A Lifelong Guide to Wellness and Prevention

Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center—New Orleans, Louisiana
School of Allied Health Professions, Department of Occupational Therapy
Our mission
To empower the people of Louisiana to live healthy, productive lives by providing wellness and prevention resources based on current research.

Our vision
We strive to inspire people to take Action in making healthy and informed decisions regarding physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being throughout each decade of life.

Who we are
As occupational therapy students at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, we are committed to promoting health and wellness in the community through service, advocacy, education, research, and collaborative efforts.
How to use this booklet

This booklet is intended to be used by individuals or families to discuss and make healthcare plans and learn healthy strategies for living. Use this tool to become more informed and active in your healthcare. The information in the booklet addresses health from a physical, mental, spiritual, cognitive, vocational and financial point of view. It is divided into decades of life, and is for both males and females. The information provided is based upon current research and information provided by multiple professions.

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http://alliedhealth.lsuhs.edu/ot/default.aspx
05/2013

We appreciate all of the stakeholders who contributed to the development of this booklet. We would also like to acknowledge Southeast Area Louisiana AHEC for their sponsorship of professional photographs.
SUPPORTING MEMORY THROUGH LIFE
What you do every day matters to your brain. The choices you make, levels of physical & mental activity, your social life, diet, & sleep habits can affect how well you perform in all areas of life.

TIPS TO SUPPORT A HEALTHY BRAIN:
◆ Write it down—put goals in writing to make them meaningful. Be sure to add what motivates you to achieve them.
◆ Give yourself a timeframe — you need enough time to work & master your goals.
◆ Physical activity — ask yourself: How did I work exercise into my day? Did I maximize my moving potential today?
◆ Cognitive stimulation — What did I learn today? What routine task did I approach differently today? Did I challenge my mind?
◆ Stress management—What caused me the greatest stress today? What triggered my stress? How did I relax?

*For the complete Action Plan for Brain Health go to: http://www.dana.org/uploadedFiles/The_Dana_Alliances/Documents/Your%20Brain%20at%20Work%20PDF.pdf

### Social & Emotional Well-Being

**Spiritual health** can be defined as a connection of mind, body & spirit that requires an interconnectedness to a greater power, to all living creatures, & to our surroundings. It can provide a sense of meaning & purpose in our lives.

◆ Research has found that spiritual practices are important to overall health as they help to improve coping skills & social support. In addition, they can foster feelings of optimism & hope, promote healthy behaviors, reduce feelings of depression & anxiety, as well as support a sense of relaxation. These things positively influence immune, cardiovascular, hormonal, & nervous systems.

**Mental health** is defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, & is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

◆ Prevention of mental illness focuses on: the avoidance of risk factors.

◆ Promotion of mental health targets: the enhancement of an individual’s ability to achieve positive self-esteem, mastery, well-being; the utilization of relaxation methods & mindfulness; participation in healthy social activities & developing a strong support system. For more information check out: [http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/LHI/mentalHealth.aspx](http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/LHI/mentalHealth.aspx)

### Financial Health

**Did you know?** Scientific evidence has proven that stress can lead to health problems such as weight gain & high blood pressure.

A new study suggests that financial stress can be more harmful than other types of stress. In the study, financial & work stress were more likely to increase the risk for conditions that lead to metabolic syndrome, potentially leading to type 2 diabetes and/or heart disease.

**Basic budgeting tips to help keep your financial stress low:**

- Save more & spend less
- Pay your credit card balance in full each month (only charge the amount you will be able to pay)
- Limit or avoid ATM surcharges
- Prepare for the unexpected
- Simplify your financial life (have checks directly deposited into accounts)
- Protect against fraud (watch for suspicious activity in bank accounts or suspicious signatures on checks and documents)

[MyMoney.gov](http://www.mymoney.gov) is a U.S. government website that provides basic financial education to all Americans. Visit the website for information on how to balance your checkbook, invest in your 401k, budget your money, & much more!
**Healthy Eating Guidelines**

- Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or 1% milk & dairy items.149
- Add lean protein to meals: lean beef, beans, chicken, turkey, seafood, tofu.149
- Do not exceed more than 2,300 mg of sodium per day (about 1 teaspoon)149
- Adults age 51+, African Americans of any age, & individuals with high blood pressure, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease: do not exceed 1,500 mg/day.
- Increase water intake & decrease soda and/or sugary drinks.149
- Use smaller plates & eat slowly to feel satisfied without over-eating.149
- Satisfy your sweet tooth in a healthy way (fruits, yogurt, sugar-free jello).149

*Visit [http://www.choosemyplate.gov/](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/) to learn YOUR calorie level, use a personalized calorie & physical activity tracker

**Exercise & Physical Fitness**

Daily exercise is critical to support bodily functioning, strength, balance, flexibility, & emotional health.

The minimum recommended guideline:

- **3, 10-minute exercise intervals** per day (30 total minutes/day)150
- At least **5 days per week.**150

Use the link below to find more specific information for your age and types of physical activity & exercise that are appropriate for YOU!

[http://www.choosemyplate.gov/physical-activity.amount.html](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/physical-activity.amount.html)

**Blood Pressure (BP) Ranges**

Did you know? Managing BP can help prevent heart attack, stroke, heart failure, & kidney disease.16

Use this website from the American Heart Association to determine & learn about YOUR specific risk factors for the diseases mentioned above based on age, gender, & BP.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top number (mm Hg)</th>
<th>Bottom number (mm Hg)</th>
<th>Your category*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 120 and</td>
<td>Below 80</td>
<td><strong>Normal BP</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120-139 or</td>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>Pre-hypertension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140-159 or</td>
<td>90-99</td>
<td>Stage 1 hypotension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160 or more or</td>
<td>100 or more</td>
<td>Stage 2 hypotension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Everyone, regardless of their BP reading, should adopt or maintain a healthy lifestyle. If your BP places you in either stage of hypertension, talk to a doctor about possible medications to help regulate your BP.16

**Body Mass Index (BMI)** is a number determined from a person’s height & weight. It can serve as a screening tool for weight categories associated with health problems.49 A high BMI puts you at a greater risk for developing: high BP, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoarthritis, female infertility, high cholesterol & more.51

Each individual’s BMI can be calculated using the following equation:

\[ \text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (lb)}}{\left[\text{height (in)}\right]^2 \times 703} \]  
\[ \text{or} \]  
\[ \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{\left[\text{height (m)}\right]^2} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>Weight category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 18.5</td>
<td>Underweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.6 - 25</td>
<td><strong>Healthy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.1 – 30</td>
<td>Overweight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.1 and above</td>
<td>Obese</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Dental Health**

Proper brushing techniques are key to long term dental health and prevention.

