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Benefits News

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Aging with resilience

We all grow older. But we don't have to feel old. It all comes down to resilience and making good choices today. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficulties. Building resilience, staying active, and nurturing your mind and body now can help your health and happiness in the future.

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Resilience is the key to aging well

Resilience is an inner strength that helps you bounce back after stressful situations. When you are resilient, you may recover more quickly from setbacks or difficult changes, including illness. Resilience can be especially important as you age.



People who are resilient tend to be healthier and happier throughout their lives.¹



People who are resilient often have a positive outlook on life. This helps them handle pain or stress better than someone who is less hopeful. You may still feel angry, sad, or worried during tough times. But you won't feel so overwhelmed. You'll be less likely to give up and more likely to cope with stressful situations in healthy ways.

Building resilience takes time. It requires making gradual, small changes in your life and careful self-evaluation. You may be able to begin this shift on your own. A counselor or therapist can help if you need support.

Build resilience today to age well in the future

Here are some tips for building resilience.

1

Be grateful for the good around you. Even in the worst of times, listing the smallest things you're grateful for each day can make a big difference.

2

Recognize that change is normal. View change as a challenge or opportunity. When things change, examine how and why you feel the way you do. You can't always change what happens, but you can learn to manage feelings and reactions. Give yourself time to figure it out.

3

See the big picture. We often focus on the hard times and forget to see how they impact our overall lives. Difficult experiences can teach you about yourself. Focus on what you can learn from these experiences. Apply these lessons to your life as you move forward.

4

Seek out people who make you feel better. Develop a strong support network. Build relationships that are solid and loving with your family and friends. Help them in their times of need and let them help you in yours.

5

Believe in yourself. Do things to gain self-confidence and build self-esteem. For example, list the things you've achieved in your life or that make you proud. Look at all aspects of a problem and brainstorm solutions. Ask friends for suggestions.

6

Take good care of yourself. Get outdoors. See a movie. Have a good meal. Do things that you enjoy. Know what's important to you. Take time to relax your mind and body through techniques such as deep breathing and meditation. You can use online videos, books, or a teacher to guide you.

7

Talk about how you're feeling. It's easy to get caught up in what's wrong and get stuck feeling negative. Talk with a trusted friend or professional who can provide an outside perspective. Talking about your emotions out loud can help you feel better.^{2, 3}



What is healthy aging?



For many people, healthy aging is being healthy enough to keep doing what they enjoy. “Aging well means living a rich, meaningful life,” says Theresa A. Allison, a geriatrician and professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.⁴





How you feel tomorrow can depend on today.



Resilience plays a big role in aging. These other factors also play a part in your health as you get older:

- Family history
- Eating healthy
- Staying physically fit
- Getting enough sleep
- Going for regular health check-ups
- Caring for your mental health
- Staying connected with others
- Participating in activities that give you a sense of purpose
- Maintaining a positive outlook
- Engaging your brain by learning new things
- Your access to health care, your income, and your race

How to feel your best as you age^{4, 5, 6, 7}

Tip	Why?	How?
 <p>If you use tobacco, try to quit</p>	Quitting tobacco can lessen the risk of cognitive decline and improve your health and quality of life. ⁵	Team up with a coach who can give you tools and resources to improve your chances of success. Click one of these links to get started: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kaiser members: Freedom from Tobacco• Moda Health and Providence Health members: Quit for Life
 <p>Keep moving</p>	Being active is one of the most important things you can do for your health at any age. Physical activity keeps your body strong, and it helps with how you feel.	Try activities such as chair yoga, walking, gardening, water aerobics, or working out at the gym. The important thing is to be active almost every day. Learn more.
 <p>Stay connected</p>	Studies show people with strong social support are happier, healthier, and live longer. ⁴	Protect or improve your emotional health by connecting with friends, family, and the community. Try to keep stress at a minimum.
 <p>Activate your brain⁶</p>	Keep your brain active and challenged to help your memory and mental sharpness. According to Daniel Levitin, Ph.D., psychologist and neuroscientist, aging well includes “being willing to try new things and new ways of doing things.”	Learn or do something new and different. Plot out a new hike using a trail map. Brush up on a foreign language. Attend an educational workshop or learn a new card game.

