of the concept. We know that olive oil's good for us, but it's got nine calories per gram. These other thing—foods have less than half a calorie per gram. So you can eat almost 20 times as much of these foods as you can of olive oil. So it's about balance. Take your plate, fill it three quarters with plant foods - vegetables, salad, fruits, a nice soup, and then one quarter with a protein. So get educated, get a good diet, physically active—be physically active. Have a plan.

One of the most important things that we can do as we get older, is to engage in regular physical exercise. Physical activity consists of aerobic activity, so you've got to do something at least 3 or 4 times a week to get your heart rate up into what we call its training zone which, for most of us, is at least some heavy walking so that, you know, we can still engage in a conversation, we're not totally breathless.

And then there's strength and then flexibility. Those are the three general components of physical fitness. So strength training for older people is particularly important to avoid things like falls, keep the lower extremities strong.

And then flexibility. If you can't get out of bed in the morning cause you're not flexible enough, then that's certainly an issue as well. So stretching, yoga, those kinds of activities are really important. So you've got your aerobic, you've got your strength, and then stretch. You've got your flexibility. You can do all that in less than hour a day. But you should engage in, at least half an hour every single day, some kind of physical activity.

Yes. If you don't plan for it, then it just happens to you. You're in control of your destiny and you should put it on your "to-do list" everyday. What am I gonna do today to make sure that I'm following my path to healthy aging?

Graphic:

The information provided is intended to help you make informed decisions. We do not provide medical information, advice or recommendations. Consult your physician before making major changes in your lifestyle or health care regimen.