

Healthy Ageing Quiz

Practical tips for ageing well



Productive Ageing Centre National Seniors Australia

Is your current lifestyle helping you age well? If you are over 50, this quiz is for you.

What to do: Answer all the questions then add up your score to see what it tells you about your current lifestyle. Tick the responses that describe your regular and current activities and behaviour. If you can't decide between two responses, tick the one with the lower score.

1. In a typical week, do you do 30 minutes of moderately intense physical activity a day?

This means activity that causes your heart to beat faster and makes you breathe harder, but you can still talk comfortably. Activities such as brisk walking, mowing the lawn or heavy housework. 30 minutes can be in 10-15 minute blocks.

- Yes, 5 days or more a week 2
- 3-4 days a week 1
- 0-2 days a week 0

Score

2. Tick which of the following exercises you do regularly in a typical week.

- Strength/power training (e.g. weights, resistance training, push ups) 1
- Balance (e.g. balancing on one leg, walking heel to toe, Tai Chi) 1
- Cardiorespiratory activities (e.g. brisk walking, aerobics, swimming, cycling) 1
- Flexibility (e.g. stretching, yoga) 1
- None of the above 0

Score out of 4 points

3. Do you feel unsteady or at risk of losing your balance when walking and turning?

- No unsteadiness 2
- Very little/minimal unsteadiness 1
- Moderate to severe unsteadiness 0

Score

4. How many falls have you had in the last 12 months? *A fall is where you land on a lower surface, and includes trips and slips.*

- Nil 2
- 1 (no medical treatment needed) 1
- 2 or more (no medical treatment needed) 0
- 1 or more requiring medical treatment 0

Score

5. Do you smoke or have you ever smoked?

- Never smoked or stopped over 10 years ago 2
- I was a smoker but stopped within the last 10 years 1
- I do not smoke but others smoke around me 1
- Yes, I currently smoke (tick even if you only smoke sometimes) 0

Score

6. Do you drink more than the recommended level of alcohol?

The recommended level for low-risk drinking is two standard drinks a day or less for healthy men and women, and no more than four drinks on any one occasion. A standard drink (10g alcohol) is 100ml of (12%) wine, 285ml of full strength or 570ml of light (2.2%) beer, and 30ml of (40%) spirits.

- I never or rarely drink 2
- No, I drink within the recommended level 2
- Yes, I drink more than the recommended level 0

Score

7. Is your Body Mass Index (BMI) within the normal range (between 18.5 to 25)?

To calculate your BMI, divide your weight in kilograms (kg) by your height in metres squared (m²) (one inch equals 0.025m). For example, if you weigh 70kg and are 1.6m (160cm) tall - you multiply 1.6m by 1.6m which gives you 2.56m² and then you divide 70kg by 2.56. Your BMI would be 27.3, which is above the normal range.

- My BMI is between 18.5 to 25 2
- My BMI is between 26-27 but I am over 65 years of age 2
- My BMI is above 25 0
- My BMI is below 18.5 0

Score

8. What is your waist circumference? Place a tape measure directly on your skin, in line with your belly button, breathe out normally and measure. The tape should be snug but not squeezing the skin.

For men

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 94cm or under | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below 102cm but over 94cm (37") (high risk) | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 102cm and over (40.2") (very high risk) | 0 |

Score

For women

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 80cm or under | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Below 90cm but over 80cm (31.5") (high risk) | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 90cm and over (35.4") (very high risk) | 0 |

Score

9. In a typical week, do you eat healthy meals (a well-balanced diet)? To help you answer this question, see the Australian recommendations for healthy eating below.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly or always | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Never or rarely | 0 |

Score

The Australian Healthy Eating Guidelines 2013 recommend that older people should eat a variety of nutritious foods each day, including:

- *Plenty of vegetables (different types and colours) and legumes/beans.*
- *Fruits.*
- *Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholemeal and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley.*
- *Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans.*
- *Milk, yoghurts, cheeses, and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat.*
- *Drink plenty of water.*
- *And limit the intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugar and alcohol.*

10. Do you eat three regular meals a day?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | 2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mostly | 1 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | 0 |

Score

11. Do you have any of the following conditions: arthritis, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, depression, lung disease, osteoporosis (low bone density) or other chronic condition?

