

Psst!

Plan to Stay in Shape Today

healthy *for Life!*

PRACTICAL ADVICES FOR
SENIORS AGE 65
AND OVER



Everyone ages—it's a natural part of life. The fact is that we start aging as soon as we are born!

What has changed is that we are now living longer than ever. Population aging is a global phenomenon. In a few years, there will be more elderly people than young people on the planet—a first in recorded human history!

As you know, age 65 isn't what it was 30 or 40 years ago. Today's seniors are more active than ever and want to stay that way for as long as possible. So, whether you're in early retirement, retired, active, or still working, you play an important role in society. And there are certain factors that can go a long way toward ensuring you live longer and better. This guide was designed to help you make the most out of your senior years!



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Healthy aging

*"Everyone is the age of their heart."
Chinese proverb*

Our physical and mental abilities develop in our first years of life, reaching their peak in early adulthood. As time passes, we aren't able to do everything we used to do, as nature intended. But how we age can depend on a range of factors.

The speed with which your physical and mental abilities are diminished is largely influenced by the lifestyle habits and behaviours you engage in throughout your life, which may include nutrition, physical exercise, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and exposure to toxic substances.

It's never too late to change your lifestyle! This section presents behaviours you can adopt for healthy living well into your golden years.



Eating well isn't just for the young!



*"If youth is the most beautiful of all flowers, old age is
the most savoury of all fruits."*

Anne-Sophie Swetchine

It's misguided to think that ageing means eating less and changing your diet: a plentiful, healthy, and balanced diet is essential at any age. Good eating habits not only reduce the risk of developing health problems, but they also encourage autonomy and help you maintain a better quality of life. Aging comes with certain physiological changes, including a reduced appetite, but keep in mind that a healthy senior has the same calorie needs as a healthy younger adult.

Here are a few tips to help you make good food choices and to enjoy what you eat:

- Eat three balanced meals a day that cover at least three of the four food groups (add one to three snacks as desired). Follow the recommended servings in Canada's Food Guide to meet your body's daily needs for:
 - > Vegetables and Fruits: seven servings per day
 - > Grain Products: six servings per day (women) and seven servings per day (men)
 - > Milk and Alternatives: three servings per day
 - > Meat and Alternatives: two servings per day (women) and three servings per day (men)
- Not very hungry? Try consuming six smaller meals.
- Make sure your daily fibre intake is high enough, but stay hydrated to avoid constipation.
- Water is the best source of hydration. Hot beverages, fruit and vegetable juices, milk, and soup are also good. Drink at least eight glasses of water a day, unless your doctor advises otherwise.
- Emphasize variety, colour, and trying something new to make meals a highlight of your day.
- Try different herbs and spices to boost flavour and keep from using too much salt.



- Spoil yourself from time to time with feel-good foods that aren't in one of the four food groups.
- Plan your meals for the week before going to the grocery store. Your pantry will be full of healthy choices, so you won't be tempted by convenience foods, which are usually less nutritious.
- When you prepare meals, make extra for those days when you don't feel like cooking!
- Finding it difficult to make good food choices or cook for yourself? Ask for help from local community organizations like CLSCs. They can direct you toward the right resources.



Do I need to take vitamin supplements?

Generally speaking, a healthy, balanced diet meets our body's vitamin and mineral needs. But a healthcare professional may recommend supplements depending on your overall health.

TRUE or FALSE

Constipation is more common in the elderly.

TRUE! But don't worry—it can be avoided. The key is to gradually increase your fibre intake while also consuming enough liquids. If that doesn't do it, there are over-the-counter medications to help with constipation. Remember that constipation can be a side effect of certain drugs. In any event, don't be shy about discussing it with your healthcare professional!



Preventing urinary incontinence: It's time to break the taboo

Urinary incontinence is considered the loss of urine in quantities sufficient enough to cause a social or hygienic problem. Less than 50% of seniors with this problem discuss it with their doctor. But having urinary incontinence is normal and nothing to be ashamed of. Being willing to talk about it is the first step toward a better quality of life!

Bladder control problems can be caused by a number of factors. Rest assured that in most cases there are things you can do to eliminate or at least treat the issue. But urinary incontinence may also be the result of an illness in some cases, e.g., Parkinson's, dementia, or stroke. Unfortunately, loss of bladder control is considered chronic in these situations. If you are struggling with chronic incontinence, don't hesitate to talk to your healthcare professional.

