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NEW RELEASE
September is Healthy Aging Month

The Healthy Aging Campaign is an ongoing national health promotion effort that is intended to broaden public awareness of the positive aspects of aging, and to provide information and inspiration for older adults (aged 50 and up) that will help them improve their physical, mental and social fitness.

"It's a fact that, as we age, our mental and physical faculties decline," said The Otsego County Department of Health.

But not everyone ages at the same rate - - and there are steps that we can take to help postpone the effects of growing older. September is "Healthy Aging Month," an annual observance designed to focus attention on the positive aspects of growing older. Older people who are physically active, eat right, avoid tobacco and alcohol, and get regular check-ups can look forward to years of staying active and independent.

Physical activity can help the body to maintain itself, and postpone the effects of aging. When older people are physically active, they maintain higher levels of strength, flexibility, and have an improved sense of well-being. Those who remain physically active help protect themselves from the many problems often associated with aging: problems such as frailty, loss of appetite, and depression. Physical activity often helps seniors to continue to remain independent.

The New York State Department of Health recommends at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week for a healthy heart and lungs, to maintain muscle strength and tone, and to control weight. People often find that simply walking provides a safe and effective way to gain the benefits of physical activity. Other easy ways to be physically active include gardening, dancing, yoga, stretching and bicycling.

Because of a growing awareness of the benefits of physical activity, many groups offer physical activity programs, including your local senior center, YM/YWCA, office for the aging and health department. Many people find it more enjoyable to participate with a friend or a group.

The State Health Department urges people of all ages to eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day to reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer, and to help maintain or lose weight. Fruits and vegetables provide vitamins, minerals and fiber without the fat and cholesterol present in other foods. Their high fiber content helps maintain regularity. Low-fat dairy products -- low-fat and fat-free milk and low-fat yogurt -- are great sources of calcium which helps maintain strong bones.

As we age, alcohol has a greater effect on the liver, kidneys, and other vital organs. Alcohol can interfere with medications, reduce your appetite, and disrupt restful sleep. If you do choose to drink, talk to your health care provider about how much you can drink safely.

Tobacco at any age causes lung damage and increases the risks for cancer and heart disease. You're never too old to enjoy the health benefits of quitting smoking.

For more information about aging, physical activity, and healthful nutrition, call the Otsego County Department of Health.