

ELDERSHIRE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

WELLNESS PROGRAM: AGING WELL INFORMED AdvantAge – a Resource Guide for Healthy Aging From: WorkCare Press

This program is based on the 330 page book published by WorkCare Press. It is intended to be used in connection with the Healthy Approaches website program and the materials associated therewith. A key element to its success will be trained mentors in each Eldershire Community working on a daily basis with all the residents of the community and others invited to join in.

I. Introduction:

The quality of your aging experience – physically, mentally, and socially – depends on the choices you make throughout your life. Experts agree that adopting healthful lifestyle habits contributes more to the quality of your life and your overall health than your genetic makeup. While scientists continue to unravel the secrets of how we age, aging is still defined simply as “the organic process of growing older and showing the effects of increasing age.” What we do know is that people who make wise lifestyle choices can slow down normal physiological and mental decline as they age.

The odds of living a long and well life are in your favor when you make important habits such as these part of your lifestyle:

- Staying socially active and engaged
- Staying physically active
- Not smoking
- Watching your weight
- Managing stress
- Controlling cholesterol and blood pressure
- Using medications wisely
- Getting recommended health screenings and immunizations
- Seeking and getting appropriate medical care

Combining a healthy attitude with healthy actions is a dynamic way of living life to the fullest. Walter M. Bortz, M.D., a respected gerontologist, and his colleagues have shown that when one lives “well,” the measured “decline” as one ages is only about one-half a percent per year after age thirty. This compares with a two percent decline for those who smoke, are overweight, and are inactive. The goal is to reduce or eliminate the gradual deterioration of physical and mental abilities which leads to frailty and loss of independence.

II. The Program:

The program is based on the Resource Guide book *Informed AdvantAGE*; the www.heathyapproaches.com; a variety of information and suggestions from the myriad sources dealing with health care and aging well; from peer support systems; from in person presentations by experts; and from the guidance of community mentors who are specially trained and who stay informed by new developments.

As primarily a self-care guide, the program places responsibility on each person to get informed, create a program for wellness, and follow it. And, because we are based on and in community, many support elements are brought to bear to help each individual on his or her path to practice positive lifestyle habits toward the end of well-being. See the attached definition of well-being as a tool for overall guidance.

In the *LifeCourse: Steps for a Longer Life* Section of the Program, for each section, there are listed:

Ideas That Work

Benefits

Resources

Summary of Sections:

1. **Walking for Exercise:** Whether you want to lose weight, help your heart, or help manage health risks such as diabetes and hypertension, walking is perhaps the best way to add regular exercise to your life. Walking is inexpensive, requires little equipment, can be done almost any where, and is good for young and old alike. “The most important organ in an older person is not the heart of lungs, but the legs.” Ideas that work include:
 - a. Use the proper footwear
 - b. Use proper form
 - c. Map your course
 - d. Reflective clothing
 - e. Consult your doctor if you have been inactive or have a medical problem
 - f. Carry an ID and a cell phone
 - g. Buddy up!
 - h. Have a regular schedule
 - i. Add variety
 - j. Start slowly and build to 30 minutes daily
 - k. Move it to lose it (60 to 90 minutes for weight loss results)
 - l. Refresh yourself and use sunscreen
 - m. Have fun!
 - n. Reward yourself and your walking group.
 - o. Use a pedometer to see how to get to 10,000 steps a day.

2. **Other Fitness Activities:** Daily physical activity may include manual labor; household chores such as house cleaning, raking leaves, and

gardening; participating in a structured fitness program; or enjoying a favorite recreational or sports activity. For most people, engaging in a combination of activities will not only provide health benefits, but also improve their overall fitness level.

The chart below rates popular fitness activities on a scale from one to ten, with ten having the most benefit (except the risk of injury column).

Activity	Aerobic Fitness	Muscle Toning	Flexibility	Weight Control	Risk of Injury
Aerobic dancing	6	7	7	6.5	5-7
Skiing*	8	7	7	9	5-7
Cycling*	6	6	3	6	5-9
Golf (walking)	4	5	6	4	8
In-line skating	5	6	6	5	8
Jogging	8.5	6	3	8	7
Rowing*	5.5	8	3	7	5
Singles tennis	6	6	7	6	6-7
Swimming	8	7	7-9	8	3
Walking (brisk)	5	5	4	5	3
Weight training	3	8-10	6	5	7
Yoga	1.5	6	8-10	2	2

- Includes both stationary equipment and outdoor activity. Outdoor activity increases the chance of injury.

