

MAYO CLINIC

Live
Longer,
Live **Better**

Personal Advice From Mayo Clinic Experts



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Introduction

Live longer, live better. For more than a century, medical care at Mayo Clinic has helped millions of people do just that.

But how do Mayo Clinic experts themselves grow older healthfully? To find out, doctors and other health care professionals who have helped develop Mayo Clinic books, newsletters and other health publications were asked what they do personally to improve the length and quality of their lives. Their top recommendations, along with how they personally practice this advice, are featured inside.

Some of these strategies won't come as a surprise to you. Be physically active. Don't smoke. Make your health a priority. Most of us have heard these before.

But many experts take a broader approach than just physical health. To live longer and better, according to Mayo Clinic experts, it's important to stay healthy emotionally and mentally, too. That's why some of the top recommendations listed inside include exercising your mind, investing in important relationships and staying connected to your community. You'll also learn tips on leading a full, active life after retirement.

Aging is inevitable. And nothing can guarantee you'll live longer or better. But these strategies from Mayo Clinic experts can help you put the pieces in place to make the years ahead happier and healthier.

Stay Physically Active

#1 STRATEGY

Not surprisingly, staying physically active was one of our experts' top prescriptions for a longer, healthier life — both for themselves and for you.

It's easy to understand why. Even in moderate amounts, exercise can help you enjoy life and avoid diseases and conditions that many people mistakenly believe come automatically with age. And exercise doesn't have to be painful or strenuous to benefit you. Even moderately intense physical activities, such as a brisk walk, gardening or yardwork, can improve your health when done regularly.

You can reduce your risk of dying prematurely if you're physically active or you exercise even for just 30 minutes a day. Regular physical activity can help prevent or manage:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Osteoarthritis
- Falls and broken bones
- Some kinds of cancer
- Depression and anxiety

Exercise can be a daunting idea, especially if you're not in shape or you have a hectic schedule. Here's how Mayo Clinic experts have made exercise a part of their strategies to live longer and better.





Dr. Charles Kennedy and his wife, Helen, enjoy walking together.

Charles Kennedy, M.D.

A 1997 hip replacement didn't end the commitment that Charles Kennedy, M.D., has to making regular exercise a part of his life.

Although the retired internist opted to hang up his running shoes after years of enjoying road races and an occasional marathon, Dr. Kennedy simply switched gears in his exercise program. His new hip, he decided, was an opportunity to explore and enjoy other kinds of physical activity.

"I needed to make some modifications, that's all," says Dr. Kennedy, a former medical editor of the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*.

Dr. Kennedy looked at a variety of activities and decided that swimming seemed like a good choice. It gave him a healthy aerobic workout, placed little stress on his hip, and there was a public pool at a nearby YMCA.

There was just one small problem. "I'm not a very good swimmer," Dr. Kennedy says.

He dived into the new activity anyway, making up for his lack of swimming expertise by using a mask and snorkel. This allows him to stroke and kick without having to worry about breathing techniques.

Dr. Kennedy also made bicycling and walking a part of his routine. The walking he especially enjoys because his wife, Helen, often accompanies him.

"It's nice because it's something we can do together," he says.



Dr. Creagan

Edward Creagan, M.D.

Edward Creagan, M.D., has always gotten plenty of exercise. The Mayo Clinic cancer specialist has been a dedicated runner for years.

But during an annual physical exam, Dr. Creagan was told he could improve his fitness routine by starting a weightlifting program for muscle strengthening. “My doctor said I was in great physical health, but I was going to start getting injured if I didn’t maintain my muscle mass,” Dr. Creagan says.

At his next road race, Dr. Creagan looked around and found evidence to back up his doctor’s advice. He realized there were few runners left in his age group. That was all he needed to make weightlifting a part of his fitness routine.

Now Dr. Creagan works out with weights several times a week, targeting muscle groups in his arms, legs, back and abdominal areas. Although it’s different from running, he enjoys both the activity and the feeling of strength it creates.

Dr. Creagan plans on lifting weights “forever,” and urges others, especially older people, to do the same. Without strengthening exercises, both men and women gradually lose muscle mass starting in young adulthood, he notes. A sensible weightlifting routine involves doing a set of eight to 12 repetitions three times a week, but check with your doctor before starting a program.