Tip	Why?	How?
 <p>Find meaningful activities⁶</p>	<p>Think of things you're good at and care about, then do them. Studies show that people who find meaning in their lives are happier and live longer.</p>	<p>Join a golf group. Take up gardening. Pick up the guitar. Try volunteering.</p>
 <p>Eat healthy foods</p>	<p>"Eat a variety of foods and eat more plants than you probably are eating," says Daniel Levitin.⁶</p>	<p>Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein, and low-fat dairy foods. Avoid salty and highly processed food.</p>
 <p>Get enough sleep⁴</p>	<p>Sleep allows your body to remove toxins. It also allows your brain to repair damaged connections.</p>	<p>Aim for getting at least seven hours of sleep per night.</p>
 <p>Seek help when you need it</p>	<p>Managing depression can help improve your overall health and quality of life.</p>	<p>If you think you may be depressed, reach out for help. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is confidential and available 24/7.</p> <p>Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canopy EAP (except OSU)— 800-433-2320 • Lyra Health EAP (OSU only)— 877-235-7812

How physical activity keeps you young





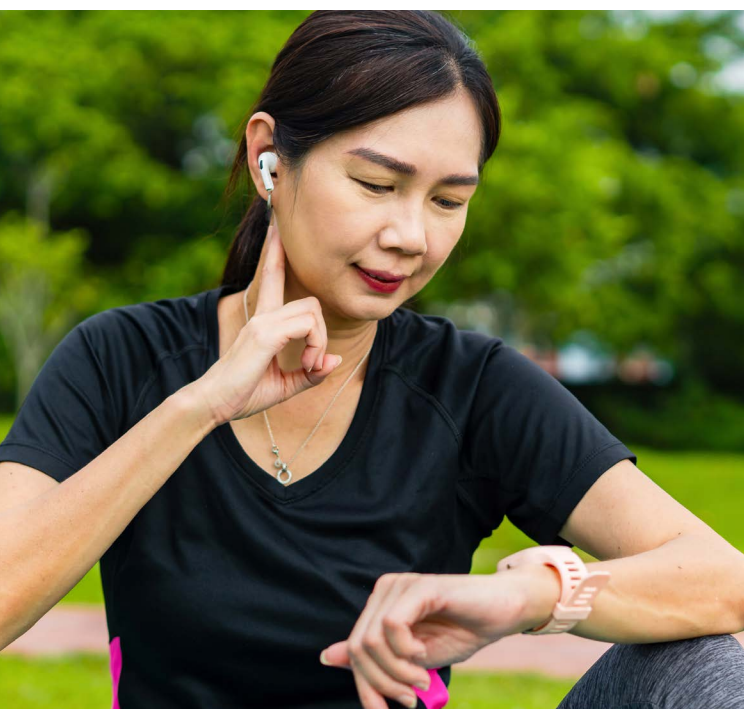
Many people become less active as they age. In addition to resilience, keeping in motion has real benefits. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health.”⁸

Physical activity doesn’t have to be hard or intense. There are lots of health benefits from a moderate amount of physical activity. Try doing one or more of these exercises. Your future self will thank you.