There are five main types of urinary incontinence:

Urge	Having an urgent need to urinate
Stress	Leaking when coughing, laughing, sneezing, jumping, or doing sports
Overflow	Having an overly full bladder
Functional	Having physical or mental issues making it difficult to get to the bathroom in time
Mixed	Having a combination of more than two types

How do you prevent or treat bladder control problems?

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of factors that contribute to urinary incontinence. Here are a few things you can do to help prevent it or relieve your symptoms.

- **Suffering from a loss of bladder control doesn't mean you should stop drinking liquids!** It's important to stay hydrated. Just don't exceed the standard recommendation of eight glasses of liquid a day. Drink throughout the day, but if you are experiencing nighttime incontinence, avoid consuming liquids in the last three hours before bedtime.
- **Try to avoid products that irritate the bladder:** they can make incontinence worse. This includes coffee, tea, chocolate, carbonated beverages like soda, energy drinks, and alcohol.
- **Avoid constipation.** When stool builds up in the rectum it can keep the bladder from emptying completely, and the increased pressure on the bladder walls can cause urinary leakage.
- **Maintain a healthy weight!** Carrying extra pounds puts constant pressure on the bladder and surrounding muscles, increasing your risk of urinary incontinence.

- **Take a look at your medications.** Certain drugs can cause urinary incontinence, especially diuretics (which cause you to urinate more frequently). For more information, talk to your healthcare professional.
- **Adapt your environment to make it easier to get to the bathroom.** For instance, you could remove any obstacles on the ground, lower your bed, or add more lighting.
- **Train your pelvic muscles!** The pelvic floor muscles, which stretch over the bottom of the pelvis between your legs, support your organs, including the bladder. Aging weakens these muscles, which can lead to urinary leakage. For both men and women, the best way to strengthen them is to perform Kegel exercises. Find out more from your healthcare professional.

Did you know that...

women are at a higher risk of urinary incontinence due to pregnancy and childbirth, but men struggle with it too.

Incontinence protection

There are a range of incontinence products on the market with varying degrees of absorption to fit your individual needs and lifestyle. Unlike sanitary napkins, these products are designed to absorb urine and offer discreet and effective protection. Try them out—you'll be pleasantly surprised!

You can't always resolve urinary incontinence by changing your lifestyle, but there are medications that can help you control the associated symptoms. Talk to your healthcare professional.



Help your healthcare professionals help you



In many cases, taking medication is just another side effect of getting older. But making sure all your healthcare professionals have the same information can be a challenge. Here are some tips to ensure they're working as a team.

1. Stay loyal to your healthcare professionals.

According to some statistics, 70% of seniors take more than one medication and 40% go to more than one pharmacy. Seeing more than one doctor increases your risk of being prescribed drugs that aren't appropriate for your condition. The more medications you take, the more this risk increases.

Be aware that pharmacy information systems are not interconnected. If pharmacists don't have access to your complete medical record, they won't be able to identify potentially adverse drug interactions.

Clearly, in some cases you have to go to more than one doctor or pharmacy, but remember to always provide each healthcare professional with an up-to-date list of medications.

2. Keep your list of medications up-to-date.

It should include everything you take:

- Prescription and over-the-counter drugs
- Natural health products, vitamins, minerals, and traditional remedies

Jot down why, when, and how much you take. Also include any relevant information about your health problems, allergies, and any other drug reactions. These details could have an impact on your future course of care. Consider making copies for a few of your family members or friends so they can share the list on your behalf if the time comes.

3. Be an active advocate for your own health.

Being informed about the medications you take and your overall health will help prevent mistakes that could have serious repercussions on your health now and in the future. Moreover, the more familiar you are with your medications, the more motivated you will be to follow your healthcare professionals' recommendations. This can result in fewer and shorter doctors' visits. Come prepared with a list of questions written in advance. And remember—your pharmacist is always there to answer questions about your medications.

Vaccines: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

"Age is more a state of mind than a period of time. It is not our duty or within our control to add years to our life, but to add life to our years."

Étienne de Blois

As we age, our immune system ages. It changes and becomes less effective at fighting off infections, so when we get sick it takes us longer to recover and the consequences may be more severe. Immunization is the best way to prevent certain infections.

The Quebec Immunization Protocol (PIQ) recommends specific vaccines for certain categories of individuals. See a healthcare professional to make sure your vaccines are up-to-date.

The **following table** summarizes the recommended vaccines for people age 65 and older. Beyond the basic vaccine, other vaccines may be suggested depending on your condition and other factors (e.g., if you travel). It's a good idea to keep your vaccine record updated so your healthcare professionals have the most recent information.