3. **Physical Activity for Special Health Conditions:** Physical activity is not only a major factor in the prevention of disease, but it can be a significant factor in the management of a chronic health problems. The following chart provides some initial guidance:

Health Condition	Type of Activity	Comments/Restrictions
<i>Rheumatoid Arthritis</i>		
-Reduces joint stiffness -Improves range of motion	-Hand and wrist exercises -Flexibility exercises -Strengthening exercises -Tai Chi -Swimming and water exercises	-Don't work joints that are inflamed -Try finger flexibility exercises while taking a warm bath
<i>Osteoarthritis</i>		
-Improves range of motion -May reduce joint degeneration	-Move your joint through the full range of motion daily -Do water exercises for knee and hip problems.	-Avoid standing for extended extended periods if you have knee or hip problems. Use a Cane opposite the affected joint to help reduce discomfort during flare-ups.
<i>Claudication (leg pain upon physical exertion)</i>		
-Helps reduce leg pain -Improves endurance	-Short bouts of walking or cycling before pain begins. Try to work up to 30-40 minutes of continuous walking or cycling.	-Stop and rest if you have pain
<i>Diabetes</i>		
-Helps regulate blood glucose -Helps reduce body weight -Helps manage other risk Factors (e.g. high blood Pressure and cholesterol)	-Walking -Cycling -Swimming -Dancing -Flexibility exercises	-Check with your doctor and and dietician before starting an exercise program. -Beware of blisters or other skin problems, especially on your feet
<i>Heart Disease (Coronary)</i>		
-Helps manage weight -Lowers cholesterol -Improves endurance -Reduces risk of heart attack or its recurrence -Helps manage stress -Helps manage blood pressure -Reduces blood clotting	-Walking -Cycling -Jogging -Flexibility exercises, especially yoga -Tai Chi	-Be sure you are cleared by your doctor before you begin an exercise program, especially if you've had a heart attack or are being treated for angina. -Be aware of signs of heart attack -Monitor your heart rate
<i>High Blood Pressure</i>		
-Helps manage weight -May reduce medication need -Helps reduce stress	-Walking -Swimming -Cycling -Flexibility exercises, -Tai Chi	-Avoid weight training, isometrics, rowing, and other activities that cause straining and breath-holding during exertion -Monitor blood pressure after exercise

Lung Disease (Chronic)

-Improves endurance
-Reduces symptoms
(shortness of breath)

-Walking
-Cycling
-Flexibility exercises (yoga)
Leg exercises

-Be sure you're cleared by your doctor before beginning
-Use prescribed medications
-Start at a low intensity and gradually build up

Osteoporosis:

-Reduces bone loss
-Strengthens bones
-Improves posture
-Improves balance

-Walking
-Dancing
-Flexibility exercises
-Strengthening back and Abdominals
-Tai Chi

-Avoid heavy lifting
-Be careful of areas that increase your chances of falling
-Maintain good posture
-Use a support or walker if you have trouble keeping your Balance

Stroke:

-Helps rehabilitate Weakened limbs
-Improves balance
-Improves recovery

-Walking (assisted/unassisted)
-Seated exercises that improve strength/flexibility
-Tai Chi

-Be sure to consult your doctor and/or physical therapist
-Monitor your blood pressure

Varicose Veins:

-Improves function of veins

-Walking
-Cycling
-Leg exercises

-Watch skin condition

4. Maintaining Your Balance: Falls can be serious, especially for those who are frail. Injuries from falls can limit your ability to lead an active, independent life. There are many things you can do to take preventive action to improve your balance, which will help prevent or minimize injury.

a. How's Your Balance?

- i. To find your balance point keep your eyes on a fixed point, raise one knee slightly so you are standing on one foot. Stretch your arms straight out to the sides, parallel with the ground, if you can. Once you are comfortable, take note of this balance point. You can use other arm positions if the above is not comfortable (e.g. hands on hips, arms raised in a "V" position, or arms at your sides).

b. A Balanced Workout:

1. *Heel to Toe:* Stand tall with your feet slightly apart and arms out for balance. Raise your right leg straight out in front of you with your foot just above the floor. Then, alternate touching your heel to the floor and touching your toe to the floor. Repeat up to ten times. Relax and repeat this sequence with your left leg.
2. *Flamingo:* Stand tall with your feet slightly apart and arms out for balance. Raise your left knee and place

your left foot on the inside of your right calf. Hold for a count of three. Slowly slide your left foot to the floor. Repeat the sequence with your right foot. Alternate legs up to ten times. If this is difficult at first, hang on to a chair to start out.

