

## RETIREMENT – A NEW BEGINNING – LIVE LONG, AGE LESS

Yes, retirement is, indeed, a new beginning– and the more you prepare yourself for it, the more enjoyable you will find it. To quote part of what John Wooden, retired UCLA basketball coach for many years, once said: “Learn like you’re going to live forever” And, add this Greek saying: “Die young very late in life.” Now, to help make all this possible, think of a healthy and fit tomorrow like you’re going to live forever as you continue to learn – all about a healthy and fit life style.

You might draw an analogy of seeing your body as a valuable and priceless antique, a body that you would treat exactly like a priceless, irreplaceable possession. Would you like to own a Classic 1921 Model T Ford, one of the few that may be still in existence? As of NOW, TODAY, YOU could well be that priceless and valuable model - you bet- that is, if you were born in 1921.

Now, if you were to treat this 1921 Model (you) as if it were a 1921 Classic car, you would make sure IT got the very best care and treatment.

Are you beginning to get the picture?

A good way to approach retirement is to meet it with a healthy, fit body. But though you may not have had any fitness program before you retired does not mean you have to think: “What’s the use?”, because all the current information we have to date indicates that no matter what shape you are in the day you retire, it should not stop you making a change–NOW! In short, now IS the time to make that change.

A complete physical is recommended in order to find out what type of program best fits your needs for starters. The results of your physical will tell you WHERE YOU ARE health-wise. Once you know WHERE YOU ARE, the next step is planning WHERE YOU WANT TO GO, WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO GET THERE, and any limitations, if there are any. Your doctor will go over these with you.

Your next challenge is motivation. My motivation came more by accident than on purpose. I answered an ad asking for volunteers with the local Catholic Charities. This turned out to be an ombudsman for residents in full-care rest homes.

On my first day at one of the local full-care resident homes I was shocked to see so many people my age as well as many even younger than I. This experience made me realize that had I not taken fitness seriously early on BEFORE I retired, I could well be a resident in this facility. So, in reality, this experience served two purposes. One, it made me aware of the importance of healthy living early in life and, at the same time, it gave me an opportunity to help these residents who were unable to fend for themselves. And it made me think of the old cliché: “There but for the grace of God, go I.” In short, I had two choices, continue to stay healthy, or be a resident.

So–Is the picture starting to develop? Yes? Good!

For starters with your new lifestyle program:

- 1) If you smoke, QUIT!

- 2) Keep your blood pressure somewhere in the 130/80 range. (Your doctor will be specific.)
- 3) Keep total cholesterol under 200.
- 4) Schedule a physical activity program that lasts at least 30 minutes and increase this as condition permits. (Check with the several fitness centers in your area to set up a program that fits your needs.)
- 5) If you are prone to diabetes, keep your blood sugars within the desired range. (Again, your doctor will provide you with the necessary information.)
- 6) Eat a healthy diet, such as five fruits and vegetables per day, reduce intakes of fats, cholesterol, and sugar, and eat plenty of fiber. Dr. Andrew Weil recommends HEALTHY fats and HEALTHY carbohydrates.)
- 7) Identify the stresses in your life and seek help to control them. (Physical activity has been known to help here and it serves two purposes.)
- 8) Check out your family history for any genetic risk factors.
- 9) And, last but not least, since you are retired, you can now RETIRE that old excuse of: "I don't have time for fitness workouts." Remember, you are retired and you have nothing demanding to do each day and you have all day to do it. To paraphrase Bob Dylan: "You are a success if you get up in the morning and get to bed at night and in between do what you want to do." And you can make that "in between" productive if you include a bit of "fit."

Now comes what I have termed THE PROCESS OF ELIMINATION. Here you start with an inventory of your "pantry" to see what you are putting into your expensive "antique" to keep it from deteriorating. (I'm sure you are aware that your body needs the best nutrition you can provide.) This is the tough one. So the best way to tackle this step is slowly but surely list all the good foods – the fruits and vegetables you like – then add some of those that are recommended, but are not yet in your pantry. Your goal is to include a combination of those five fruits and vegetables to feed this "antique" you are going to rebuild – on a daily basis (see Item 6, above).

Next is an inventory assessment of your refrigerator. Is it heavy on red meats and light on poultry and seafood? You might want to think about trying a different balance, heavy on the seafood and poultry and light on the red meat. I am not suggesting you turn into a vegetarian – but maybe close to it. (See Item 6, above.) Start a new adventure in foods you have read about, but never tried, (And remember this, it was none other than Confucius who recommended a good meal be one-fourth meat and three-fourths vegetables – man, was he ahead of his time!)

The second part of your program deals with the physical part. (See Item 4, above.) Here, I believe actually scheduling a specific time each day is the best approach. Make "appointments" with one or more of the following: WALKING, SWIMMING, BIKING, STRENGTH TRAINING, TENNIS, GOLF (if you carry your own bag) – anything that gets you out of the "rocker." Pencil in about 30 minutes a day to start and add to this as time goes by with one hour or so as your ultimate goal.

Much of your program you can start before signing up with any of the local fitness centers. But it has been my experience that scheduling and working out with others is much more motivating. Having said all this, I want to stress the importance continued learning plays in retirement. LEARNING new “things” does not end. There is no stage in life that does not contain something new. Let this approach to retirement be your beginning.

For more detailed information on exercise, nutrition, and strength training, I highly recommend a book entitled AGE LESS by Edward L. Schneider, M.D. and Elizabeth Miles. Following the concepts presented in this books will put you on and keep you on the path to an enriched life style.

**STAY HEALTHY**

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

**IT'S YOUR FUTURE**

**BE THERE!**