“No matter what your age or physical fitness level, you can benefit from a weightlifting routine — as long as you begin slowly,” Dr. Creagan says.



Dr. Martenson

James Martenson, M.D.

When the alarm rang at 5:30 a.m., James Martenson, M.D., found it difficult to pull back the covers and put on his jogging shoes.

“I just wasn’t motivated,” says the specialist in cancer radiation treatment. Then he discovered squash — the kind you play, not the kind you eat.

“Once I found something I really liked, it was no longer a case of thinking, ‘How do I fit my exercise in?’” says Dr. Martenson. “I wanted to do it.”

Squash, which is similar to racquetball, is a fast-paced game that’s played with another person. Dr. Martenson first took it up when he was a student at the University of Washington. Now he plays three to five times a week on courts near the Mayo Clinic campus in downtown Rochester, Minnesota.

The 5:30 a.m. alarm makes sure he gets plenty of exercise before work.

“I think there is something out there for everyone that they can really enjoy,” Dr. Martenson says. “Enjoying exercise is a huge key to continuing the activity and benefiting from it.”

Exercise Your Mind

#2 STRATEGY

Just as physical activity keeps your body strong, mental activity keeps your mind sharp and agile.

If you continue to learn and challenge yourself — whether it's by learning a foreign language, switching careers or doing crossword puzzles — you can strengthen your memory. Regardless of your age, an active brain produces new connections between nerve cells that allow these cells to communicate with one another.

While it's true that older people in general learn differently from younger people and have more difficulty retrieving information rapidly, old age isn't an automatic slide into dementia. Numerous studies show that older people can and do learn new things — and learn them well. Memory exercises and recall techniques can improve your memory and enhance your learning.

Seeking out new learning opportunities, practicing existing skills and embracing change can help you stay mentally fit no matter what your age, according to Mayo Clinic experts. On the next few pages, you'll find out how they put this advice into practice in their own lives.





Colleagues sometimes refer to Dr. Ken Berge as “Cyberdoc” because of his role in helping pioneer the electronic information age at Mayo Clinic.

Kenneth Berge, M.D.

As one of the medical editors of MayoClinic.com, Mayo Clinic’s award-winning Web site, Kenneth Berge, M.D., helped pioneer the electronic health information age at Mayo. A retired internal medicine specialist, he reviews and develops consumer health information articles published on the site at www.mayoclinic.com.

Dr. Berge says many people his age are surprised with both his computer expertise and his willingness to work after retirement. From Dr. Berge’s perspective, it’s simply an intriguing way to stay in touch with medicine and stay sharp mentally.

“If you don’t keep up with things, then you’re going to slow down in other areas of your life,” he says. “You need to have interests, no matter how old you are. Just because you’re 60, 70 or 80 doesn’t mean you have to roll over and give up on things.”

Dr. Berge also likes demonstrating to others of his generation that computers aren’t something only younger people can operate. “If you can use a hand-held calculator, you can use a computer,” he tells senior citizens. “Don’t be afraid to give it a try. If you say you can’t, you can’t. If you say you can, you will.”



Dr. Dave Williams and his daughter, Laura, add new life to a community garden.

David Williams, M.D.

David Williams, M.D., and his wife, Aileen, thrive on finding opportunities to learn — and they try to use this knowledge to help others.

After his career in pulmonary diseases at Mayo Clinic, Dr. Williams honed his editing skills as the associate medical editor of the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter* for seven years. Curiosity about new medical discoveries and research prompts him to continue to attend medical meetings and updates.

An enthusiastic community volunteer, Aileen has been honored for her volunteer efforts in Interfaith Hospitality, Habitat for Humanity and other areas.

Living and working in Pakistan for nine years (when the children were young) and traveling the globe gave the Williams family a unique understanding of and fondness for other cultures. Dr. Williams' involvement in medical relief efforts and medical lectures includes trips to Russia, Kenya, Bolivia and Albania.

Dr. and Mrs. Williams' two sons and daughter share their parents' love for travel, learning and helping others. Dean served in the Peace Corps in Guatemala, Laura helped build a school in Zimbabwe, and Mark assisted in earthquake relief efforts in Pakistan.