- I have no chronic conditions 2
- I have one or more chronic conditions but they are well managed 1
- I have one or more chronic conditions that causes me some concern 0

Score

12. Have you visited a doctor (GP or other medical practitioner) in the last 12 months for an annual check-up?

- Yes 2
- No 0

Score

13. Do you have difficulty sleeping?

- I usually sleep well 2
- My sleep is interrupted but I usually go back to sleep without difficulty 1
- I usually have difficulty sleeping 0

Score

14. In a typical week, do you do activities that challenge and stimulate your mind most days of the week? *For example, reading, writing, playing a musical instrument, doing crosswords or learning new activities/skills.*

- Yes, 5 days or more a week 2
- 3-4 days a week 1
- 0-2 days a week 0

Score

15. In a typical week, do you have activities that keep you socially and productively engaged? *For example church or volunteer work, paid work, taking care of grandchildren or creative activities.*

- Yes, 5 days or more a week 2
- 3-4 days a week 1
- 0-2 days a week 0

Score

16. Are you involved in group activities (formal or informal), community or religious organisations (in total at least once a week)? *For example, lawn bowls, choir, reading group, church activities or Probus/Rotary.*

- At least once a week 2
- Once or twice a month (not weekly) 1
- Rarely 0

Score

17. How often do you see or hear from family and/or friends in a typical week?

- 5 days or more a week 2
 3-4 days a week 1
 0-2 days a week 0

Score

18. Do you have people you feel you can depend on?

- Yes (2) No (0)

Score

19. Do you have people you feel very close to?

- Yes (2) No (0)

Score

20. Are you generally an optimistic person?

- Yes (2) No (0)

Score

21. Do you always look for opportunities to make the most of your life and what you can do (even when there are changes in your life such as health problems and retirement)?

- Often or always (2) Sometimes (1) Never or rarely (0)

Score

22. Are there things that you look forward to each day?

- Often or always (2) Sometimes (1) Never or rarely (0)

Score

Total score:

How did you rate?

If your score is 0-15: Many of your current lifestyle choices are not helping you age well.

If your score is 16-30: Some of your lifestyle choices are helping you age well, others are letting you down.

If your score is 31-46: You have adopted many positive lifestyle choices that are increasing your chances of ageing well.

Regardless of your total score, for each question where you have scored less than 2 points (or 4 points for question 2) see what changes you can make to improve that area of your life. You can also take this quiz to your doctor to see what he/she recommends for improving your health.

You've completed the quiz and you now know which areas of your life you need to improve. Here are some tips to help you get started...

Tips for healthy ageing

Questions 1 and 2: Physical activity

- Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate activity each day. The 30 minutes can be done in 10-15 minute blocks and can include formal exercises or physical activity such as gardening or walking.
- Include a variety of exercises that help improve your function and independence: strength/power training, balance, mobility and cardiorespiratory activities and flexibility.
- Exercise programs are available through local councils, gyms and community health centres, or a physiotherapist can develop an individually tailored program for you.
- See the physical activity guidelines for older people on the National Ageing Research Institute's (NARI) website (www.nari.unimelb.edu.au) or call on 8387 2305.
- Physical activity is good for both your body and your mind.

Question 3 and 4: Balance and falls

- If you have concerns about your balance, or have fallen, find out what why. Some causes of falls include vision, muscle weakness, balance problems, inactivity, medication, certain medical conditions, foot problems or inappropriate footwear.
- For further information about fall risk factors and strategies to prevent falls, talk to your doctor or see the following websites:
 - NARI - www.nari.unimelb.edu.au
 - Victorian Department of Human Services - http://health.vic.gov.au/agedcare/maintaining/falls_dev/Section_a.htm

Question 5 and 6: Smoking and alcohol use

- Quit smoking now! Speak to your doctor or ring the Quitline on 13 7848 (or check their website: <http://www.quit.org.au/>) for ways to help you beat the habit.
- Use alcohol wisely – drink within the recommended level for low risk drinking. For older people it may be preferable to drink less or no alcohol because the body's ability to process alcohol decreases with age and alcohol can interact with your medication. The guidelines (and precautions for older people and other subgroups) can be downloaded from <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/ds10syn.htm>

Questions 7 and 8: Weight

- Being overweight or obese, or underweight, increases your risk of many chronic diseases. Ensure your weight is within the healthy range for your height.
- If you do not know your Body Mass Index (BMI) or waist measurement, talk to your doctor. Your Body Mass Index should be between 18.5 and 25 (preferably 20 to 25).

