



Age is just a number

We are now living longer than ever before, but are not necessarily healthier. Here are some tips to improve your chance of maintaining a good quality of life as you get older.



Stay Active – the number one thing you can do to maintain your health and improve your life expectancy is to keep active. The Australian guidelines recommend adults get 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity every day. It does not have to be formal exercise; gardening, housework and walking to the shops all count. Stretching and yoga exercises are also important for flexibility and strength training can help to manage your weight and keep your bones strong.



Get enough sleep – getting a good night's sleep can have a huge impact on your quality of life. The amount of sleep a person needs varies between individuals but it is recommended that you get between seven – nine hours each night. To help you sleep well, have a regular sleep routine, and avoid caffeinated drinks at least two hours before bedtime.



Keep your brain active – challenging your brain by learning something new can improve brain function and lower the chance of developing dementia. Activities such as doing crosswords, Sudoku puzzles, learning a new language or a musical instrument can stimulate the brain.



Attend regular health checks – it is important to have a check-up at least once a year even if you feel healthy. Many conditions have no obvious signs or symptoms and if there is a problem, early detection can improve outcomes.



Stop smoking – it is never too late to give up smoking. Research indicates if you give up smoking in middle age you can increase your life expectancy by 10 years. Smoking is also a risk factor in many chronic diseases, including Alzheimer's disease and dementia.



Stay in touch – being socially active is important for both your physical and mental health. Make an effort to maintain your relationships with friends, family and other important people in your life.



Stay positive - are you a glass half empty or glass half full person? Optimistic people are more likely to engage in behaviours that keep them physically healthy like eating well and exercising. To become a more positive person try focusing on something you are thankful for each day.

Case Study

Southern Metropolitan Regional Council



The Southern Metropolitan Regional Council (SMRC) is committed to providing workers with a safe, productive and supportive working environment where healthy lifestyle choices are valued and encouraged. This is evident through the comprehensive range of health initiatives the Regional Council offers their workforce, targeted at improving behaviours towards health.

With the majority of SMRC workers being located at the Regional Resource Recovery Centre (RRRC), ensuring attendance at workplace events and seminars can prove challenging due to operational demands and shift rosters. SMRC has overcome this by offering a multi-faceted program that provides a range of activities targeted at different areas of health and wellbeing including:

- Daily fresh fruit has replaced biscuits in all lunchrooms to encourage healthy food options
- The implementation of diabetes education sessions covering shopping smart, cooking smart and portion control.
- The introduction of Cancer Council seminars which are run to support and encourage staff to quit smoking
- A vegetable patch has been planted at the RRRC so staff can grow and pick their own herbs and vegetables
- Health assessments which look at workers' physical health and fitness and provides strategies to make improvements.
- Fundraising to promote awareness of men's health
- An employee counselling service is provided through LGIS to support mental health
- Flu shots and Hepatitis A & B vaccinations

Activities are supported by internal communications in the form of updates on the staff intranet, fact sheets and notices in the staff lunchrooms.

The funding received from LGIS and the Healthier Workplace WA Small Grants Scheme has allowed SMRC to expand their program and provide a greater variety of activities to raise awareness and promote behavioural changes in the workforce.

Benefits seen at the organisation since implementing a health and wellbeing program have included:

- Improved awareness and understanding of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- Improved productivity, positive employee morale and reduced absenteeism
- Improved eating habits
- Eight employees who attended the Cancer Council sessions have now quit smoking

Chocolate mousse with raspberries

Serves 

Ingredients:

- 85g medjool dates, pitted
- 2 ripe avocados, peeled
- 40g cacao powder
- 1 tbsp honey or brown rice syrup
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways and seeds scraped
- Raspberries, to serve
- Toasted hazelnuts, to serve

Method:

1. Place the dates in a small bowl and cover with warm water. Soak for 20 minutes to soften, then drain.
2. Place the dates, avocado, cacao, honey or brown rice syrup, cinnamon and vanilla seeds in a food processor and process until smooth and fluffy.
3. Serve the mousse in small glasses topped with raspberries and hazelnuts.

Thank you to Rachel Byrne at the Shire of Toodyay for sending in this recipe.



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