

# Geriatric Health

## Growing Older Can Be A Pleasant Experience

Dismiss the idea that old age means decrepitude, helplessness, and sickness! The destiny of the senior citizen need not be dependency and illness. The so-called infirmities of age do not come automatically with the passage of time, but rather as the result of chronic health problems.

These are some ailments often associated with old age: stiffening of joints . . . trembling hands . . . tottering walk . . . loss of efficient function of various bodily processes such as poor digestion and constipation . . . hardening of the arteries . . . diminishing sense perception such as in hearing, sight, and taste . . . and finally, a pessimistic, hopeless mental attitude.

To avoid health problems such as these, you must maintain the sound and balanced function of all structures, organs, and glands.

## Pain is Not a Sign of Old Age

It is important to remember that the senior citizen does not have a monopoly on pain. It happens to both old and young alike, for it is a symptom of illness, not age. Too many people overlook health problems until pain occurs. Often the cause has occurred much earlier.

Young people have the advantage of being able to “bounce back” from health problems because their bodies are more resilient and their organs more responsive. As we get older, maintenance of the health and balance of our vital structures and functions becomes more critical to our total health. Our prospect to good health long after 40 or 50 years of age is just as good as before – provided we recognize the need for proper health care, maintenance, and preventive practices.

## The Importance of the Spine and Nervous System to Good Health

The spinal column supports the weight of the entire body above the pelvis, which is more than half of our total weight. In later years, it is natural that the spine has been subjected to many years of stress because of all the work it has done and the various strains that have been put upon it.

As we grow older, two major changes take place in our body which have a tremendous bearing on our spinal health – and, therefore, our total health:

1. The elastic discs which separate the 26 vertebrae of our spine grow less elastic.

2. Our back muscles, which help maintain proper spinal alignment, begin to lose their youthful tone.

With this combination, our spinal vertebrae may have a tendency to cause trouble more easily and more frequently than in our younger years. When this happens, the vertebrae may affect vital spinal nerves leading to important parts of the body which influence and/or control various body functions and process. This, in turn, may cause serious imbalances and impairments of our body systems.

When this happens, we may witness health problems which are often misinterpreted as merely “old age”.

## Advantages of Chiropractic Care

The person who is healthy and keeps himself occupied enjoys the secret of a satisfying senior life. He enjoys the pleasures of activity and productivity. He has an involvement in living. He partakes in moderate sports and sensible exercises. He practices good nutritional habits and other habits of daily living. And he seeks to retain his health with regular chiropractic examinations and adjustments.

In chiropractic offices throughout the world, chiropractic methods have been extremely effective in the treatment of illnesses associated with aging. These modern procedures help to retain normal structural alignment and normal functional balance. In this manner, a regular schedule of adjustments can be directed to keeping at a minimum interference with normal nerve function, thus enabling your body to operate at its maximum potential.

Virtually all insurance carriers in the United States provide policies covering chiropractic care. The Congress of the United States has authorized the provision of chiropractic services in Medicare, and under the Internal Revenue Code as a “medical” deduction.

## Health is Sensitive and Requires Specialized Understanding

A doctor of chiropractic is a specialized physician employing a method which gives particular attention to the structural and neurological aspects of the body in the prevention and treatment of health problems.

His training requires a minimum of two years pre-professional and four years of professional instruction in anatomy, biochemistry, microbiology, pathology, physiology, public health, roentgenology, clinical disciplines, and other related health sciences. This training,

which is comparable to that of other health practitioners, leads to a D.C. (Doctor of Chiropractic) degree.

After completing the prescribed course of study, the doctor of chiropractic must pass a state examination to obtain a license to practice. In addition, the chiropractic profession has supported continuing education as a yearly requirement for relicensure in the vast majority of states to assure alertness to scientific developments.

### **Health Assurance Requires Preventive Care**

Health remains first and foremost on the list of factors which can make the later years a pleasure or a curse.

In most cases, the ailments of later years cast their shadows before the individual reaches the senior years. Therefore, special attention should be paid to even apparently minor symptoms which indicate health problems which could possibly develop into chronic conditions. Here is where professional counsel is very important to avoid worry and correct minor problems before they develop into serious considerations.

### **Facts & Figures About America's Senior Citizens**

- ? ? There are about 19 million American men and women age 65 or over. This is 10% of the approximately 200 million people in the United States.
- ? ? The 65 plus population continues to increase faster than the total population. Each day there is a net increase of more than 900 people age 65 plus.
- ? ? Projections based on reasonable assumptions indicate possible totals of more than 28 million persons age 65 and over in the world at the beginning of the next century.
- ? ? Although the total population is growing younger, the older population is also growing older. Half of all senior citizens are now 72.7 years of age or older.
- ? ? More than 106,441 living Americans have passed their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- ? ? Retirement age comes earlier, so that the average retiree may have 14 years or more in retirement, the equivalent in hours of free time to the length of an entire work life.
- ? ? Most older people live in families: only one in 25 lives in an institution.

### **Good Health Means Freedom**

Good health means the freedom to do what you want to do, go where you want to go – without stiffness and pain.

Because happiness to the older person to a large degree depends on his state of physical and emotional well-being,

chiropractic education and research has become more and more concerned with research programs devoted to the health and welfare of the senior citizen.

It is goal of the chiropractic profession to make the older person unwilling to accept pain and infirmity as a penalty of the maturing process . . . to help him or her enjoy the freedom and status of older age will good health and lively spirit.

### **Here are five tips on staying healthy and happier which will help most any senior citizen truly enjoy the mature years:**

- 1. Don't Concentrate on the Past**  
Instead of looking backward to the glorious past, look forward to the future with curious enthusiasm as you live each day to its fullest. Establish new goals and become involved in new and interesting projects. Be an inspiration to yourself and others, yet avoid sermonizing on your personal experiences. Offer your unique contribution to the needs of today.
- 2. Keep Your Mind Open and Alert**  
The ability to learn and enjoy new experiences does not deteriorate with age. Older people can readily acquire new skills and knowledge that will make their lives more interesting, their time more productive, and their personal contribution more meaningful.
- 3. Don't Fight Maturity**  
Don't be so concerned with the numbers of your age as you are with making the most of your personal abilities and experiences. Remember that chronological age is not a reliable indicator of people's capacities. Try to be young in spirit, in a sensible manner.
- 4. Don't Retire – Aspire!**  
Retire means to move back, retreat, withdraw. Aspire means to move forward, become involved, seek the best that life has to offer. Retirement gives you the time to do all the things you always wanted to do that a fixed working schedule wouldn't allow. Do them and enjoy them now. Keep active physically and mentally.
- 5. Maintain Your Health Through Chiropractic Counsel and Care**  
Many symptoms associated with aging are actually the end result of processes that began many years earlier. With early detection and treatment of these disorders (many of which may appear minor on the surface), it may be possible to delay the age when serious infirmities are likely to appear. Youth is a feeling, not an age . . . and health is the key.