- **Every individual should visit the dentist 2x/year for checkups**14
- Brush teeth for 2 minutes at least 2x/day14
- Floss daily14
- Avoid sugary & starchy snacks14
- Don’t smoke & don’t pierce any part of mouth14

* Visit [http://www.mouthhealthy.org/](http://www.mouthhealthy.org/) to learn more

** Replace your toothbrush every 3-4 months! Germs that grow on your brush can cause cold & flu viruses and the viruses that cause cold sores.14
"The most important role models in people’s lives, it seems, aren’t superstars or household names. They’re ‘everyday’ people who quietly set examples for you — coaches, teachers, parents. People about whom you say to yourself, perhaps not even consciously, ‘I want to be like that..’” - Tim Foley

**Driving safety**
5 seconds is the average time your eyes are off the road while texting. When driving 55 mph that’s the length of a football field! Silence is golden: turn off phone notifications. The less you hear your phone, the less you’ll be tempted to respond. Designate a texter: borrow thumbs from a friend. Passengers can safely text or make calls for you.

**Braces**
*Should you get them?*
Crooked teeth can interfere with proper chewing & lead to tooth decay, cavities, & gum disease.

*How do you get them?*
Ask your dentist to refer you to an orthodontist or visit [http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/find-a-dentist.aspx](http://www.mouthhealthy.org/en/find-a-dentist.aspx) for a list of dentists & orthodontists in your area.

**Wisdom Teeth**
It is important to have your wisdom teeth evaluated to prevent possible overcrowding later in life & to promote optimal oral care. If surgery is needed, it tends to be easier & less painful when performed on teens.

**Get Vaccinated:**
- Tdap — every 10 years; for Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis
- Menactra — age 11; for conjugate meningococcal vaccine
- Gardasil — age 11; for HPV
- Meningitis — may be required by high schools & universities

**Health check**
Tracking your health:
- Date: ______ | ______ | ______
- BMI: ______ | ______ | ______
- Calculate BMI (body mass index) with the equation listed on page 5.

**Keep smiling!**

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**MONEY $$$$$

**Did you know?**
- The higher the credit card balance, the higher the anxiety.
- Determine personal NEEDS vs. WANTS & live within your means!
- Do not charge items you do not have money to pay off.

**How do I pay for college?**
- Fill out a FAFSA form at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to see if you qualify for freeaid.
- Be familiar with TOPS requirements to earn free tuition for state schools in LA.
- Visit [mappingyourfuture.org](http://mappingyourfuture.org) for specific information on preparing for college, paying for college, & managing your money.
Let's Get Physical

Studies show that physical activity improves focus, gives you more energy, & releases hormones that make you happy.158

*For more tips on living a healthy, active lifestyle visit http://www.letsmove.gov/

Sexual Health. The facts:

◆ STDs often show no symptoms, so many people that have them are not aware of it.70
◆ 15–24 year olds are the most affected by STD’s in Louisiana.154
◆ All STDs are treatable, & many are curable. Putting off getting care for an STD can lead to lasting negative health effects for both women & men.70
Find a testing center near you
Enter your zip code in the testing center locator at www.GYTNOW.org or text your zip code to GYTNOW (498669) on your cell phone. You will get a text message back with information about testing centers nearest to you.

If you do have an STD, take control & get it treated. Find someone you trust to talk to.

Substance Abuse
Staying drug & alcohol free will give you more energy, more money, & more life.119

How to say no
Hold a bottle of water or a soda so you’re less likely to be offered a drink.
Make an excuse; blame your parents or coach.119
Find a treatment center near you at: http://www.theagapecenter.com/

It Gets Better

Bullying
◆ Victims of bullying are prone to sleep difficulties, phobias, anxiety, depression, & low self-esteem.75
◆ What can you do about it? Don’t be an innocent bystander. Witnessing a bullying situation without reporting it is just as bad as the bullying itself.124

Suicide Awareness
Did you know?
◆ Teens more prone to suicide, are those that are bullied, antisocial, or abuse substances?75
◆ You can help prevent suicide by learning the signs & reporting any suspicious behavior to a trusted adult.146
◆ The signs are: hopelessness, anger, recklessness, mood changes, withdrawal, & substance abuse.146
◆ Don’t be afraid to talk about suicide! It can only help.146 Visit http://www.ulifeline.org for information about what to do if you or a friend is in a suicidal situation or call 1-800-273-TALK.146

Promoting Positive Mental Health
Positive mental health can help you pursue & reach goals, make healthy lifestyle choices, make decisions based on your personal beliefs.47,119

Ways to promote positive mental health: believe in yourself, develop coping strategies that reduce stress, get involved in fun & meaningful activities, & surround yourself with friend & family support.47,119

Brain Power

Why should I earn a high school diploma?
People with high school diplomas earn an average of $143/week more than dropouts (that’s $7,436 more per year!).112
82% of prisoners in US are high school dropouts.112

Tips to help STAY IN SCHOOL:
Get involved in school-based activities & sports. Utilize after school enrichment programs. Find a trustworthy mentor/tutor to encourage & support your academics.111

For more tips: www.dropoutprevention.org
Become familiar with local resources
◆ Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG): This program is for individuals considering dropping out & for those who already have. They can help you finish school or earn your GED.73:
  http://www.jag.org
◆ Louisiana Youth Works Offers information to guide career decisions, prepare for jobs, explore educational options & offers helpful resources. Visit: http://www.laworks.net/Youth_Portal/YP_Menu.asp85

SLEEP and LEARNING
Sleep is vital to overall well-being! Teens need about 9.2 hours of sleep/night for best functioning (8.5 hours are enough for some).16
Sleep in a dark, cool, & quiet environment.116
When fatigued, the overwhelming drive to sleep replaces any chance of alertness or understanding.4
Sleep deprivation can lead to lower grades.4
Lack of sleep can also lead to acne & weight gain.16
“For the most part, "naturals" are myths. People who are especially good at something may have some innate inclination, or some particular talent, but they have also spent about ten thousand hours practicing or doing that thing.”

