

Secrets of healthier older years

Hi from your health care team. Those older than 50 years of age form one of the largest sections of our community. With the right approach, as people get older, there are so many ways they can stay healthy and happy - or even happier! The newsletter covers some important aspects of health in older years.

Michael Maroon writes about the critical nature of balance, Steve Jones sees lots of aging feet and describes some important conditions, Angelo Schibeci has lots of life experience and urges people to maintain vitality, Geraldine Eibner has witnessed the benefits of massage therapy for older adults and discusses these, while Rebecca Barakat hopes people will improve their diet before it is too late. Read on if you'd like to discover some secrets, even better, come and talk to one of our experts and tap into their wisdom and expertise.

Some of you may be aware that we've been searching for the right Massage Therapist to be dedicated to Friday afternoons. We are pleased to announce Geraldine Eibner has joined our team in this position. We welcome her and we are sure you will be impressed with her long experience and very comprehensive knowledge and skills.



Geraldine
Eibner

Keeping Balance

An article in the Sydney Morning Herald recently discussed a study of 22,000 adults over the age of 65 with the results showing most seniors participate in exercise beneficial to heart fitness, but don't do anything to protect against falls. You're probably wondering how the heck anyone can protect against falls, keep reading and you'll find out!

Michael Maroon's 75-year-old grandfather regularly comes in for chiropractic care and he can definitely see and feel the benefits of being treated. Although his attention wanes whenever Michael uses the word *proprioception*, he loves the fact that Michael can help him keep doing the gardening and lawns safely by reducing his risk of falling!

Balance is monitored by 3 main systems in the body, vision, hearing and joint/muscle feedback otherwise known as proprioception. It is an unfortunate side-effect of ageing in that our vision and hearing becomes worse as we get older, as well as this, the

joints in our body become subject to disuse and degeneration.

Degeneration of our joints can lead to a lack of feedback to the brain - therefore our brains can't see what our joints are doing! Muscles systems don't work as well when there is less information getting back to the brain,



which further increases the risk of falling over. Imagine you walk along the same pavement every single day, you know the path, you make sure to avoid the dip at number 22, but one day you don't realise that council has done some work and created another ditch in the path. If your joints were working as well as they could, the body could react quicker allow you to regain balance, but if the feedback is delayed, then it could be too late.

Chiropractic adjustments have

the potential to increase the feedback from skeletal joints, which lead to better muscle activation and therefore better balance. Our joints were designed for movement and with regular movement, the pathways to our brain are constantly being used and kept in optimal working order!

Current research has shown that between 18%-33% of older hip fracture patients die within 1 year of their fracture and for those who survive, an estimated 25%-75% who are independent before their fracture can neither walk independently nor achieve their previous level of independent living within 1 year following their fracture.

If that's not a good enough reason to ensure your body is working properly, then we don't know what is! By combining chiropractic care with regular exercise which can include walking, dancing, light weight-lifting and specific balance exercises, we can ensure that your body will be ready for any unexpected dips in the path.

The Older Feet

There are reportedly over 300 known foot conditions. As we get older the chances that we encounter any one of these problems vastly increases. Much like a car needs servicing, check-ups and scheduled maintenance due to 'wear and tear', the human body does the same. Muscles and tendons weaken, joints lose their integrity and congruency, and the defensive capabilities of our immune system decreases. While there is too many conditions to cover in one article, three common foot ailments related to aging will be discussed.

1. *Type 2 Diabetes.* Diabetes is Australia's fastest growing chronic disease. According to 'Diabetes Australia' in 2005 over 1.7 million Australians had diabetes.

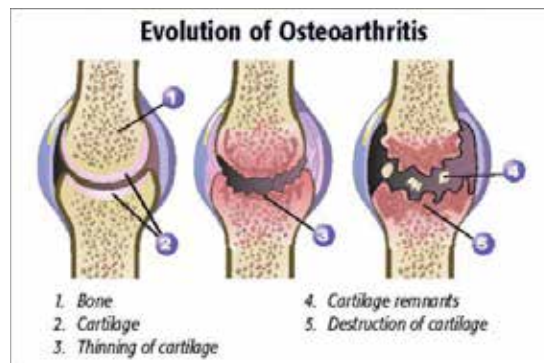
How does diabetes affect the feet?

Problems with the feet relating to diabetes occur most commonly as result of poor diabetic control and hyperglycaemia. Nerves and blood vessels are affected by hyperglycaemia. A condition known as 'diabetic peripheral neuropathy' can result. This condition occurs as a result of blood vessels that are damaged as a result of hyperglycaemia. Resulting blood flow to the nerves is insufficient also known as neuroischaemia. Neuroischaemia causes nerve demyelination which is the destruction of the outer sheath of the nerve. Nerve conduction then slows and can eventually be obliterated. This is dangerous to the individual as nerves provide us with protective sensation (i.e. the ability to detect painful objects that may penetrate the skin), proprioception (i.e. the sensation of balance and being able to detect body position in space), autonomic functions (i.e. constriction and dilation of blood vessels).