Vaccines recommended for people age 65 and up

ILLNESS	WHY GET THE VACCINE?	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
Diphtheria/ tetanus	<p>Diphtheria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A contagious bacterial disease characterized by an infection of the respiratory tract, skin, and mucous membranes. <p>Tetanus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A non-contagious disease caused by an infection by a bacteria that releases nerve toxins. - Is usually contracted during injury by an object contaminated by dirt, soil, or dust or from an animal bite. 	Combined vaccine: Get a booster dose every 10 years , regardless of age.
Influenza (flu)	A highly contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. Very common in the elderly.	Recommended annually for people ≥ 60 .
Pneumococcal infection	Caused by the bacteria that most often causes pneumonia and other more serious infections.	Recommended for people ≥ 65 .
Shingles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A painful disease caused by reactivation of the varicella zoster virus when the immune system is compromised. - Characterized by the outbreak of a skin rash along a nerve. - Most frequent complication: persistent pain for months or years. 	Recommended annually for people ≥ 60 .

Staying active in every area of your life



*"Old age is like climbing a mountain.
The higher you get, the more tired and breathless
you become, but your views become
more extensive."*

Ingmar Bergman

Being retired doesn't mean being idle!

Your day-to-day life can change dramatically when you retire. At first glance, not having to get up every morning to go to work might seem like a long, relaxing vacation. But after a while, some people start to miss their active work life.

Some retirees even decide to go back to work part-time. Think about those do-it-yourselfers you see working the aisles of the hardware store to make a little extra money, but mostly to stay busy. Other

retirees use their spare time to volunteer or help out their children who are in a more active stage of life. What's important is to find something you enjoy that helps give meaning to your life!

Three million retirees across Canada dedicate five billion hours to volunteer work every year, the equivalent of contributing \$60 billion to the economy.

(Statistics Canada)



Get your body moving!



It's common knowledge that engaging in physical activity every day throughout our lives is part of a successful strategy for maintaining general health. Physical activity has a number of specific benefits for the elderly, including improving balance, limiting falls, and preventing certain cardiovascular diseases, not to mention prolonging independent living.

Being physically active is a great opportunity to meet people who share your interests and to avoid feelings of isolation at the same time. People who regularly engage in physical activity have a better quality of life.

Health Canada suggests performing at least two hours and 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity a week. Note that this time does not have to be consecutive. For example, you could divide it into sessions of 10 minutes or more. Remember—every minute counts! It's also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups.

Did you know that...

being physically active isn't just good for your body, it has been scientifically proven to ward off depression!

Here are some tips to help you dedicate more time to being physically active without even realizing it. Be sure to respect your personal limits, and consult a healthcare professional if you have specific conditions:

- **Walk whenever you can**
- **Take the stairs whenever possible**
- **Carry your bags if you're able**
- **Perform day-to-day activities, like:**
 - > Mowing the grass
 - > Working in the garden
 - > Shovelling snow
 - > Vacuuming
 - > And more!



Keep your brain active, too!



*"You don't stop laughing when you grow old,
you grow old when you stop laughing."*

Unknown author

The brain is like a muscle: you have to use it and give it a workout to keep it in shape. Engaging in physical activity has a positive effect on your brain. As an added bonus, you don't need to take a shower after a brain workout!

Here are a few ideas for a workout routine to train your brain:

- Finally—**you're allowed to play games!** Opt for Sudoku, crossword puzzles, word searches, numbers games, and card games to keep you sharp. Find one you love and play it with friends.
- Keep your brain strong with **memory games**. In fact, the Internet is loaded with games designed to exercise your noggin. You can even download apps for your tablet. Just do a quick online search to find the perfect mind game!

Many
memory games
are available for
your tablet.

- **Be a lifelong learner!** There are a plethora of courses available for retirees. Now's a perfect time to learn a new language or take up painting to stimulate your brain.
- **Break from routine and try something new.** Go to the theatre, practice yoga, take a different route home... Give your brain a new challenge from time to time to keep those synapses firing!



Slippery when wet: Avoiding falls

According to the World Health Organization, falls are the second leading cause of accidental or unintentional injury deaths worldwide. Adults older than 65 suffer the greatest number of fatal falls.

Why do older people have a higher risk of falling?