An avid gardener, photographer, snorkler and scuba diver, Dr. Williams encourages people to explore various activities to stay mentally sharp. Dr. Williams and his wife always seek new adventures. "Exercising your mind is a lifelong endeavor," says Dr. Williams, "and a welcome challenge."



Dr. Fontana

Robert Fontana, M.D.

For the first six months of his retirement, Robert Fontana, M.D., woke up feeling restless and guilty. “I kept thinking to myself, ‘I ought to be doing something,’ and I think a lot of people feel that same way,” he says.

For that reason, the retired pulmonologist joined the staff of the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter* on a part-time basis to answer some of the health questions sent in by readers. After working with the *Health Letter* for several years, Dr. Fontana turned his attention to evaluating the results of research studies on various aspects of lung disease.

Some people don’t understand why he wants to continue working after retirement. Dr. Fontana’s response is to tell them that he’s the one who benefits from it.

“I retired from active practice, but I could never retire from medicine completely,” he admits. His involvement in research projects keeps him up to date on the ever-changing world of medicine.

“I think if you get away from challenging yourself regularly, it doesn’t take long for you to go stale,” he says. “I think that’s true for anyone. Sitting around isn’t good for your body or your mind.”

Dr. Fontana encourages retirees to keep active, whether it’s in the work world, doing volunteer activities or enjoying recreational pursuits.



Dr. Nelson

Audrey Nelson, M.D.

“Always have a goal that you’re working toward,” advises Audrey Nelson, M.D.

Dr. Nelson takes that advice to heart for herself. During her career, she had a series of goals that she set and achieved.

As a retired consultant in rheumatology, Dr. Nelson is now setting goals for her various retirement activities and projects. “Retirement planning must be done well in advance and should be viewed as a transition from one career to another rather than an endpoint,” Dr. Nelson says.

Dr. Nelson points out that individuals who have completed their primary careers have much to contribute to society in terms of their experience and talents.

“You not only help other people, but broaden your own horizons in the process. When you retire from a busy career,” she adds, “there is a whole new world just waiting for you to dive into.”

“People who have something to do have a better life,” she says. “People who sit around are not as functional as they get older.”

“Life is a series of steps,” notes Dr. Nelson, “and you should always be looking for your next landing.”

Make Your Health a Priority

#3 STRATEGY

Make your health a priority. Simple as it may seem, it's one of the best, most practical choices you can make to lead a healthier and longer life, according to Mayo Clinic experts.

Your health depends a great deal on the responsibility you take for it. In many ways, you decide every day how healthy you're going to be. Not all diseases and conditions are avoidable, of course. But you can lower your risk for many of the most serious ones by making good decisions each day about:

- Eating healthy foods
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Getting regular medical care
- Taking time to listen to your body

Making your health a priority doesn't mean giving up your favorite foods, activities or becoming concerned about your health to the exclusion of other things. It's about balance — making sure that taking care of yourself is as important as meeting your other responsibilities.

How you do this is up to you. But here's how these Mayo Clinic experts make their own health a priority.





Dr. Hensrud

Donald Hensrud, M.D.

Making your health a priority doesn't have to be a matter of sacrifice, according to Donald Hensrud, M.D., a Mayo Clinic specialist in nutrition and endocrinology.

For example, Dr. Hensrud naturally makes healthy eating a part of his life — both at home and at work. But he still has an occasional passion for desserts that he's unwilling to give up.

"Are they the healthiest things in the world? No," he says." But that's not the point. If I eat healthy 95 percent of the time, an occasional treat probably won't matter. To make your health a priority, you need to look at your lifestyle and make positive, not negative, changes."

For example, by working out with his wife each day on their home fitness equipment, exercise has become something he looks forward to and enjoys. "It keeps us and our marriage healthy," he says.

And when it comes to eating healthfully, Dr. Hensrud chooses to focus on the variety of healthy foods he can eat. He enjoys trying the new or exotic fruits and vegetables now available in produce sections. At home, he also makes sure that healthy foods are more visible and accessible to his family than less healthy ones.

"We're too caught up in focusing on restricting this and that, especially healthy (unsaturated) dietary fats," Dr. Hensrud says. "Although limiting some foods is important, there are plenty of great foods out there, and you can learn to like new foods."