~Meg Jay, The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter

**Physical health**

- Among individuals age 20-24, unintentional injury is the top leading cause of death, causing almost *three* times as many deaths as the next leading cause of death (homicide).26
  - **Prevention tips**
    - Always wear your seatbelt when driving, and refrain from mixing driving with drinking, substance use (including some prescription drugs), & use of technology, such as phone calls or texting.159
    - Follow safety procedures & always wear a helmet while operating a motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle.
    - Avoid risky behavior that may lead to falls or drowning, two of the highest causes of death by unintentional injury for adults in their twenties.26

**Emotional & Spiritual health**

- Protecting your mind and attitude are important for your health and happiness. If you are feeling overwhelmed by economic worries, relationship problems, depression, or loneliness, there is help available to you.42
  - Learning the signs of suicide is important in identifying when to seek help for yourself or someone you know. Signs may include hopelessness, increased alcohol or drug use, dramatic mood changes, withdrawal from friends & family, or expressing no purpose in life.42
  - If you feel you are in a crisis, whether or not you are thinking about killing yourself, call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 to speak with a trained crisis worker who can tell you about mental health services in your area. The hotline is open 24/7, & all calls are confidential & free.42
- Self actualization can be defined as recognizing and reaching your potential & experiencing self-fulfillment & is reached through feelings of connection, meaning & purpose, all leading to greater sense of health.100

**Tips for reaching self-fulfillment**

- Make sure to pay attention to your biological needs & safety needs (sleep, shelter, food, etc.).100
- Find a sense of belonging & love through family, work groups, & relationships.100
- Work to maintain good self-esteem through achievement & independence.100

**Cognitive**

**Did you know?** The brain at 20 is efficient, creative & growth is supported by major life events that are an interaction of nature & nurture. Provide healthy experiences for your brain.

**Alzheimer’s Disease:**

- People who have good language skills early in life may be less likely to develop Alzheimer’s disease decades later in life.6
- Language scores have been shown to be higher in individuals *without* memory problems compared to those with memory problems.6
- An intellectual ability test in the early twenties may predict the likelihood of remaining cognitively sound decades later, even in the presence of Alzheimer’s disease symptoms.6
- Harmful use of alcohol and/or other drugs can result in disturbances in level of consciousness, cognition, perception, behavior, or other brain functions. This can have long-term effects on mental function later in life.69
Financial

Student Loan Tips:
- Apply for grants & scholarships first they do not have to be repaid. 153
- Finding employment on or off campus contributes money to your budget. 153
- Borrow only the amount needed to pay for your tuition, school essentials, & living expenses. 153
- Accept loans with the lowest interest rate. 153
- For example paying $50 per month on a loan of $1000 with a 6.8% interest rate will result in paying about $1064 in 22 months. 153

For more information about student loans, repaying student loans, & creating a budget visit: https://studentloans.gov/myDirectLoan/financialAwarenessCounseling.action?

Building Credit Using Credit Cards:
- Look for a credit card with the lowest annual interest rate & fees. 106,153
- Read the fine print before getting a credit card. 106,153
- Limit the number of credit cards you have to decrease overspending & increasing debt. 106,153
- Pay your balance in full each month to avoid interest & fees. Use your credit card only when you can pay the balance immediately. 106,153

Savings Accounts:
- If someone puts $4,000 per year in a retirement account at age 22, by the age of 62 they will have about $1 million saved depending on interest rates. 46,166
- Be sure that you have enough money in savings to live for up to 6 months if you lose your job. 106

For more information about building credit, loans for large purchases, & savings visit: http://www.mymoney.gov/

Relationships

Domestic Abuse:
Abuse can be emotional, physical, psychological, or sexual 45

What are the signs/actions of an abusive partner?
- Extreme jealousy/insecurity 45
- Constant “put-downs” 45
- Telling you what you can or cannot do & constantly checking in on you.
- Explosive temper 45
- Isolating you from your friends & family 45

Abusing someone is a choice, & there is nothing you can do or say to deserve being abused. 45

Abuse and Physical/Mental Health:

Did you Know? Women exposed to domestic abuse have poorer physical health & experience more depressive symptoms than woman who are not exposed to abuse. 20

The Key to a Healthy Relationship:
Communication! This is the first step in making sure you & your partner are on the same page. It is also important to maintain healthy boundaries, including going out with your own friends, participating in individual hobbies, & not sharing passwords to email, phones, or other social media. 91

Vocational

Many 20 year olds are beginning their first full-time job & are often competing with older more experienced applicants. 23

Tips for Interviewing include: 1). Mirror your interviewers body language 63
2). Find common interests with the interviewer 63
3). When sharing an experience with your interviewer, follow this format: 1. Explain the problem you faced 63
   2. Outline how you solved the problem 63
   3. Explain what improved/changed from your involvement in solving the problem 63

Visit http://www.resume-help.org/ for tips on resume and cover letter writing!