“Being physically active can improve your brain health, help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve your ability to do everyday activities.”⁸

Type of exercise	Benefits	Examples	Frequency ^{8, 9, 10, 11}
 Aerobic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improves heart health• Gives you more energy	Brisk walking, swimming, water aerobics	20 minutes per day
 Balance exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduces your risks of falls when combined with strengthening and flexibility exercises	Yoga and Tai Chi	Three times per week

Type of exercise	Benefits	Examples	Frequency ^{8, 9, 10, 11}
 <p>Flexibility and stretching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps make everyday tasks easier—like tying your shoes and reaching for a shelf • Allows you to move your muscles and joints through a full range of motion 	Dancing, chair yoga	Twice per week
 <p>Strengthening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps you maintain muscle and strengthens bones • Helps protect knees and other joints 	Lifting weights, using resistance bands	20 minutes each session, three times per week



Stay safe

It's important to know when to stop exercising and when to call your doctor. When you exercise, it's normal to have some minor muscle and joint soreness. But other signs may point to something more serious. These include chest pains, dizziness, or unable to catch your breath. Work with your doctor to know when to stop and call.⁹

What is the mind-body connection?



According to Psychology Today, “people who tend to experience more frequent positive emotions live longer.” Also, “highly optimistic people have at least 50% greater odds of living to the age of 85 compared to people with low optimism.”¹²



Your mind and body are powerful allies. How you think can affect how you feel. And how you feel can affect your thinking.

An example of this mind-body connection is how your body responds to stress. Constant worry and stress can cause headaches, pain, stomach problems, and high blood pressure.

On the other hand, constant pain or a health problem like heart disease can affect your emotions. You might become depressed, anxious, and stressed. This could affect how well you treat and manage the issue.

Having resilience and a positive outlook on life might help you better handle pain or stress. And it can help you stay healthier than someone who is less hopeful.

How do your thoughts and feelings affect your health?

Your brain produces chemicals and proteins that can improve your health. These substances include endorphins, which are natural painkillers. And there’s gamma globulin, which strengthens your immune system.

Research shows that what your brain produces depends in part on your thoughts, feelings, and expectations.¹³ Let's say you're sick and...



You have positive thoughts...

If you keep a positive attitude and you believe that you'll get better, your brain is likely to produce chemicals that will boost your body's healing power.



Or you have negative thoughts...

Negative thoughts and emotions can keep your brain from producing some of the chemicals that help your body heal.

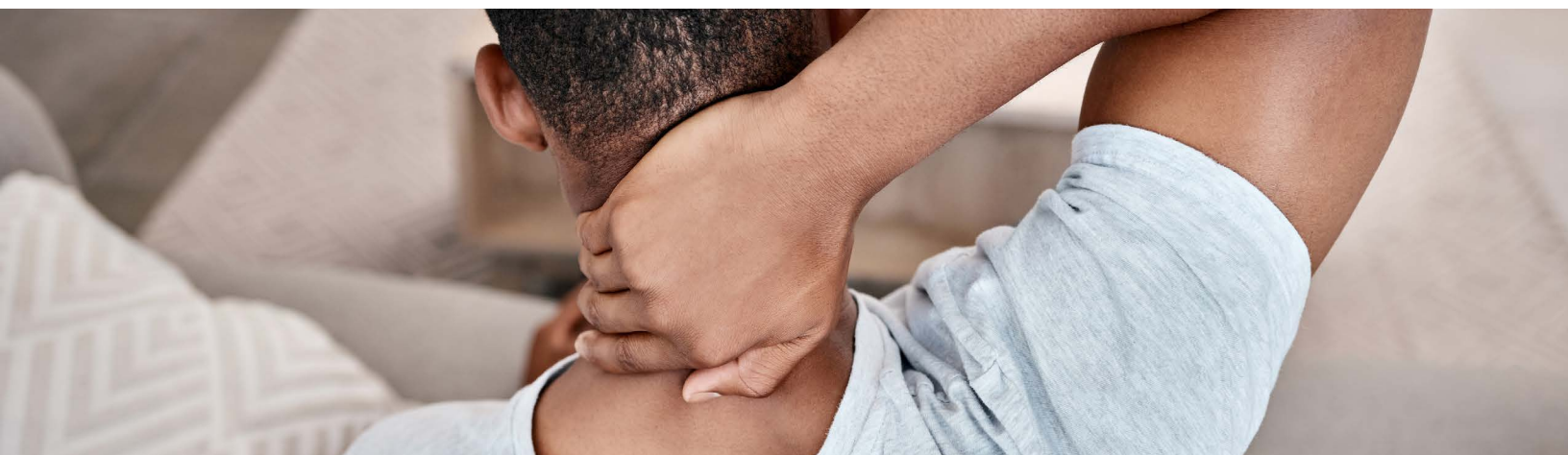
Some illnesses are beyond your control. But your thoughts and state of mind are resources that can help you feel better.¹³

How does stress affect you?