"Eating healthfully can mean eating well."



Jennifer Nelson

As head of Mayo Clinic's dietetics department, Jennifer Nelson has helped thousands of people make healthier eating choices and understand the role nutrition plays in preventing disease. In the kitchen of her home in Rochester, Minnesota, she's worked to instill in her family the same appreciation of how much influence nutrition has on their health.

Lower fat meals, attention to portion sizes and healthy cooking methods result in healthy meals at her household. She enjoys inviting friends and relatives over for dinner.

Nelson offers these tips for you, based on how she cooks for her family:

- Emphasize whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. Filling up on these keeps higher fat meats, dairy products and sweets in check.
- Remember, the method of preparation is important. You don't need to fry food. Bake it, steam it or poach it. And let fat drip away during cooking.
- You can reduce fat by up to half in almost any recipe without compromising flavor.
- If you really must eat something high in fat or sugar, you can cut the size of the serving.

"Making your health a priority is something you don't have to do alone," Nelson says. "When you include your family and friends, it's easier to start and maintain healthy habits. And the nice thing is, you're helping others learn how to make choices that can help them lead healthier lives."

Jennifer Nelson believes that one of the most powerful tools in medicine is a healthy diet — and it can taste great!



Dr. Hagen

Philip Hagen, M.D.

As medical editor of the *Mayo Clinic EmbodyHealth Guide to Self-Care*, Philip Hagen, M.D., emphasizes making your health a priority. The book, which draws upon Dr. Hagen's experience as a specialist in preventive medicine, features practical advice on taking care of yourself and developing healthy habits.

For Dr. Hagen, the demands of being a physician along with responsibilities to his family and community can make practicing what he preaches difficult. Although he works hard to eat healthfully and get enough exercise, fitting everything in can be a challenge.

"The key is balance. You have to make sure your health doesn't take a back seat to 'the urgency of the moment' and everything else that's going on in your life," Dr. Hagen says.

To ensure this doesn't happen, Dr. Hagen makes it a point to analyze all aspects of his health at least twice a year — on his birthday and at his preventive care visit with his doctor. He looks at four categories when evaluating his health:

Physical. "I ask myself: 'Am I eating a reasonably healthy diet? Am I getting enough rest? Am I getting exercise every day? And what did my primary care doctor tell me I needed to work on at my last visit?'"

Dr. Hagen says you should keep your immunizations up to date and think carefully about your nutrition, your exercise habits, and other health-related habits, such as home and work safety issues.

When was the last time you saw your doctor for preventive care? Dr. Hagen notes that you can determine the number of times you need a physical exam by decade, barring major medical problems.

That means see your doctor twice in your 20s, three times in your 30s, four times in your 40s and five times in your 50s. After 60, get an annual physical exam.

If you find that you've neglected your physical health, Dr. Hagen says don't panic, simply "make an adjustment. Achieving and maintaining good health is a daily process, not a one-time event."

Mental. Everybody needs at least one activity that's both challenging and enjoyable. Dr. Hagen coaches and teaches youths because "It forces me to be informed and creative, and not to take myself too seriously." At work, he spends one day a week with a team of developers at Mayo Clinic Health Solutions, designing novel ways to keep people healthy. "It's a positive, challenging, creative activity," he explains.

When you analyze your health, Dr. Hagen suggests asking yourself what in the last few weeks has challenged you and allowed you to enjoy a creative, innovative "right brain" experience. If the answer is "nothing," it's time to look for those types of opportunities at work, at home or in the community.

Spiritual. For Dr. Hagen, spirituality means thinking seriously about one's place and purpose in the world. "Humans have a great need to have purpose in life," he says. "I fill this need through my clinical practice, church, family discussions and reading."

Social support. Everyone needs supportive human contact to be healthy. Developing that social network should be a priority. At each analysis, Dr. Hagen makes sure his social life is healthy as well.

Birthdays, holidays and life changes offer good opportunities for self-analysis, Dr. Hagen says. "You can't afford to neglect any one category," he notes. "Like it or not, they all contribute to your health."