Health check

Tracking your health:

Date: ______ | ______ | ______

✔ Blood pressure: ______ | ______ | ______
✔ Cholesterol: ______ | ______ | ______
✔ Body Mass Index: ______ | ______ | ______
“In my thirties, I felt I had hold of one of the reins some of the time.” ~Chaka Khan

**Emotional**

- Depression in the Workplace: 7% of full time workers (ages 18-64) had experienced a major depressive episode in the past year.\(^{141}\) 3% of disability days are due to depression (76% are women). It is important to realize that more than 80% of people with clinical depression can be treated.\(^{102}\) [http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml)
- Anxiety: It is the most common mental illness in the U.S and can be due to genetics, brain chemistry, personality, & life events. Although, anxiety is highly treatable, only 1/3 receive treatment.\(^{17}\)
- Physical Activity: Although staying fit is good for the body & mind, over 80% of adults are not meeting their aerobic & muscle strengthening needs.\(^{155}\)

**Cognitive**

Decline in attention, memory, & information processing speed can begin in the mid thirties. Remain aware of the following cognitive health awareness tips.\(^{58}\)

- Risk factors: lack of physical activity, family history, hypertension, aging, lack of social engagement, diabetes, stroke, vitamin deficiency, dehydration, alcoholism
- Prevention: creating checklists, eliminating distractions, remaining physically active, cognitive testing (i.e. Neurological exams, lab work, mental status, brain imaging)\(^{99}\)

*Cognitive decline could lead to problems at work. You may even begin caring for a parent with cognitive decline. Stay proactive!*

**Vocational**

- Work ergonomics focuses on maintaining proper posture when sitting for long periods of time so that future physical complications can be prevented.
  - The following worksheet is a simple check list showing proper positioning and comfort tips for your workstation: [http://www.unomaha.edu/humanresources/DocumentsergonomicWorksheet.pdf](http://www.unomaha.edu/humanresources/DocumentsergonomicWorksheet.pdf)\(^{148}\)
- Occupational safety on the job is important in preventing work-related injuries. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health enables you to search various jobs for prevention techniques\(^{40}\)
- Vocational rehabilitation may be sought in cases of physical or mental disability to help you return to work\(^{90}\)

**Screenings**

- Cholesterol Test: Once every 5 years, and more frequently if your levels are abnormal.
- Blood Pressure: At least every 2 years if have a history of high blood pressure
- Eye Exam: With dilation once a year
- Breast Exam: Clinical every year, Self-exam every month
- Pap Test: Once a year
- Testicular Exam: Clinical every year, Self-exam every month
- Skin Exam: Clinical every 3 years, self-exam every month
- Flu Shot: Every year\(^{168,170}\)

**Health check**

Tracking your health:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Blood pressure:</th>
<th>Cholesterol:</th>
<th>Body Mass Index:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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10
Financial

- The average age of a home buyer as of 2011, is 31 years. The average purchase is around $155,000 with 54% of financing done through FHA (Federal Housing Administration), with a low down payment.
- 39% of home buyers in 2011 were first-time buyers!!

Tips for buying a home:
- Look at payment history (bills, loans, etc.) and find out credit score.
- Keep credit balances low.
- Avoid taking on new debt.
- Maintain a good credit score.
- Pay more than minimum on credit balances.
- Make credit card payments on time.
- Choose a realtor to help with buying process.
- Meet with a loan officer & get loan pre-approval (reviewing credit & finances & receiving pre-approval letter).
- Think about: What kind of loan? How much of down payment?
- For more info on buying house, visit: http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Family-Homes.shtml

Student Loan Information: see page 9 of this booklet

Physical Health

- Did you know that 20% of women are having their 1st child at age 35 or older?
  - 1/3 of the couples that have children with the woman being older than 30 have fertility issues.
  - Aging decreases a woman’s chances of having a baby because of the ovaries being less able to release eggs, the reduced number & diminished health of the eggs, other possible new health conditions, & being more likely to miscarriage.
- What increases a woman’s risk for infertility?
  - Smoking, excess alcohol use, stress, poor diet, being overweight or underweight, & STDs
- What increases a man’s infertility rate?
  - Heavy alcohol use, drugs, smoking, environmental toxins, medicines, radiation treatment & chemotherapy, & kidney disease
- Diabetes is the 5th leading cause of death in Louisiana!
  - People with diabetes have 5x greater risk for having a heart attack & 4x greater risk for coronary heart disease & stroke.
  - Pre-diabetes: Only 7% of people are aware that they have it, yet 35% of adults over 20 years old have pre-diabetes.
  - 5 Healthy Keys to Preventing Diabetes & Pre-diabetes:

Managing stress

- Stressed about money? Job? Kids? Ready to make a change?
- Steps to manage stress
  - Make decision to change how you manage it
  - Identify stress triggers (positive or negative)
  - Think of strategies for dealing with triggers:
    - Seek help and support from family & friends
    - Mindfulness (awareness)
    - Tai chi/yoga
    - Medication
    - Spending time outside
    - Exercise
  - To take a stress test, visit: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/stress-assessment/SR00029
FORTIES

“Age is opportunity no less than youth itself.”
~Henry Longfellow

Spirituality

During middle age, it is important for an individual to make his/her mark on the world. Each person will make different contributions to the world based on what is most important to him/her.101

Ways to make your mark:
- Caring for others
- Creating things
- Doing things that bring you meaning & purpose
- Raising children or establishing meaningful relationships.101

If someone does not find a way to contribute to the world, he/she may feel disconnected from their community and dissatisfaction with their lack of productivity.101

Financial

- During the early part of your 40s, it is important to focus on establishing retirement goals if you have not already done so.55,56
  - If your retirement goals are already in place, it is important to update them at least every ten years to ensure you are on track or to make adjustments when necessary.
  - Everyone should regularly review their long-term investments such as IRAs or 401(k)s to determine if they are meeting their goals.
- Those who are approaching the age of 50 may want to consider long term care insurance. Long-term health care costs can be overwhelming & devastating to some families. Insurance can help alleviate these costs & protect your savings.