When you're stressed, your body responds as though you're in danger. It makes hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster, and give you a burst of energy. This is called the fight-or-flight stress response. If the stress is over quickly, your body goes back to normal, and no harm is done.

But if stress happens too often or lasts too long, it can have harmful effects. Long-term stress can make you more likely to get sick, and it can make symptoms of some diseases worse. If you tend to tense up when you're stressed, you may develop neck, shoulder, or low-back pain. Stress is also linked to high blood pressure and heart disease.

In addition, stress harms your emotional health. It can make you moody, tense, or depressed. Your relationships may suffer, and you may not perform as well at work or school.¹³



Ways to nurture your mind and body



We all experience stressful times. It's a normal part of life. Here are some ideas to build resilience, help or improve your mind and body, and live a calmer life.¹⁴

Deep breathing This is one of the best ways to lower stress. When you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body.

Guided imagery Imagine yourself in a setting that helps you feel calm and relaxed. Stay there for a while.

Mindfulness Focus your attention on things that are happening in the present. The idea is to notice what's happening without trying to change it.

Progressive muscle relaxation Tense and relax each muscle group (head, neck, shoulders, back, arms, stomach, butt, legs, feet) one at a time. Start with the muscles in your face and work down your body. If you have trouble falling asleep, this method may also help with sleep problems.

Laughter Watch a funny movie or play a board game with friends. Laughter and humor make life richer and healthier. Laughter increases creativity, reduces pain, and speeds healing.

Hygge^{15, 16} Seek ways to add hygge to your life. Hygge (pronounced hue-gah or hoo-gah) is a Danish term. It means creating an atmosphere of coziness and comfort in your physical surroundings and your emotional state.



- Sipping hot cocoa with friends while sitting around a campfire
- Lounging under a fuzzy blanket and reading a good book
- Wearing a cozy sweater while watching the colorful leaves fall to the ground

Hygge is a big part of Danish culture. Denmark consistently ranks as one of the world's happiest countries. So, maybe they're onto something with hygge.



What to expect as you get older






Changes as you get older are usually gradual. Certain physical changes are common. Here's what to expect, why it's important, and what you can do to maintain an active life:¹⁷

Body part or function	What it means and why it's important	What you can do
 Bladder and urinary tract	<p>Your bladder becomes less elastic as you age. This can cause you to urinate more often.</p> <p>Weakened bladder and pelvic floor muscles might cause you to lose bladder control. There are medications and over-the-counter products to help with this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use the toilet more often• Maintain a healthy weight• Avoid caffeine, acidic foods, alcohol, and soda• Try Kegel exercises
 Bones, joints, and muscles	<p>With age, bones can become less dense and strong. Muscles lose strength and flexibility.</p> <p>Weak bones, joints, and muscles can affect your balance and coordination. Staying active can help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take calcium and vitamin D supplements, as needed• Do weight-bearing exercises each day, such as walking, jogging, tennis, climbing stairs, and weightlifting