Don't Smoke

#4 STRATEGY

Another top strategy that's recommended by Mayo Clinic experts for a longer, healthier life should come as no surprise — don't smoke.

If you're a smoker, you're simply more likely to die early. About half of all current smokers will die of a disease caused by tobacco. Every year, more than 430,000 people in the United States die from the direct effects of smoking, and about 50,000 nonsmokers die from the effects of secondhand smoke. Smoking leads to more deaths than AIDS, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, fire, automobile accidents, homicide and suicide combined.

And it's not just adults who are at risk. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to develop upper respiratory illnesses, asthma and ear infections. And maternal smoking before and after a baby's birth is a risk factor for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

But there is good news. No matter what your age, if you stop smoking, you'll dramatically reduce your risk of disease, according to Richard Hurt, M.D., head of the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center.

"It's never too late to stop," Dr. Hurt says. And he should know. See the next page for an account of his personal struggle with smoking.





Richard Hurt, M.D.

Through his work as the Director of the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center (www.mayoclinic.org/stop-smoking), Dr. Hurt and his staff have helped thousands of smokers stop. But his knowledge of both the benefits and the difficulties of quitting come firsthand. Dr. Hurt is a former smoker who struggled to stop for many years.

Dr. Hurt

“I smoked heavily right from the beginning and even smoked through medical school,” he says. “I never met a cigarette I didn’t like.”

At one point, Dr. Hurt smoked two to three packs a day. As a physician, he knew the toll it was taking on his health. Although he stopped smoking dozens of times, he couldn’t permanently break the grip that tobacco had on his life.

Then while a resident at Mayo Clinic, he enrolled in the Smokers’ Clinic at Rochester Methodist Hospital, which offered support, information and understanding. With the program’s help, Dr. Hurt finally stopped for good.

Years later, however, Dr. Hurt still remembers how hard it was going without a cigarette for the first time. “It was November 22, 1975. It was Saturday at 3:30 in the afternoon. I was home alone. It was the hardest thing I have ever done,” he says.

Nicotine, the addictive drug in tobacco, can have serious withdrawal symptoms, and sometimes, they can last for months. Dr. Hurt himself experienced irritability, insomnia and intense cravings for cigarettes.

Fortunately, Dr. Hurt notes, today there are more treatment programs that have trained health care professionals to help smokers stop. In fact, one of the

major recent initiatives of Mayo's Nicotine Dependence Center's education program is training tobacco treatment specialists for medical practices around the country.

In addition, telephone "quitlines" are now available across the United States and in many other countries, making effective treatment available to millions of smokers. Also, effective medications are available — including nicotine gum, nicotine patches, nicotine nasal spray, a nicotine inhaler and two non-nicotine medications.

But as helpful as these services and medications are, Dr. Hurt says your success also depends on your commitment to stop smoking and do what's necessary to achieve your goal. Once you reach that point:

- Ask your health care professional for advice on seeking out a formal treatment program.
- Use the services provided through telephone quitlines. The national number is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).
- Set a date to stop smoking and stick to it. Make the date within the next 30 days.
- Plan to use at least one of the approved medications that help smokers stop.
- Think about what happened last time you tried to stop. Avoid places and activities that you connect with smoking, such as going to a bar or watching a lot of TV.
- Get rid of all your smoking paraphernalia.
- Don't try to smoke just one cigarette to ease your cravings. Most smokers can't stop at one.

Above all, be honest with yourself, Dr. Hurt says. "Quitting won't be easy, but the reasons for doing it far outweigh the reasons for continuing to smoke."

Invest in the Major Relationships in Your Life

#5 STRATEGY

When it comes to your well-being, don't underestimate the importance of those closest to you. Whether it's your spouse, children or close friends, the people you count as family can play an important role in your health.

Strong relationships with your partner or family can motivate you to take care of yourself — to eat right, exercise and get regular medical care. Your partner and family can also be an important buffer from the stresses of everyday life. And if your health isn't good, your family may help get you the medical care you need to manage your condition more successfully.

But like a garden, family relationships need tending, according to Mayo Clinic experts. You can't expect to reap the benefits of long-term relationships unless you invest in them.

There is no right way to stay connected with your family. What's important is simply that you do it. Here's how these Mayo Clinic physicians invest in and benefit from the major relationships in their lives.