Emotional

- At this point in life, many people’s focus is on work & parenthood, but it is important to take time to focus on yourself as well. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, finding fulfilling volunteer opportunities, & making time for leisure activities is important for your overall wellbeing.
  - These are also good ways to spend meaningful family time together.
  - Civic & community activities or spiritual activities are also good ways to feel connected or to become involved in your community.
- Research suggests that there is a peak risk in middle age for depression. The following are ways to fight off depression: exercise, eat right, get out serve others, talk to someone you trust, join a depression support group, & take time to relax.22,133

Vocational

- Increasing job skills leads to a better retirement. As a worker, it is important to plan for retirement through job security.120
- There are many sources for job retraining for a change in career or to stay competitive in the workplace. Many of these sources are free through employers or the government.145
- A certification or an educational degree can make you a more valuable employee. Many programs are designed for the working student.145

Cognitive

- Engage in cognitive exercises on a daily basis (crossword puzzles, reading the newspaper, etc.)93
- Eat more “brain food”. A 50 item list is provided at this link: http://4mind4life.com/blog/2008/07/18/brain-foods-list-of-50-good-brain-foods/
- Exercise on a regular basis promotes increased cerebral blood flow.93
Physical

**Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)** is among the top two causes of death in your 40s. At this age CHD is more common in males but as you age it is more common in women. In Louisiana, approximately 12,000 people die every year from some form of CHD. Family history is the only risk factor for CHD that isn’t under your control. These are things you can do to reduce your risk of getting heart disease:

1. Know your blood pressure and keep it under control  
2. Exercise regularly  
3. Don’t smoke  
4. Get tested for diabetes and if you have it, control it  
5. Know your cholesterol levels & keep them under control  
6. Eat a lot of fruits and vegetables  
7. Maintain a healthy weight

To figure out your risk for heart attack, visit the Heart Attack Risk Calculator: https://www.heart.org/gglRisk/locale/en_US/index.html?gtype=health

### Breast Cancer

**Did you know?** Louisiana has the highest rate of death from breast cancer in the nation African American females have a slightly higher rate of death from breast cancer. It is important to get regular screenings so that if cancer does occur it is caught at an early stage.

**To reduce your risk of breast cancer:**

1. Be physically active regularly;  
2. Eat a healthy & balanced diet;  
3. Avoid drinking alcohol in excess;  
4. Breastfeeding for several months may reduce your risk.

### Cancer

**Did you know?** Louisiana has the third highest cancer deaths in the nation. All men & women above the age of 20 should have regular examinations for cancers of the thyroid, testicles, ovaries, lymph nodes, oral cavity, and skin.

#### Health Check

**Tracking your health:**

- **Date:**  
- **Blood pressure:**  
- **Cholesterol:**  
- **Body Mass Index:**

---

**Screenings:**

- **Mammogram** with or without clinical breast exams every 1-2 years for women 40 & older.
- **Aspirin** regimen for men age 45-79 to prevent heart disease. 75 mg /day is effective as higher doses, but check with your doctor before beginning.
- **Blood pressure** screening for men & women 18 and older, every two years for those with a pressure of less than 120/80 and every year for those with pressures being higher.
- **Cholesterol** screening for women 45 & older and men 35 years & older every 5 years.
- **Baseline vision exam** every year. If you have a chronic disease, check with your doctor for frequency.
- **Cervical Cancer:** women 30-65 should have a Pap test every year & an HPV test every 5 years.
- **Tetanus** shot every 10 years.
- **Flu shot** every year.
“By the age of fifty, you have made yourself what you are, and if it is good, it is better than your youth.”
~Marya Mannes

**Physical**

**Menopause:**
- **What is Menopause and how will it affect me?** Menopause is when a woman stops having menstrual periods, marking the end of her reproductive years. **Symptoms:** hot flashes, lack of sleep, mood swings, bone loss, vaginal dryness.
- **Treatment options to help menopausal symptoms:**
  - Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)
  - Natural treatment: soy, sources of phytoestrogens
  - Lifestyle changes: eating healthy, quit smoking, exercise regularly

**Osteoporosis:**
- **Did you know?** All women age 50 are at risk for Osteoporosis (bone loss). Bone loss can lead to many bone breaks & other health conditions.
- **Tips for keeping your bones strong and preventing further bone loss:**
  - Eat a diet rich in calcium
  - Engage in regular weight-bearing exercises (walking and dancing)
  - Strength-training (lifting weights)
  - Get your annual bone-density screenings.

**Colorectal Cancer:**
- Men and women need to get a colonoscopy or some other type of colorectal screening at age 50.
- **Did you know?** Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer in the U.S. 90% of colorectal cancers begin in people over the age of 50. A colonoscopy can find precancerous polyps before they develop into cancer. Therefore, the cancer can be stopped before it ever starts!

**Screenings**

**Men and women age 50 and Up:**
- **Colorectal screening:** beginning at age 50, then follow doctor recommendations for further screenings.
- **Cholesterol test and blood pressure:** should be done regularly but will depend on your current levels.
- **Flu shot:** once a year

**Women only age 50 and Up:**
- **Mammogram:** once a year
- **Bone Density screenings:** once a year
- **Pap test:** every 2-3 years

**Men only age 50 and Up:**
- **Prostate screening–** once a year

**Dental**

- **Gum disease,** also known has periodontal disease or gingivitis, is one of the main dental concerns for someone in their 50s. Gingivitis is reversible & can be corrected with proper home care & dental visits.
- **Symptoms:** red or swollen gums, bad breath, bleeding of the gums, loose teeth, & the gums can start disappearing along the tooth line.
- **Prevention for gum disease:** have good oral hygiene, which includes daily teeth brushing, mouth washing, & flossing. Also, reduce the amount of sugar that is consumed & quit smoking.
- **Did you know?** Gum disease may not show any signs or may not have any pain. Attending a yearly update with your dentist is important because an exam can be done to check for gum disease.
Spiritual

- According to Erikson’s stages of development, most men and women in their 50s are at the stage in their life where they either need to produce or nurture something or someone that will last longer than them to achieve a high quality of life.
- Usually people at this age have children or make changes in their life or in the lives of other that affect them for the better.
- Participating in the community can help men & women in their 50s feel accomplished & successful.  

Cognitive

- Starting healthy exercise & eating habits in your 50s can help improve cognitive function & decrease risk of dementia in later years.  
- Walking for two-and-a-half hours a week or 30 minutes, 5 days a week has been shown to improve memory & could possibly delay the onset of dementia.
- Woman who engage in a once-a-week endurance & strength training program are more likely to maintain the program long-term & also show sustained improvement in cognitive abilities.