This results in poor blood flow and oxygenation of the body's tissues and organs. This damage in the lower limb is known as peripheral vascular disease (PVD). In particular individuals are at far greater risk of tissue ulceration and amputation due to poor healing times and detection of painful objects and pressure areas on the foot.

2. *Osteoarthritis* - is the most common joint disorder. Osteoarthritis is a result of gradual wear and tear on joints. This wear and tear on joints ultimately leads to destruction of joint spaces and the soft tissue that lies between bony joints known as articular cartilage. It is this cartilage that provides joints with smooth and cushioned surfaces to operate against.

When cartilage deteriorates joints become stiff, swollen and painful. Often individuals will find that joints are painful with weight bearing and after activity. Joints are described as feel-



ing 'stiff' for the first 30 minutes after getting out of bed in the morning.

The symptoms of osteoarthritis generally begin in middle age. Almost all individuals of age 70 and over display some sort of symptoms of osteoarthritis. Age is a contributing risk factor.

3. *Corns and skin changes.* Many physiological changes happen in the skin as we get older: the superficial and deeper layers of the skin become thinner; between the ages of 20-70 the moisture content in the skin reduces by 40%. This causes the skin not only to become thicker but drier; elastin and collagen, (which are the structural framework of the skin,) decrease in number.

Corns are hardened pockets of tissue that lie in the superficial layers of the skin. They commonly occur in between the toes and on the sole of the foot where the skin is more susceptible to frictional pressures. If left untreated they can penetrate into the deeper layer of the skin. In combination with poor healing potential of older individuals due to poor circulation in the skin, a corn may also result in ulceration.



To help prevent corns shoes should be properly fitted to minimise pressure and frictional areas. If they are persistent you should see your podiatrist effectively to par away the affected area.

The above mentioned conditions are only a few of the common conditions that affect the feet as we age. If you have any further questions about foot pain or relating issues please contact our podiatrists here at Health plus

The Ageing Truth of Massage

It's a well-known fact; Australia is an ageing nation. Generally, with age comes an increasing amount of physical complaints and decreasing ability to heal, but does it have to be that way?

Massage can not only help with the everyday aches and pains associated with ageing (arthritis, stiffness, circulatory issues, increased blood pressure, decreased energy and appetite, poor bowel movement, poor quality of sleep etc.). Massage as well brings back the importance of human touch as a *tactile therapy*, massage is a major contributor to the development and function of the Central Nervous System which in turn helps re-educate our bodies to become more responsive, flexible and co-ordinated (you can teach an old dog new tricks after all!!)

Massage has also been proven scientifically to help ease the suffering experienced by patients with dementia and Alzheimer's.

Massage is a great way to free the body of tension and release more energy for you to utilise in your everyday activities. Remember, our bodies have the capacity for improvement and change, throughout life, regardless of age, and when it comes to nurturing, what better time than now?

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Nutrition for the elderly

Nutrition is important at all stages of life - including as we age. The process of ageing can have significant effects on a person's food intake and nutrition. Attitudes and preferences to foods change over time due to many factors including loneliness, boredom, depression, and forgetfulness. This unfortunately means that many older people skip meals and develop poor eating habits. There are many services available today in the community to help overcome these factors, and help maintain nutrition in the elderly, or it can be as simple as asking a friend or family member for a helping hand.

To maintain good health at an older age, there are a few key points;

1. Use less salt

The Australian diet provides enough natural salts from foods such as meats, eggs, milk and vegetables. It is unnecessary to add salt to cooking to reach your daily requirements. Many packaged foods are loaded with salt to help present them and also enhance flavour. Too much salt increases the risk of developing high blood pressure, or worsens high blood pressure if you already have been diagnosed. It is a fact that approximately half of the Australian population over the age of 60 has high blood pressure. If you think your food doesn't taste as good without salt, then get experimenting with other herbs and spices - such as garlic, basil, oregano, and pepper!

2. Drink more water

Adequate water intake and staying hydrated is vital to staying healthy, especially in the warmer months. It is important that even if you don't feel thirsty, that you keep drinking at least 6 cups of water per day! It is a fact that as we get older our sensation of thirst decreases, however our need for fluids does not. You don't only have to drink water - try teas, mineral water, low sugar cordials, and milks - they all count.

3. Calcium and vitamin D

To maintain strong bones and stop the development or progression of osteoporosis, it is important to have adequate calcium AND vitamin D intake. Calcium makes the bones stronger, but vitamin D is needed to get calcium into the bones. To maintain calcium intake you need at least 2 serves of high calcium foods per day, such as a glass of milk, slice of cheese, tub of yoghurt, tin of sardines. However, vitamin D is not absorbed through foods but rather through sun exposure. So to get out in the sun for a short period of time every day, and if you can't do this then speak to your GP about a course of vitamin D supplements.



For any more information on how to optimise your health and nutrition, make an appointment with Rebecca Barakat, Dietitian, today.