Andrew Good, M.D.

The secret to a longer, healthier life, according to Andrew Good, M.D., is this: “Live with a loving partner in a relationship of mutual respect and sharing. It’s easier for two to handle a problem than one.”

Dr. Good bases his advice on personal experience. He and his wife, Alison, have been married for 40 years. In that time, they’ve raised two children and built a strong relationship in which each has grown and changed yet still maintained common ground.

Dr. Andrew Good believes the secret to a longer, healthier life is a good relationship. He and his wife, Alison, have been married for 40 years.

For Dr. Good, sharing his life with Alison has been an important part of staying healthy — both physically and mentally. Talking with Alison and enjoying the comfortable companionship that comes with being partners for life plays a key role in

helping Dr. Good relax and keep stress at bay. With Alison, he can share laughter, celebrate achievements or put problems in perspective.

Most importantly, Dr. Good says, his relationship with Alison keeps him looking forward to the years ahead. “With a life partner, you continue to grow, not just grow older,” he says.

Still, working at a relationship, even one as strong as his own, is critical, Dr. Good says. The couple regularly alternates bringing each other breakfast in bed. At home, dinners together are almost always by candlelight.

“The little things you can do to let the other person know they’re special are important ways to invest in your relationship,” Dr. Good says.



Floyd Willis, M.D.

As a family practice physician, Floyd Willis, M.D., estimates that stress plays a role in up to 40 percent of the diseases and conditions that bring patients to his office. That's why Dr. Willis, who practices at Mayo Clinic's Jacksonville, Florida, location, makes spending time with his wife and two young children a top priority in his hectic schedule.

Dr. Willis

At home, mealtimes are a family occasion, where Dr. Willis and his family can catch up on the day's news. And whenever possible, he and his family head to the beaches to fish, build sand castles, or just enjoy the sights and sounds of the Atlantic Ocean.

"My family really helps me strike a balance," Dr. Willis says. "And when you do this, it has a positive effect on your physical and mental well-being."

Dr. Willis tells many of his patients that to stay healthy, it's not enough to simply have medical tests and report there's no problem. He advises people that the whole of life needs to be taken into account.

"You have to ask yourself if your lifestyle is healthy, too," he says. "If you're in tune with everything in your life, you're going to be much, much better off." Family is essential to "staying in tune," he adds.

He notes that your relationship with your partner can be an important foundation for helping you stay healthy and succeed in other areas of life. If you have children, building and keeping strong relationships can be a source of great joy — one that can help you keep your perspective if other things go wrong.

Even an extended family of relatives and friends can benefit you, Dr. Willis adds. "Family can help nourish the soul," he says. "And for your health, that's as important to nourish as anything else."

Take Time for the Things You Enjoy

#6

STRATEGY

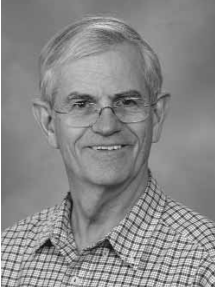
Do you enjoy gardening? Playing bridge? Traveling? Spending time with your grandchildren?

You might be surprised to know that these activities not only bring enjoyment, but they also may benefit your health.

Science is only beginning to document the health benefits of leisure activities. But a growing number of studies suggest that taking time for the things you enjoy can help you feel better about yourself and more satisfied with life. And when you feel this way, you may be more likely to exercise, eat well, get regular medical care and reach out to friends and family — all of which can benefit you physically and mentally.

Not surprisingly, taking time for the things you enjoy is one of the prescriptions for a healthier, longer life that Mayo Clinic experts follow themselves. Here's how they do it.





Edward Lufkin, M.D.

Edward Lufkin, M.D., followed a path in retirement that's popular with many other professionals who don't wish to "cut the cord" too suddenly. He worked as a medical adviser to a pharmaceutical company for six years after retiring from Mayo Clinic.

He then moved back to the town of his birth, Northfield, Minnesota, where he enjoys the many community activities and spirit of a small town.

These include service projects with his church, the Rotary, and the Elder Collegium, an educational program for senior citizens.