Emotional

Stress can be a part of any individual’s life, whether you are a caregiver, have empty nest syndrome, or going through a major life change in your 50’s. However, some of this stress can be managed with simple techniques or lifestyle changes.

Tip for managing stress:

- Exercise regularly and eat healthy
- Progressive muscle relaxation by tensing then relaxing muscles throughout the body
- Practice deep breathing
- Picture yourself relaxed
- Meditate
- Write out your feelings
- Do something you enjoy
- Seek out social support
- Visit www.webmd.com

Vocational

- Many people over the traditional retirement age are still in the labor force.
- Making yourself invaluable at work is a way to prepare to stay in the labor force past the traditional retirement age.

Tips from AARP include:

- Embrace technology such as social media.
- Volunteer to take on more responsibilities
- Be the expert on what you do and show you are excited about it.
- Know the company’s budget and make sure your boss knows you are helping control cost.
- Keep a positive and energetic attitude.
- Get unbiased advice from a professional career coach on remaining marketable.
- Find ways to connect with younger coworkers.
- Keep a positive and energetic attitude.
- Get unbiased advice from a professional career coach on remaining marketable.

Financial

Long Term Care Insurance

- As people age or become ill, they may need help doing activities like dressing & bathing.
- Long term care insurance is a type of insurance that provides monetary assistance for services to help individuals perform these tasks.
- Most health & disability insurances will not cover these services, but long term insurance will.
- Visit www.aarp.org.

Health check

Tracking your health:

- Date: _____ | _____ | _____

- Blood pressure: _____ | _____ | _____
- Cholesterol: _____ | _____ | _____
- Body Mass Index: _____ | _____ | _____
"You can only perceive real beauty in a person as they get older."
~ Anouk Aimee

**Financial**

*Did you know?* 1/3 of parents have to remortgage their home to support their adult child.114

- Nearly 2/3 of Louisiana residents over the age of 50 are eligible for SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). You can access eligibility information online.114
- To protect yourself financially when it comes to driving, certain insurance agencies will reduce costs for seniors to take a defensive Driving Course.114, 115
- If able to, individuals in their 60’s should also increase limits of liability on car insurance to protect assets if involved in a lawsuit concerning a vehicular accident.115

**Cognitive**

Dementia and Alzheimer’s

- Alzheimer’s is the 6th leading cause of death in LA.5
- Half of all Alzheimer’s cases could be eliminated if risk factors such as obesity, depression, & smoking were eliminated.5
- Adopt a brain healthy diet including:
  - Foods low in cholesterol, saturated fats, sugar, and salt (nuts and beans) 4
  - Foods high in dietary fiber (oats) 4
  - Fruits, vegetables, whole grains
  - Potassium, calcium, magnesium, & vitamin B12 (spinach and bananas) 4
- Exercise for 30 minutes a day. For example:
  - Cardiovascular training like walking, running, or cycling 3
  - Resistance training using weights or doing sit-ups
  - Mental activities such as learning something new, visiting museums, reading, doing puzzles, & debating and discussing topics 3
- Always remember to stay in touch with friends & family!

**Financial**

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- Always remember to stay in touch with friends & family!

**Spiritual/Relationships**

- Stay connected to others
- Find humor in everyday life 6

**Relationships**

When adult children move home:

- Set a time limit for how long they can stay, have them pay rent, set goals for them, have them do chores, make a contract of what is to be expected, & lend a helping hand but don’t do everything for them.6
- Keep YOUR financial future first.6

**Caregiving for elderly family member**

- Seek outside help. Do NOT try to do it all.6
- Look into community based services that provide meal plans, nurses, aides & helps with chores around the house.6

**Marriage and Dating**

- Maintain open communication & be honest about how you feel, try something new, keep fun in the relationship, and don’t do EVERYTHING together.6
**Physical**

- **Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention:** Eat a healthy diet, maintain a healthy weight, know your Body Mass Index, exercise, do not smoke, limit alcohol use, manage medical conditions such as blood pressure and diabetes, take prescribed medications, and talk to health care professionals. Also, limit salt (sodium) intake to 4 grams per day. 27&110

**Important Screenings and Tests For Your Age:**
- **Cholesterol test and blood pressure:** should be done regularly but will depend on your current levels—ask your doctor.
- **Yearly:** Continue mammograms, pelvic exams, colon exams, eye exams and flu vaccinations yearly. 156
- **Every 3 Years:** Skin and hearing exams 156
- **By Age 60:** Shingles Vaccine 156
- **By Age 65:** Bone Density Scan 156

**Vocational**

- **Did you know?** 52% of seniors are physically active 4 days a week.
- Get out there and exercise!6
- 30% of the “Baby Boomer” generation is supporting both their parents and children, leading to what’s called “Caregiver Burnout.”
- To prevent burnout, join a support group, continue to make time to participate in activities you enjoy, and stay in touch.6
- Many senior-friendly companies have joined the AARP National Employer Team.
- These companies recognize the contributions older workers provide to their workforce.

![Health check](image)

**Emotional**

- The risk for sexual dysfunction increases greatly in the 60-69 age group, with 40% of men first reporting it during this time. Often, sexual dysfunction can be attributed to mental or emotional stress, and at the same time, these areas can be negatively affected by sexual dysfunction caused by another factor. It is important to talk to your physician if you are experiencing these problems.6
- Depression can increase during the 60’s due to life changes such as retirement, losing a spouse, or multiple illness. Signs and symptoms of elderly depression include confusion, forgetfulness, lack of hygiene, eating less, and not taking medicines correctly. Depression *is treatable* and you should see your primary care physician if you are experiencing these issues.26

**Dental**

- 25% of people over the age of 65 have lost all of their teeth.79
- Deterioration of dental health as you age can be caused by medications that cause dry mouth, hormonal changes, and other health problems such as diabetes or dementia.79

**Prevention**

- Continue semi-annual dental office visits and get x-rays and cleaning.79
- At check-ups, ask the dentist if head and neck exams should be performed to check for cancer.79
- Brush teeth twice a day and floss daily.79
- Eat nutritious foods that contain antioxidants that can help your body’s ability to fight infection.79
DENTAL

Did you know? It is important to maintain good oral health as a way to protect your overall health.