Body part or function	What it means and why it's important	What you can do
 <p>Cardiovascular system</p>	<p>Your blood vessels and arteries can stiffen, making your heart work harder.</p> <p>It can lead to high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get moderate exercise each day, like walking or swimming • Eat healthy foods • Avoid tobacco • Manage your stress • Get enough sleep
 <p>Digestive system</p>	<p>As you age, the structure of your large intestine can change. This can lead to constipation. Diet and using over-the-counter products can help.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat high-fiber foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains • Drink plenty of water • Exercise daily
 <p>Ears</p>	<p>You might experience some hearing loss. It may be hard to hear high pitches or a conversation in a crowded room.</p> <p>Hearing loss can cause a sense of isolation, depression, and anxiety.</p> <p>Using hearing aids can help you stay more engaged, which is important for your mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular hearing exams • Use earplugs around loud noises • If you begin to experience hearing loss, consider getting hearing aids
 <p>Eyes</p>	<p>You might have trouble focusing on objects close up. Your eyes might be more sensitive to glare. You might develop cataracts.</p> <p>Protecting your vision can help you see more clearly throughout your life.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular vision exams • Protect your eyes while outdoors • Wear sunglasses with UV protection and a hat to reduce glare

Body part or function	What it means and why it's important	What you can do
 <p>Memory and thinking skills</p>	<p>Your brain changes as you age. This can affect your ability to think and remember clearly.</p> <p>Slower response time can be a good thing, however. The longer it takes you to think through an issue, the more likely you'll come up with a good solution.¹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise daily • Eat fruits, vegetables, fish, lean meat, and chicken • Keep your mind active by reading, playing word games, or learning a new hobby • Stay socially connected
 <p>Menopause (starting around age 50)¹⁹</p>	<p>If you're a female, menopause is the point in your life when you stop having menstrual cycles. After one year without a cycle, you've reached menopause.</p> <p>As you age, your body produces less estrogen. Estrogen is important for your heart, metabolism, thyroid, and strong bones. Hormone replacement therapy can help replace your body's natural estrogen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid smoking • Exercise daily • Eat healthy foods • Manage your stress • Get enough calcium and vitamin D • Ask your doctor if hormone replacement therapy is a good option for you



Body part or function	What it means and why it's important	What you can do
 <p>Mental health</p>	<p>Generally, emotional intelligence and social intelligence improve with age. With experience, you gain understanding and wisdom.</p> <p>You also can become less anxious and more resilient.¹⁸</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay socially active • Get involved in your community
 <p>Skin</p>	<p>Skin becomes less thick and elastic with age.</p> <p>You may bruise more easily. Dry skin, wrinkles, and age spots can develop.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathe in warm—not hot—water with mild soap • Use moisturizer • When outdoors, use sunscreen and wear protective clothing
 <p>Teeth</p>	<p>As you age, your gums might pull back from your teeth.</p> <p>This can increase your risk for cavities and infections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get regular check-ups • Brush your teeth twice a day • Use floss once a day
 <p>Weight</p>	<p>Your metabolism (how your body burns energy) slows down as you age.</p> <p>If you continue to eat the same amount, this can lead to weight gain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise regularly • Eat healthy foods and limit sugar • Reduce portion sizes



PEBB at your service

How PEBB's health plans support all ages

No matter your age, our health plans have you covered. The Board and vendor partners have designed our health plans with age-specific services in mind. Our plans provide coverage for everyone from infants to older adults. Take advantage of these benefits to keep your body healthy and strong throughout your life. Some of these services may be available at certain ages. However, be mindful of your medical needs. If you have a health concern, contact your health care provider. The covered services and items include:

- Annual wellness exams and bloodwork
- Autism support
- Colonoscopies
- Diabetes prevention
- Employee Assistance Program
- Fertility treatment
- Gym discounts and wellness perk
- Hearing exams, hearing aids
- Mammograms
- Maternity care
- Mental health and substance misuse care and treatment
- Personal health coaches
- Physical therapy
- Preventive vaccinations
- Prostate exams
- Sports physicals
- Teeth cleanings and X-rays
- Vision exams, lenses, frames, contact lenses
- Wellness programs

PEBB Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month and are open to the public. To learn more about upcoming meetings or to view recordings of past meetings, visit the [Public Meetings](#) page of the PEBB website.

Benefits Questions?

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