3. *Tai Chi*: An increasing number of elders are turning to Tai Chi, a Chinese practice that combines slow, rhythmic movements with active meditation. Not only does Tai Chi promote good balance, but its slow, deliberate movements improve range of motion and motor control.
4. *Other Actions*:
 - a. Have your vision and hearing tested regularly and corrected properly.
 - b. Check on the side effects of the medicines you are taking.
 - c. Limit your intake of alcohol. Remember that many older people become more sensitive to the effects of alcohol as they age.
 - d. Use caution in getting up: (before breakfast, after eating, lying down, or resting) – low blood pressure may cause dizziness at these times.
 - e. Watch the temperature in your home. Prolonged exposure to cold temperature may cause a drop in body temperature which can lead to dizziness and falling.
 - f. Use an aid (cane, walking stick, or walker) to help maintain balance on uneven or unfamiliar ground. Use special caution in walking outdoors on wet or icy pavement.
 - g. Wear supportive shoes with rubber soles or low heels. Avoid wearing smooth-soled slippers or wearing only socks on stairs and waxed floors. Active walkers may want to avoid wearing shoes with thick midsoles as they feel unstable.
 - h. Maintain a regular program of exercise to improve strength and muscle tone, especially in leg and abdominal muscles. Keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments more flexible.
 - i. For further guidance see: www.ncoa.org; and www.nia.nih.gov. Also see *Dare to Be 100* by Walter M. Bortz II, M.D. (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996).

5. Sleeping Well: A common misconception about sleep is that you need less sleep as you grow older. In fact, the eight hour average per night does not change with age, but the ability to get restful sleep may become more difficult as you age. There are some *seventy* types of sleep disorders such as insomnia, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, and restless leg syndrome. Each person's sleep needs are different and why we sleep and the cause of many sleep problems is still a mystery. A good gauge for how much sleep you need is simply how you feel during your waking hours. Are you tired? Do you feel run-down? Do you have less energy? If you do, these may be indications of a sleep problem. Of all the sleep disorders, insomnia and sleep apnea are the most common.

a. *Insomnia:* Insomnia is defined as trouble falling asleep, waking in the middle of the night, or waking up early. It can be related to stress, medications, mental or emotional problems such as anxiety and depression, medical conditions that cause pain such as arthritis, or poor pre-sleep habits such as consuming alcohol or caffeine too close to bedtime. Insomnia can be temporary, occasional, or chronic. Some self-care tips include:

- i. Establish a set bedtime and rising time.
- ii. Avoid long naps (although a 15 minute nap can be helpful in the early afternoon).
- iii. Work out. Moderate physical activity helps older adults improve their sleep – but not within 2-4 hours before bedtime.
- iv. Avoid caffeine and nicotine up to 6 hours before bedtime.
- v. Avoid alcohol and other liquids up to 6 hours before bedtime – particularly for men with prostate problems.
- vi. Check out drug interactions that may keep you awake or change sleep patterns.
- vii. Manage stress.
- viii. Relax before bedtime.
- ix. Avoid heavy snacks (food high in protein, fat, or sugar, or foods that are acidic). A light carbohydrate snack (e.g a banana or bagel) helps stimulate the body's natural sleep hormone (melatonin).
- x. Reserve your bed for sleep and intimacy. Avoid making your bed your TV or reading lounge chair.
- xi. Make your sleeping area cozy (comfortable temperature, free of excess light and noise).
- xii. Move the clock out of direct view.
- xiii. Don't just lie there if you are awake a while. Get up, move around, do something quiet until you feel sleepy.
- xiv. Sleep assessment: If your sleep problem persists after trying a variety of traditional treatments and actions, consider a sleep assessment, that typically includes a detailed health

history and medical examination as well as an evaluation of your sleep habits and daily routines.

- xv. Treatment plan: When a sleep medication is prescribed, it usually is part of an integrated approach that includes behavioral and self-care techniques. This method addresses your immediate need to get a good night's sleep while looking to improve your sleep habits and other factors (e.g. stress) that may affect your ability to get quality sleep.

b. *Sleep Apnea*: This problem is characterized by loud snoring with interrupted breathing where the person suddenly catches his or her breath because the airway closes after inhaling. Then, as oxygen levels are reduced, the person unconsciously wakes up and "catches his/her breath." This cycle continues many times a night and interrupts the sleep cycle. This problem is more common in men than women. Sleep apnea places you at a higher risk for cardiovascular problems. Causes include extra tissue around the windpipe, abnormalities in the nose and throat, and being overweight.