- Oral infectious diseases, such as periodontitis, are linked to risk for cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, & lung diseases. Periodontitis may be an early indicator for osteoporosis & may cause flare-ups of diabetes. 113,35

Individuals retain their own teeth for a longer period of time. Good oral health care can prevent cavities & gum disease.

- Screenings for oral & throat cancers are essential during this period & should be done every 6 months.

- Check for oral side effects caused by medications, such as dry mouth, gum sores, taste changes, burning oral sensations, increased cavities, & involuntary oral movements. 113,35

SEVENTIES

“No man loves life like him that’s growing old.” ~ Sophocles, Acrisius

SPIRITUAL

Spirituality is not just religion.
- Spirituality includes personal growth, personal relationships, relationship with a higher being, sense of purpose, inspiration, connection with people & nature, & feelings of love, faith, hope, and trust. 103,105

Being socially engaged & maintaining supportive relationships is important for your mental & physical health. 78
- Take care of your body by exercising & staying active. 77
- Laugh, play, look back at memories, make friends, maintain family relations, & develop new purpose. 103
- Pray, meditate, & forgive others. 103
- Address feelings of pain & loneliness. Instead of withdrawing, seek new friends, try new things, & reach out to others. 76

Health benefits associated with good spiritual practice:
- Longer life expectancy.
- Better immune system.
- Greater well-being.
- Lower rates of cancer, alcoholism, hypertension, & heart disease.
- Shorter hospital stays.

FINANCIAL

At this stage of life, you are adjusting the way you spend money & are planning to give it away upon your death. 142

Important financial actions:
- Re-evaluate & adjust living conditions/spending, based on health & income.
- Adjust insurance coverage as needed.
- Finalize will, estate plans, & letter of last instruction. 142

Tips for safe money management:
- Watch for unusual activity in bank accounts or suspicious signatures on checks/documents.
- Keep accurate documents about financial matters.
- Sign a legal power of attorney with a person you trust to help you manage your money. 109
- Use the Louisiana Power of Attorney and Healthcare Forms

Cognitive Polypharmacy is the use of several different drugs by a patient who has 1 or more health problems. Older adults are at risk for high costs & harmful drug interactions due to polypharmacy. 54,71

Tips for reducing your risk:
- Learn the reasons for taking each medicine, & buy only the specific medications you need for your symptoms.
- Make a list of every medicine you are taking, including supplements, vitamins, & over-the-counter drugs & keep it with you.
- Read all labels for possible drug interactions, & avoid using combination products like cold remedies.
- Get prescriptions filled at same pharmacy, & ask your doctor or pharmacist to check your medicines for any harmful drug interactions. 54,71

RESOURCES

- Area Agencies on Aging: 1-800-677-1116
- CarFit—Helping Mature Drivers Find Their Safest Fit: http://www.car-fit.org/
- Healthy Aging Help Center: http://www.helpguide.org/topics/healthy_aging.htm
**Physical**

**Did you know?** Falling in older adulthood can lead to long-term disability & early death. Falling is preventable & does not have to occur with older age.\(^{37}\)

Tips to prevent falls:
- Exercise regularly. Leg-strengthening & balance exercises help reduce falling.
- Get regular eye exams to check vision. Update prescription lenses, if needed.
- Wear good-fitting shoes & avoid walking barefoot or in slippers.
- Modify your home: add grab bars & nonslip mats to bathroom, add railings to stairs, & remove tripping hazards. Increase lighting.\(^{37}\)
- Use a [home falls prevention checklist](#) to help make your home a safer place to live.\(^{108}\)

**Frailty** is a common condition in older adulthood. It consists of weight loss, muscle loss, general weakness, slow walking speeds, & tiredness. Frailty is often caused by a combination of diseases, aging, lifestyle choices, & the environment.\(^{18,66}\)

Frailty can be prevented or reversed with the right lifestyle choices:
- Get plenty of physical activity /exercise. Walking, balance training, & strengthening exercises should be the focus of activity.
- Get proper nutrition to help increase energy & prevent weight loss. Eat fresh fruits, vegetables, calcium, whole grains, & protein.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.
- Consume plenty of vitamins B & D. The body produces less of these in older age.
- Supplements can help with maintaining proper nutrition & muscle mass.\(^{66}\)

**Emotional**

**Depression** affects relationships, mood, sleep, energy, appetite, & overall health. Major life changes & losses that occur in older adulthood may lead to depression.\(^{136}\) Symptoms of depression:
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Deep sense of guilt.
- Slow speech & body movements.
- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Constant feelings of hopelessness, emptiness, & despair, with no moments of happiness.\(^{136}\)

**Tips for preventing or managing depression:**
- Keep yourself surrounded by support
- Recognize the physical symptoms, such as poor sleep, loss of appetite, pain, and/or illness.
- Talk about your feelings & ask for help.\(^{136}\)
- Grief may be experienced when coping with losses, such as loss of a loved one or loss of independence.\(^{136}\)
- Depression is often confused with grief. A major difference is that depression continues if it is not treated, but grief will ease over time.\(^{136}\)
- To cope with grief, find a good support system such as family, friends, faith, support groups, therapists, or grief counselors.\(^{137}\)

**Vocational**

**Retirement** is a major life adjustment.\(^{52}\)

Tips for a healthy retirement transition:
- Find a part-time “bridge” job. This is a job after a career ends but before full retirement.\(^{78}\)
- Participate in volunteer work
- Join a fitness center/gym for exercise & social
- Spend time doing enjoyable hobbies.
- Join an adult day program in your community.
- Plan to spend time with family and friends.
- Seek professional help if you start feeling anxiety, stress, and/or depression.\(^{19}\)
- Have your car fitted through AARP programs like [Car-Fit](#) to make driving safer.
- For public transportation, see [Louisiana Transit Resource Guide](#).

