

seniors first BC

HEALTHY AGING: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

“Healthy aging is the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age (World Health Organization, 2020).”

Healthy aging is a topic that is especially relevant for people who are getting older. This blog post will take a look at some of the developments in healthy aging in the past half-century, how healthy aging activities differ for everyone, and how to focus on what makes us happy despite certain idealized views of aging.

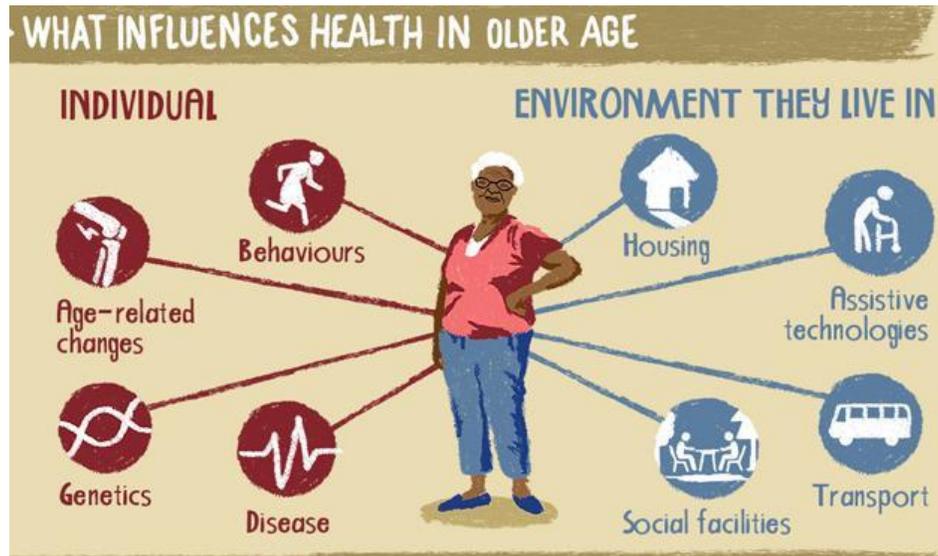
Developments in the Perception of Healthy Aging

Reaching older age is a fairly recent phenomena to our society. The average lifespan has already increased 11 years since 1960 due to a combination of improved technology, a greater understanding of medicine and health risks, reduced mortality rates and so on. Researchers suggest that during this time, our society constructed a framework of what it means to go through successful or “healthy aging”, which consists **of a series of choices that determine one’s health, social experiences, and physical appearance** (Rowe et al., 1997). However, in reality it is not that simple to age healthy in society’s standards; as the World Health Organization (WHO) explains, everyone comes from different backgrounds and goes through different experiences, which causes them to face different challenges as they age.

Embracing Unique Healthy Aging

Individuals, who participate in activities that are often considered luxurious, such as golfing, travelling and cosmetic procedures, are praised among our society, especially in the media. However, we need to embrace the idea that every individual has a different perspective of what healthy aging means to them. This pressure to age a certain way can cause stress and a

negative sense of well-being among older adults. **We must recognize that many individuals may not feel an urge or desire to participate in certain activities.**



Source: <https://theconversation.com/as-life-expectancies-rise-so-are-expectations-for-healthy-aging-102388>

There is a significant influence from consumer companies who rely on the idealistic images of aging to encourage people to buy their products. This is the root of demand for anti-aging creams, surgical and non-surgical treatments, diet plans, and sexual performance drugs, among many other products (Higgs et al., 2009). Recognizing where our idealized perceptions of aging come from **can help determine what we really want our lives to look like** as we age. There is often a lot of fear around the chronological age at which we reach certain milestones and the number of wrinkles on our faces. The media has influenced us to use these markers as indicators of our success in healthy aging, but what do they really mean to us?

What's important is that we focus on what makes us feel good as we age and pursue the activities we enjoy. Our well-being is subjective, and it is fueled by our thoughts and perceptions in addition to how we interpret the people and environment around us. Having a good sense of well-being and actively working towards caring for yourself on your own terms contributes to positive mental health. That being said, *what goals do you have for yourself given your circumstances? What does healthy aging mean to you?*



Source: <https://www.age-platform.eu/policy-work/healthy-ageing>,
<https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/cartoon-old-people-happy-aged-citizens-disabled-vector-21386711>

CONTRIBUTOR

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