

### The Perks of Growing Older

Your senior years can be one of the most enjoyable and fulfilling times of your life. As the baby boomer generation gets older, the number of senior citizens in the United States is rapidly increasing, and seniors are finding ways to be more active and involved. So what are some of the key trends in this age group?

- ◆ **Better economic position.** Thanks to improvements in Social Security and Medicare, the number of seniors below the poverty level has dramatically decreased, from 35% in the early 60’s to about 10% today.
- ◆ **Higher education.** More seniors than ever before have completed high school, and it is becoming increasingly common for seniors citizens to have earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- ◆ **Lasting marriages.** The majority of senior citizens younger than 85 are married. Since women tend to live longer than men, older men are twice as likely to be married as elderly women.
- ◆ **Longer life expectancy.** People are living longer today than in the past, and the number of people who live until age 100 is growing.
- ◆ **Better services and programs for senior citizens.** Today’s senior citizens know that staying active is one of the most important parts of healthy aging. Some of the services available to help senior citizens remain vital include **fitness programs, job placement services, volunteer organizations, lifelong education, travel programs and senior discounts.**

One of the best ways to stay in good mental and physical shape as you age is to get out and enjoy yourself. Take advantage of the programs and services offered to senior citizens so you can **make the most of life.**

Instead of the “John”, I call my bathroom the “Jim”!

That way it sounds better when I say

“I go to the Jim first thing every morning.”



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### Spring Vegetable Soup

#### Ingredients:

- ◆ 1 T. Olive Oil
- ◆ 1/4 red cabbage (shredded)
- ◆ 2 ripe tomatoes (seeded & chopped)
- ◆ 1/2 C canned artichoke hearts (drained & chopped)
- ◆ 1 C green peas (frozen or fresh)
- ◆ 2 1/2 C tomato juice
- ◆ 1 C water
- ◆ 2 teaspoons dried basil
- ◆ Salt & pepper to taste

#### Preparation:

1. In large soup pot, heat oil over medium heat. Saute cabbage, tomatoes, artichoke hearts and peas for 10 minutes
2. Add tomato juice and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, add basil and simmer for 10 minutes, or until all vegetables are tender and soup is piping hot.
3. Serve in individual serving bowls. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



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## The Flu

### Warning Signs You Shouldn't Ignore

Certain symptoms should be considered red flags indicating that the flu is becoming more serious or even life-threatening. These include:

- ◆ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ◆ Mental confusion or sudden dizziness
- ◆ Getting better, then spiking a fever and developing a worsening cough
- ◆ Chest or abdominal pain
- ◆ Purple or blue lips
- ◆ Persistent vomiting
- ◆ Seizure

If you believe you have the flu, it's important to call your doctor, take care of yourself and pay close attention to your symptoms.



## Boosting Mental Health

A challenged brain is a happy brain. So when the kids are grown and you're retired from your joy, you could find yourself struggling a bit to stay busy and engaged, and you might feel depressed. Staying physically healthy, socially active, and mentally engaged as you age, experts agree, are keys to boosting senior mental health. For instance:

- ◆ **Just keep moving.** Exercise is essential for mind and body. Go for a daily walk or join a senior exercise class at a nearby gym or senior center. If you have physical limitations, try chair exercises.
- ◆ **Socialize at your senior center.** Senior centers offer a variety of classes, from crafts and hobbies to computer classes, to keep the mind interested and active. Some offer transportation to those who need it.
- ◆ **Stay involved in family gatherings.** Find ways to be included and visit often with family, especially grandchildren.
- ◆ **Call on friends.** Stay connected with your peers. Get your hair done together, go on a shopping trip even if it's just to the grocery store or have them over for dinner.
- ◆ **Turn to technology to stay in touch.** Schedule regular phone calls to catch up with loved ones, and send snail mail or email letters, cards, and photos. Try Skype or FaceTime for a video call.
- ◆ **Go back to school.** Challenge your brain by taking a class at your local community college—many are free or offered at a very low cost.
- ◆ **Get a pet.** Whether you're a dog or a cat person, caring for a pet can be helpful. Animals make us more socially engaged, less depressed and less agitated.
- ◆ **Play games.** Try word puzzles, crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles and games like Sudoku to keep your brain healthy and stimulated. Joining a Bridge Club is also another great suggestion.
- ◆ **Make a deeper spiritual connection.** Religion and the community that goes with it can offer meaningful activities and support and your place of worship can also be a great venue for volunteering.
- ◆ **Make a difference.** Volunteering comes in all shapes and sizes. Giving back can be one of the best ways to add meaning to your life.

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