

# LIVESAFE

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## ► Your Mental Health (Aging)

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**Growing older is an experience we all share and many of us worry about.** As we age, we face many changes and many potential sources of stress — we are not as strong as we used to be, illness is more of a problem, children move away from home, people we love die, we may become lonely, and eventually we must give up our jobs and retire.

Coping with all these changes is difficult, but it can be done. The keys to coping include your long-term lifestyle, your ability to expect and plan for change, the strength of your relationships with family and friends, and your willingness to stay interested in and involved with life. It is, therefore, important to think carefully about what will happen to you as you age and how you are going to deal with the changes that will happen.

### **Dealing with Physical Changes**

As you grow older, your body will naturally change. You may tire more easily than you used to. You may become ill more often. You may not see or hear as well as you did when you were younger.

Here are some things you can do to cope with these physical changes:

- **Accept reality.** Denying these changes will only make life less enjoyable for you and the people around you. Get the things that will help you – eyeglasses or hearing aids for example.
- **Keep a positive attitude.** Remember that slowing down does not mean you have to come to a complete stop. Chances are you will still be able to do almost all the things you used to; you may just need to take a little more time and learn to pace yourself.
- **See your family doctor regularly.** He/she can, then, deal with any changes or symptoms that require medical attention.
- **Be careful about your medications.** As you get older, they may begin to interact differently with other drugs and to affect you differently than before. Make sure your doctor knows about all your medications including any herbal and naturopathic remedies that you are taking and any medication another physician may have prescribed.
- **Take responsibility for your own health.** Do not hesitate to ask your doctor questions; some do not offer explanations unless asked.
- **Change your eating habits.** Adopt a balanced diet with fewer fatty foods, and try not to over-eat.
- **Drink less alcohol.** Your body will have more difficulty coping with it as you grow older.

Adapted from: [www.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/aging-and-mental-health/](http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/aging-and-mental-health/)

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