If you are over 65 years of age a BMI of 26-27 is also acceptable. Your waist circumference should be 80cm or less for women and 94cm or less for men.

- To control your weight, eat a healthy balanced meal (see below) and exercise regularly (see above).
- Your doctor or a dietitian can also provide other advice on ways to reduce your weight.

Questions 9 and 10: Diet

- Your body needs fuel for energy and vitamins and minerals to function efficiently, and for this you need a healthy, balanced diet. Poor diet is associated with many preventable chronic diseases.
- Aim to eat three meals each day (or more frequent smaller meals).
- Ensure that your diet meets the guidelines for healthy eating. Your diet should include:
 - Plenty of vegetables (different types and colours) and legumes/beans.
 - Fruits.
 - Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholemeal and/or high cereal fibre varieties, such as breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles, polenta, couscous, oats, quinoa and barley.
 - Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds, and legumes/beans.
 - Milk, yoghurts, cheeses, and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - And limit the intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugar and alcohol.

To download the guidelines: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/n55A>
A dietitian can help you develop a healthy meal plan.

Question 11 –12: Chronic conditions and medical care

- Learn all you can about your chronic condition – what helps the condition and what makes it worse. Talk to your doctor or contact a relevant chronic disease association. These organisations can be found in the yellow pages under “Associations” (e.g. Arthritis Foundation, Diabetes Australia, Cancer Council of Australia, Kidney Health Australia, National Heart Foundation of Australia, National Stroke Foundation).
- Understand the medication you take, their side effects and any contraindications, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. Ask them about a Home Medicines Review.
- Have a general check up each year, as early detection of problems improves outcomes. If aged 75 and over (or 55 years and over if an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) ask your doctor about the Medicare Health Assessment for Older Persons (75+).

Question 13: Sleep

- Your body needs sleep to repair any cell damage and to refresh your immune system. A good night's sleep (generally 8 hours) helps your concentration and your memory function.
- Avoid smoking or consuming alcohol or caffeine before bedtime, avoid too much daytime napping, have regular sleep hours and a routine, and keep active during the day. Exposure to sunlight (at least 2 hours a day) helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle. Limit the use of sleeping tablets; they are a short term solution and can cause long term health problems.
- Investigate the causes of sleep problems and address them. They may include pain, medication, lack of exercise, psychological stress or sleep disorders, such as sleep apnoea. Talk to your doctor.

Questions 14: Stimulating your mind

- Just like your body, you need to keep your mind active.
- Learn a new skill or take up a new hobby (e.g. painting, carpentry), do a short course, read, write, do crosswords puzzles, learn to play a musical instrument or a foreign language.
- Keeping physically and socially active also helps.
- If you have concerns about your memory, see your doctor.

Questions 15-19: Social connection and productive engagement

- Do things that make you happy and that are worthwhile to you – this may include working, looking after grandchildren, volunteering, and doing creative arts and crafts.
- Take time to develop and nurture your relationships with family and friends; not only are they people you can turn to in need, but they provide a social outlet and companionship.
- Group activities and volunteering also give you an opportunity to meet new people.
- If you feel lonely and isolated, speak to someone – a family member or friend, your doctor, a social worker or a psychologist.
- If you have persistent symptoms of low mood, see your doctor.

Questions 20-22: Optimism and adaption

- It is important to have something to look forward to each day, no matter how big or small.
- Keep a positive attitude and an open mind to opportunities that come your way.
- Plan your retirement, including what you will do to keep mentally and physically active.
- If your health changes, look at what you can do and not what you can no longer do.

KEEP ACTIVE, EAT WELL, STAY CONNECTED.