- i. Sleep laboratory evaluation: A clinical sleep evaluation in a laboratory setting can identify obstructive sleep apnea. (See below for symptoms). While you sleep in a controlled environment, clinicians will observe your physiological signs (brain wave patterns, respiration, heart rate, and muscle tension). Based on test results, a treatment plan will be recommended.
- ii. Treatments: The most often prescribed treatment is a continuous positive airway pressure machine (CPAP). This device pumps a continuous flow of air through a device (there are a variety of these) through the nose, keeping the airway open). Using the CPAP every night helps reduce the stress on the cardiovascular system. In some cases, surgery may be recommended to shrink or remove extra tissue or to correct other physical abnormalities of the nose, jaw, or throat.
- iii. See also: www.aasmnet.org (American Academy of Sleep Medicine) and www.bettersleep.org (Better Sleep Council).

6. **Eating Well**: Eating a healthful diet is one of the most important ways to live a long and healthy life. Following a few simple nutritional guidelines can help you lower your risks for disease, maintain your ideal body weight, and have more energy. It is a most helpful ally on the road to well-being. There is a continuing dialogue and debate going on relating to food items, habits, nutrition, what to eat and what not to eat. A balanced diet plays a major role in the prevention of many chronic illnesses such as cancer, liver disease, osteoporosis, and alcoholism. There are some areas of general

agreement that just make sense for you to work on to incorporate into your daily eating regime:

a. *Regular physical activity* is the handmaiden to good eating habits in enhancing overall well-being. To achieve desired results and long-term benefits, both are crucially necessary.

b. *Shop wisely*: As you fill your grocery cart, think about your health and well-being with each item added. If you don't buy high-fat, high-calorie food and snacks, they won't be in your house to tempt you. If you do have the "good stuff" it will be there to eat. Some reminders:

- i. Take a shopping list to avoid impulse buying
- ii. Avoid shopping when you are hungry
- iii. Shop the outside walls of super markets – that's usually where the fresh vegetables, fruit, dairy products, fish and meat are. The inside aisles usually hold processed foods, snacks, soft drinks, canned items, and other packaged food you should limit.
- iv. Select fruits and vegetables for vitamins, antioxidants, potassium, and fiber. Aim for about four and a half cups per day (5 to 13 servings). Choose from a variety of dark green leafy vegetables, yellow or orange fruits or vegetables, and legumes.
- v. Select whole grains for fiber, soluble vitamins, and minerals. Try for three ounces of products made with whole grain wheat, oats, corn, and barley. Other options include popcorn, brown rice, buckwheat, and quinoa.
- vi. Choose low-fat or fat-free milk and dairy products for calcium and vitamin D. Experts recommend three cups of yogurt, milk, or cheese every day.
- vii. To get monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, choose olive and canola oils and nuts. Avoid saturated fats and cholesterol found in animal fats, organ meats such as liver, high-fat meats (hot dogs and luncheon meats), and full-fat dairy products. Avoid trans fats found in processed baked goods, crackers, and stick margarine.
- viii. Unrefined carbohydrates provide a good source of energy. They can be found in many fruits and vegetables. Avoid refined carbohydrates (white rice, white potatoes, white bread, pasta, and crackers made from white flour). Foods made from white flour and sugar are generally high in calories and saturated and trans fats. They are high-glycemic carbohydrates that cause rapid increases in blood sugar that, in turn, trigger cravings for more carbohydrates, causing you to eat more than you otherwise would.
- ix. Get 25-35 grams per day of soluble fiber to provide protection against cancer and heart disease, promote

- regularity, and lower cholesterol. Choose plenty of fruits, whole grains, fresh or frozen vegetables, beans, and nuts.
- x. Limit salt to one teaspoon or less a day. Salt-cured, smoked, and nitrite-cured foods (e.g. bacon, hot dogs) and sodium laden processed foods and snacks can add up much too quickly. Potassium-rich foods (sweet potatoes, bananas, green leafy vegetables) help blunt the effect of salt on blood pressure.
 - xi. Moderate alcohol consumption has been shown to be healthful for most people. Moderate relates to two drinks per day for men, one per day for women. Heavy use of alcohol increases the risk of cancer, liver disease, osteoporosis, and alcoholism.
 - xii. Breakfast is the most important meal of your day. Try whole-grain cereal, low-fat yogurt or cottage cheese, or a whole grain bagel with a low-fat spread, along with a piece of fruit instead of high-fat eggs, bacon, and doughnuts. If you don't like regular breakfast foods, try lunch or dinner food instead.
 - xiii. No matter where you eat lunch, you can make it nutritious and enjoyable. By making it lower in refined carbohydrates (white bread, cookies) it will help you avoid mid-afternoon sluggishness. Try the salad bar, avoiding heavy dressings high in fat. Select main dishes that are broiled or steamed instead of fried. Include a vegetable dish and/or a salad. If you pack lunch, include a vegetable such as celery or carrots; a turkey, chicken, or tuna sandwich on whole-grain bread, a piece of fruit, fig bars or graham crackers.