Dr. Lufkin offers these thoughts about retirement in the computer age:

- Maintain contact with friends and family through e-mail. It's easy to learn.
- Explore the array of enjoyable games (such as bridge, chess, solitaire and backgammon) and discussion groups available through computers.
- Take advantage of convenient shopping opportunities on the Internet — you can find almost any product.
- Explore the numerous Web sites that offer health information. Check the source and the date to be sure the site is recent and reputable.

Dr. Lufkin advises, at the risk of oversimplifying, that the three best strategies for retirement are these: "Find something to do. Find someone to love. And find something to look forward to."



Renée Bergstrom

Renée Bergstrom

Renée Bergstrom, a patient education specialist at Mayo Clinic, takes time for people and activities that lift her spirit. She practices yoga to start her day with intention. Yoga keeps her flexible enough to bike, kayak and tend her numerous flower gardens.

Bergstrom observes nature, friends and her 10 grandchildren through a camera lens. Her chronological photo albums keep the kids entertained, and her Southeast Minnesota scenes sell as postcards and bookmarks at an art center in Lanesboro and a gallery in Spring Grove.

“Art is spiritual. My soul is enriched by discovering awesome scenes, capturing tender expressions, designing living spaces, arranging flower bouquets and connecting with other artists,” says Bergstrom.

“Teaching stress management several times a week reminds me to keep my life balanced,” she explains. “I encourage my class participants to take time for creative fun because laughter is a great stress reliever.”

Bergstrom and her husband and friends celebrate life simply. For example, six 63-year-old women recently ate birthday cake and flew kites. A friend dubbed herself the “Blue Moon Empress” and invited several people to bring blue food and watch June’s second full moon rise over the river. And their Fourth of July parade consisted of a king and queen riding in an all-terrain vehicle and trailer, a team of horses pulling an Amish surrey, and a red Miata sports car.

The joy of connecting with people led Bergstrom to choose the development of caring presence as her doctoral dissertation research topic. She plans to use the study results to create curriculum for medical professionalism training.



Mary Madden

Mary Madden

Mary Madden, a registered nurse who works in obstetrics at Mayo's Rochester Methodist Hospital, makes it a priority to take time for her favorite activities: reading, hiking and spending time outdoors with her family.

Hiking directly benefits Madden's health — the exercise increases her muscle strength and endurance. Over the years, she's taken in the beauty of the Minnesota state parks and nurtured the family bond by hiking with her husband and two sons.

"We've even hiked through national parks in Alaska, and the scenery is stunning," says Madden. "It's just you and the wilderness."

Books are especially important to Madden. Whether it's history, biographies or Westerns, she's an avid reader of them all.

"I make time to read — even if I have to sneak it in," she says. The books help her learn or fire her imagination, but the benefits go beyond this.

"For me, time devoted to reading and outdoor activities are the most effective stress management tools there are," she says. "They help me keep my balance. If you have balance, you can get up in the morning and look forward to the new day."

Do Pets Play a Role in Your Health?

A pet — whether it's a dog, cat, goldfish or iguana — can help you establish healthy habits or benefit your emotional health.

For example, research shows that dog owners are more likely to walk regularly than are people who don't have dogs. Other research suggests that pet owners may feel less lonely or isolated, even if they live alone. Because social isolation is a powerful risk factor for poor health, having a pet may help you live longer and better.

Robert Sheeler, M.D. (see page 31), believes strongly in the healthy impact that pets can have on your life. He and his wife have three cats, a golden retriever and two horses. "The cats are like gyroscopes — they help ground you and remind you that living in the moment is the place to be. The dog is a great exercise companion and is more of a barometer, reflecting your moods and keeping you in touch with yourself," says Dr. Sheeler.

Dr. Sheeler tries to walk 20 miles a week, rain or shine, summer or winter. "In the dead of winter it's of great help to have a canine compatriot who already has his coat on, ready and waiting for a walk — no matter what the weather."



Stay Connected to Your Community



Whether it's volunteering for a cause or simply befriending someone else, being part of a network of people can benefit you physically and mentally.

Research shows a link between quality of life and community involvement. It's only common sense. If you feel needed and a part of your community, you'll likely feel better about yourself and enjoy life more.