The Aging Truth of Massage *continued*

During the middle to late years of life, massage can aid body tissues and basic functions for a more youthful state, enhance tissue elasticity and joint flexibility. It promotes blood and lymph circulation, healthy, vibrant skin and improves the immune system function while relieving muscle aches and stiffness.



The power of touch through massage provides significant benefits, in particular, during the ageing and change of life transition. Not only can massage help with these symptoms directly, it can also relax and leave you feeling better equipped to handle the changes.

Massage can increase a sense of energy and well being and improve your body's ability to recognise stress signals and respond appropriately. Massage promotes a relaxed state of mind and body and helps relieve daily stress. Nurturing yourself during the ageing and change of life transition assists with your emotional health also.

Age Gracefully by maintaining Mental Vitality. Ageing is Natural and Inevitable. Decline is not !!!

Habits we have steal our life!! That's because we become more habitual as we get older. We run more of our life on 'automatic pilot'. The range of things we do shrinks to an ever-smaller set. Our personality gets more entrenched with age and so life rushes by.

Decline isn't inevitable for all. "Do Something Different" flex your personality and habits. This way you could help prevent dementia and stave off some of the ravages of old age.

50-70% of all primary care medical visits are related to psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Physical and mental health affect each other. For example, older adults with medical problems such as heart disease have higher rates of depression. Untreated depression in an older person with heart disease negatively affects the outcome of the disease. Even mild depression lowers immunity and may compromise a person's ability to fight infections and cancers. Also, Depression has a powerful negative impact on ability to function, resulting in high rates of disability.

Warning signs of Alzheimer's Disease (AD). Alzheimer's earns the title of the most common type of dementia, brain wasting diseases that result in brain cell death. Dementia causes memory to deteriorate and in some cases, people with Alzheimer's experience difficulty speaking, understanding written and spoken words, recognizing certain objects, and exercising good judgment. In severe cases, patients have extreme difficulty completing familiar tasks in the home and experience confusion surrounding where and when they are.

In the Blue Zone of Ikaria, Greece dementia is virtually nonexistent. Dementia wreaks havoc upon the cognitive processes. Yet we know that about 50% of dementia is related to modifiable risk factors. These include physical inactivity, obesity, depression and their concomitants such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

Five tips that help prevent Alzheimer's Disease

1. Walk daily. The best way to prevent mental decline is to walk daily. Walking about 5 miles per week increases brain volume, and correlates well with prevention of AD and other forms of dementia. Other forms of light, regular exercise like gardening also have a preventive effect.

2. Change your attitude. Stress and depression contribute to the onset of many chronic diseases. It is not surprising then, that depression is an early warning sign of dementia! People who show signs of depression as early as midlife have

a 50% greater chance of developing AD. A growing body of evidence supports the preventive effect of a positive attitude and purpose in life on mental decline. Volunteering, practicing a religion, meditating and using deep breathing techniques helps develop a positive attitude and purpose in life. If you have severe depression, consider seeking a trained professional.

3. Cut the smoking habit. Smoking actually doubles the risk for contracting Alzheimer's disease. Luckily for current smokers, quitting seems to reduce these effects to that of a non-smoker.

4. Learn new hobbies. Knitting, playing board games or learning other crafts during mid-life can reduce memory loss by 40%-50%. Note that Television is not a hobby! Elders who spent their day (7 or more hours) watching television are 50% more likely to experience memory loss.

Playing a musical instrument also helps protect cognitive function. Also, playing music from their childhood, even recalling events from their past.

5. Get social. One in seven people who have dementia or Alzheimer's live alone.

There are a variety of positive effects social engagement can provide a buffer against dementia, including improving your mood and giving you a support network when you need it the most. Volunteering with friends may serve a double effect by improving mood and providing a purpose! People whose brains were severely affected by AD are still able to perform well on

memory tests providing they had a large social network. Additional tips include simple exercises such as, seeing beauty in everyday moments, feeling grateful for daily blessings, and getting into a feel good state. "When you feel good, you feel GOD!"

"Teach me, God, to live out my days focused on all that is meaningful in life. As unaccountable aches and pains multiply, as memory and retention fade, teach me to relate to my physical existence with an ever-expanding recognition of its transient nature; teach me to relate to my soul with an ever-expanding awareness of her eternal nature and ageless worth". Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

Dr. Angelo Schibeci and Josephine Capitani, Psychologists at Health *plus* Chiropractic provide services to older adults to assist them during this difficult period of their life.



**Health *plus*
Chiropractic**

Chiropractors: - Anthony O'Reilly, Rachael Veronesi, Kerrie Park & Michael Maroon
Dietitian, Exercise Physiologist:- Rebecca Barakat
Massage Therapists: - Gary Fairhurst, Patricia De Guzman and Geraldine Eibner
Podiatrists: - Dollene and Ara Hadjetian and Stephen Jones
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Health Plus Chiropractic is a team of health care professionals committed to the highest quality of care and service by being consistently enthusiastic, efficient, loving and dedicated to health care. We will treat and educate those who strive for optimum health and wellbeing, and in return be rewarded by seeing satisfied patients, reaching our full successful potential and bringing joy and fulfillment to us all.