**Vaccinations & Screenings**

**Important Vaccinations**
- Shingles: Once in lifetime for adults over age 60.
- Seasonal flu: Yearly.
- Tetanus: Once every 10 years, but a lifetime dose is available after age 64.
- Pneumonia: Twice in lifetime if the 1st dose is given before age 65. Doses must be 5 years apart. But, received once in lifetime if the first dose is given after age 65.

**Recommended Vaccinations for Older Adults**

**Important Health Screenings**
- Blood pressure check: Yearly
- Cholesterol check: Yearly
- Bone density scan to check osteoporosis: Yearly
- Eye examinations: Yearly
- Fasting blood sugar test to check for diabetes or pre-diabetes: Yearly
- Weight and height check: Yearly
- Colon screenings: Once every 5 years
- Dental check-ups: Once every 6-12 months
- Pap test and breast examination (women): As recommended by physician
- Prostate test (men): As recommended by doctor
- Ask your doctor about an abdominal aortic aneurysm ultrasound if you have smoked more than 100 cigarettes in your lifetime.

**Health Check**

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**SEVENTIES**
**EIGHTIES AND BEYOND**

“Birthdays are great. Statistically, the people that have the most are the ones that live the longest.” ~Father Larry Lorenzoni

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**VOCATIONAL**

Participating in productive activities can slow down your aging process.

- Stimulating & engaging tasks will preserve your cognitive & physical abilities, as well as delay or reverse declining brain function. ⁹²
- Recreation can play a key role by reducing stress & increasing happiness, while volunteer work has social, emotional, & physical benefits. ¹³⁴
- There is an infinite number of activities you can engage in with others, such as attending a community event, exercising, completing puzzles, & visiting with family & friends. ²

Transportation is a necessary part of participation in activities.

- You must renew your driver’s license every 4 years, in person, & a vision test is required.
- If you do not drive, use the Louisiana Transit Resource Guide for public transportation information.

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**FINANCIAL**

You should be adjusting the way you spend your money & planning for giving away your money to loved ones when you pass. ¹⁴²

**Important actions:**

- Re-evaluate & adjust living conditions and spending, based on health and income.
- Adjust insurance coverage as needed.
- Assign a legal & health Power of Attorney.
- Finalize your will, letter of last instruction, & estate plans.

**Tips for safe money management:**

- Watch for suspicious activity in back accounts or suspicious signatures on checks & documents.
- Keep accurate documents about financial matters. ¹⁰⁹

Use the Louisiana Power of Attorney & Health care forms.

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**SPIRITUAL**

Addressing spirituality is just as vital to your well-being as medication & comfort. ⁵⁹

You are in what Erikson called the “integrity vs. despair” stage of your life. ⁶⁹

**To connect spiritually:**

- Take time to meditate daily.
- Create a legacy by writing down, scrapbooking, teaching special skills, or talking about the following questions: What qualities do you hope to pass on? What stories do you want others to know? ²⁶¹
- Turn to a spiritual or religious representative for guidance. This may be a pastor, priest, or clergyman.
- Enhance your existing relationships. ⁹

Being open & honest about spiritual needs will allow for greater ability to cope with illness and disability, give you a positive & hopeful attitude, and bring a sense of meaning & purpose into your life. ¹³⁸

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**DENTAL**

There are important actions you should take regarding your dental care and oral health including: ⁵⁰, ⁸², ¹³⁵

- Ask your doctor about your medications’ side effects that could result in dry mouth & further your risk of tooth decay.
- Take adequate care and maintenance of your dental implants & dentures to prevent gum breakdown. The increase of good oral self-care will help reduce your chances of periodontal disease.
- Improve your dental health to increase your quality of life & overall health.
- If you have a current or past history of periodontal disease, dental check-ups may be required more than twice a year.

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20
**Physical**

As you age, you might get less sleep each night. You may notice that daytime sleepiness & napping are happening more frequently. Sleep problems can lead to many other issues such as fatigue, depression, & injury.  

**Preventing sleep loss:**
- Eliminate daytime napping
- Exercise and go outside everyday
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol
- Relax before laying down in bed
- Follow a regular routine
- Only use your bed for sleeping and sexual activity
- Do not try over-the-counter sleep medications

Many older adults have trouble controlling their bladder, feel like they cannot make it to the toilet in time, or leak urine.  

**Preventing urinary incontinence:**
- Do NOT reduce daily water intake
- Do reduce caffeine intake
- Perform daily kegel exercises to strengthen your pelvic muscles
- Keep a daily bladder diary of your bladder functions in order to recognize any problems
- Use nightlights to light up the pathway to the toilet from your bed

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**Cognitive**

Having healthy habits in the 80’s can help maintain proper cognitive function.  

**Important tips:**
- Eat a healthy diet
- Take vitamin supplements
- Replace tea/sodas with water
- Make a daily schedule for drinking water

**Urinary tract infections (UTI)** are common in the older population and can affect your ability to think.  

**Signs that you might have a UTI:**
- Painful/frequent urination
- Confusion or mental fogginess
- Reddish/Rust color urine

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**Emotional**

It is important to maintain a positive mental outlook to prevent depression & preserve one’s happiness.  

**Prevent depression** by staying active in the community through:
- Volunteering
- Hobbies
- Time with family & friends

**Guard against negative thinking** by:
- Keeping a journal
- Staying positive. Look at the good things in your life.
- Seeking professional help if you have suicidal thoughts
- Staying active

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**Vaccinations**

- Pneumonia: Twice in your life if the first dose is given before 65. (Doses must be 5 years apart.)
- Seasonal flu: Yearly
- Shingles: Once for adults over age 60.
- Tetanus: Once every 10 years, but a lifetime dose is available after age of 64

**Recommended Vaccinations for Older Adults**

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**Screenings**

- Blood pressure check: Yearly
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**Health Screening Guidelines for Older Adults**

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**Health Check**

Tracking your health (see page 4):

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- Blood pressure: ______ | ______ | ______
- Cholesterol: ______ | ______ | ______
- Body Mass Index: ______ | ______ | ______
References

References

This booklet was made for you to use and refer to as often as you need. You may also record questions, resources that you find out about, medical information, and health check information.

Notes