

# rEAP the Benefits

State Employee Assistance Program 1-800-308-4934

## Aging Well: Something We All Want But How Do We Achieve That?

### Focus on Prevention

Unfortunately, many people think diseases are an unavoidable part of aging. In fact, you can take many steps to reduce the chance that you'll encounter these illnesses.

**Minimize your risk factors.** Most diseases and conditions commonly associated with aging have specific risk factors, some of which can be controlled. High cholesterol, smoking, high blood pressure and physical inactivity are all risk factors for heart disease and stroke. Obesity puts you at risk for breast, colon and skin cancer, and both type 2 diabetes and smoking put you at risk for lung cancer.

Your healthcare provider can help you determine your risk factors and what you can do to reduce them.

**Get regular checkups.** As you age, early detection becomes increasingly important. The earlier diseases are caught, the better your chance of successful treatment. That means regular checkups and exams, including regular blood pressure and cholesterol-level tests and annual skin exams. Women should also perform monthly self-exams of their breasts and have annual breast and pelvic exams.

An increasing number of health problems, including high cholesterol and blood pressure levels, can now be dealt with medically. All the common cancers, including breast, prostate, colon and lung, are treated more successfully if they're found early.

*continued on page 2*

## 10 Tips For Family Caregivers

1. Caregiving is a job and respite is your earned right. Reward yourself with respite breaks often.
2. Watch out for signs of depression, and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
3. When people offer to help, accept the offer and suggest specific things that they can do.
4. Educate yourself about your loved one's condition and how to communicate effectively with doctors.
5. There's a difference between caring and doing. Be open to technologies and ideas that promote your loved one's independence.
6. Trust your instincts. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.
7. Caregivers often do a lot of lifting, pushing, and pulling. Be good to your back.
8. Grieve for your losses, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
9. Seek support from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
10. Stand up for your rights as a caregiver and a citizen.

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.Magellan-Health.com/member](http://www.Magellan-Health.com/member). Or, you can always call our 24/7 free and confidential line at 1-800-308-4934.

*Aging Well continued*

Additional preventative steps you can take include wearing sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 15) and getting immunized for flu and pneumonia each year.

**Watching Your Diet, Exercise and Sleep**

A secret formula can help you age well: ***Eat well, exercise regularly and get enough sleep.***

**Eat a healthy diet.** A major component of aging well is maintaining a healthy weight. The top nutritional problem in the United States is obesity; 54 percent of Americans are overweight. Obesity has serious consequences, including decreased life expectancy, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Eating a balanced diet can help you stay healthy as you age by preventing diseases and maintaining the proper weight for your height. You should also monitor your cholesterol levels, drink 8 glasses of water a day and consume no more calories than you need.

**Exercise.** In addition to keeping your heart and bones strong, exercise can help you maintain flexibility, keep your weight down and help you stay alert and active. Older adults who exercise have a better chance of maintaining their ability to live independently and a reduced risk of falling and fracturing bones.

A good goal is to exercise at least three times a week, a 30-minute session of aerobic or weight-bearing exercise that's vigorous enough to work you into a mild sweat; daily stretching exercises are a good idea, too.

Try to be creative about exercise - consider walking rather than using a cart when you play golf or try jogging when you take the dog out in the morning.

**Get enough sleep.** Many people experience changes in their sleep patterns as they age. In fact, as many as 30 percent of people older than 60 complain about sleeping poorly. Sleep deprivation can lead to stress, increased vulnerability to disease and other health problems. Make getting enough sleep a priority. If you're having trouble sleeping, see your doctor.

**Staying Active**

The final step in your plan for aging well should be staying active. Older people who suffer from isolation or boredom are more likely to be depressed and sick, and may even live shorter lives.

Staying active means different things for different people. Some people need a bustling social network. If you fit this description, consider the fact that as you age, you'll most likely find that your social circle shrinks – what can you do to replace it? Or you may be someone who needs hobbies that challenge you and keep you stimulated. **Consider these activities:**

- Gardening
- Volunteering
- Taking classes
- Traveling

Spend time thinking about what interests you. Maintaining a sense of connection to the world around you is a critical aspect of successful aging.

**Employee Assistance Program is here to assist you on a variety of topics including:**

- Stress
- Depression and anxiety
- Workplace concerns
- Alcohol and drug dependencies
- Grief and loss
- Financial issues
- Legal consultation
- And more

EAP counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance. The toll free phone number is 1-800-308-4934. Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.MagellanHealth.com/member](http://www.MagellanHealth.com/member).