And staying connected to your community may also add years to your life. Science has only begun to document the effects of social support on your health. But a growing body of evidence suggests that staying connected with others may play a role in helping you recover from a health condition — or even extend your life.

Staying involved with your community can mean different things to different people. You may choose to volunteer with an organization, or you might participate in your church choir. Simply being involved is far more important than what you're involved in.

Here's how these Mayo Clinic experts stay involved in their communities.





Dr. Norman Hepper listens intently as a young student reads aloud.

(Photo courtesy of Rochester Post-Bulletin)

Norman Hepper, M.D.

During his years of practice at Mayo Clinic, pulmonologist Norman Hepper, M.D., read medical charts, journals and thousands of X-rays. In retirement, Dr. Hepper still devotes a great deal of time to reading. Only now, Dr. Hepper is being read to — by students at an elementary school in Rochester, Minnesota.

As a volunteer for 15 years, Dr. Hepper is as familiar to students as their teachers or principal. Each week he and his wife, Char, spend three to four afternoons in an after-school program, helping students sharpen their skills in reading and math.

“It’s really a different world for me to be involved in, but it’s very gratifying,” Dr. Hepper says. “I feel as though the school is my own. I know the teachers, the students and what they’re doing. It’s been very educational for me.”

Dr. Hepper notes that a particular highlight is working with children from many different cultures. He and his wife made a permanent endowment to benefit academically struggling third-, fourth- and fifth-graders at the school.

Dr. Hepper is also involved in other community activities. Between volunteering and activities with friends, he’s rarely home for lunch. But he wouldn’t have it any other way.

Community involvement, he says, has widened his circle of friends and given him a sense of fulfillment that he wouldn’t have found otherwise. “Community involvement is so important,” he says. “And it’s something anybody can do.”



Dr. Kiely

Joseph Kiely, M.D.

Joseph Kiely, M.D., believes he's part of a global community. In that spirit, the retired hematologist spends a month each year helping others in a place far from the peaceful, rolling hills that surround Mayo Clinic.

Every January, Dr. Kiely travels to Haiti and sets up practice in a clinic and hospital in a remote village. There, underneath the bright Caribbean sunshine, he puts the skills honed at Mayo Clinic to use treating people who normally have little access to medical care.

The weather is hot and the hours are long, but Dr. Kiely doesn't mind. Tending those who come to the clinic makes him feel needed and "part of the solution, not the problem."

"These trips are an opportunity to give something back," he says. "And actually, the experience is so positive that I get more out of it than I give."

Dr. Kiely, the founding medical editor of the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*, believes this is true for many reasons. For one, his research into the diseases he encounters in Haiti (many of them have virtually disappeared in the United States) keeps him sharp. He's also able to connect with many different and interesting people when they come to work at the clinic. In addition, his work there reminds him how privileged his life has been and continues to be.

That, he says, is enough to keep him thinking positively a long time after he returns to Minnesota.

Dr. Kiely urges others, especially older people, to get involved in their communities in any way possible. "No matter how old you are, you can still be very helpful and useful. And feeling that way makes you feel better yourself."



Dr. Bob Sheeler poses with Gil.

Robert Sheeler, M.D.

Volunteering isn't the only way to stay connected to your community. You can also find others with whom to share hobbies or interests, as Robert Sheeler, M.D., has done.

In addition to being a family practice specialist and medical editor of the *Mayo Clinic Health Letter*, Dr. Sheeler enjoys reading. Through this interest, both he and his wife, Pat, stay connected with friends and the community around them.

Dr. Sheeler and his wife are part of the Diverse Readers Book Club, an informal gathering of friends and acquaintances that meets regularly to debate and discuss books from an assigned reading list.

Books covered by the group include everything from mysteries to works by noted writers. Not only is the reading list diverse, so is the group. Members include computer programmers, engineers, lawyers and bookstore employees.

"It's really inspiring and thought provoking," Dr. Sheeler says. "Everyone has such different backgrounds and philosophies."

Although the discussion is challenging, Dr. Sheeler notes that an important benefit of the book club is getting to know other members. He believes that this feeling of being connected to a larger group helps both him and his wife feel and stay healthier.

"The relationships you have with your family and the community around you are important," he says. "Building both types of ties is an enjoyable and worthwhile investment in your health."

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