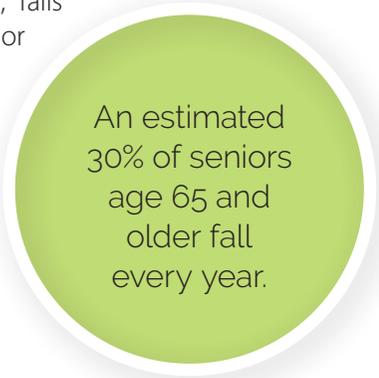
The effects of aging can increase the risk of falls:

- **Vision**

As you age, your eyes age with you and get weaker, making it tougher for them to adapt to light. They also become more sensitive to glare and are unable to perceive colours, depth, and contrasts as well as they used to.

- **Hearing**

Age-related changes in the ear and having hearing loss without using a properly fitted hearing aid can affect your centre of gravity and increase your risk of falling.



An estimated 30% of seniors age 65 and older fall every year.

- **Balance control problems and unsteadiness**

A loss of muscle mass weakens muscles, which can cause you to lose your balance.

- **Medications**

Medications can cause dizziness or insomnia and can increase the risk of falls.

Taking multiple medications is also a risk factor. Talk to your healthcare professional to find out more. It has been proven that reviewing your medicines helps reduce the risk of falls.

- **Alcohol consumption**

Alcohol causes dizziness and a loss of balance, which can increase your risk of falling.

There are a number of other combined risk factors:

- Being female
- Being older than 75
- Being socially isolated
- Having depression or dementia
- Being malnourished
- Having certain cardiovascular issues

When an older person falls, it can have a number of consequences. Over the long term, the person could develop post-fall syndrome, meaning they are terrified of falling again even though the risks have been minimized. It has been shown that reconfiguring the living environment of a person at risk of falling greatly reduces that risk.

Are you at risk in your own home?

It is important to arrange your physical environment to meet your needs. The first thing is to think about making your home safer for you, especially in the bathroom and on the stairs. CLSCs offer a range of services to help you adapt your (or a loved one's) home. Most pharmacies also have a section with handy home safety devices and equipment; ask your healthcare professional.

Do a home safety check

- 1 Is the house well lit?
- 2 Consider installing nightlights in hallways, bathrooms, and stairways.
- 3 Do you have a handrail on your stairs? Do you need two—one on each side? Is the stairway well lit?
- 4 Tidy up and put things away to avoid stumbling over something in your path.
- 5 Remove rugs and carpets to keep from tripping.
- 6 Are there electric cords and wires running every which way?

Bathroom safety

Bathrooms pose a high risk of injury, but you can add safety products where you need them.

Follow these tips:

- Put a non-slip mat on the floor of the shower and bath.
- Install grab bars near the toilet and bath if you have difficulty sitting down or standing up.
- Use a shower seat or toilet seat if needed.
- Dry the floor if it gets wet so you don't slip!



For older people, 80% of falls occur during the day, usually in the bathroom.

Do you need a little support?

Mobility aids are used for a variety of purposes. Whether it's to avoid putting some or all of your weight on an ailing leg, to help you keep your balance, or to improve how well you walk, these accessories help keep you on your feet.

This section covers the main products available on the market. Don't hesitate to ask your healthcare professional for advice!

■ Cane

Canes have changed dramatically since our grandparents' day. They come in several variations, the main difference being the handles.

Crook



Offset



Derby



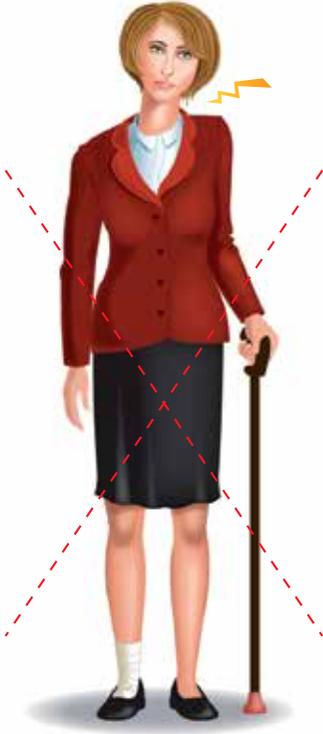
To use your
cane correctly,
it must fit
correctly!

> PROPER FIT



1. Stand tall and relax your shoulders.
2. Hand rest comes to the crook of the wrist.
3. Proper fit
Holding the cane on the uninjured side:
 - Makes you limp less because the injured leg is supported.
 - Allows you to walk naturally.
4. Rubber tip 15 cm (6 in.) away from your foot.

> THINGS TO AVOID

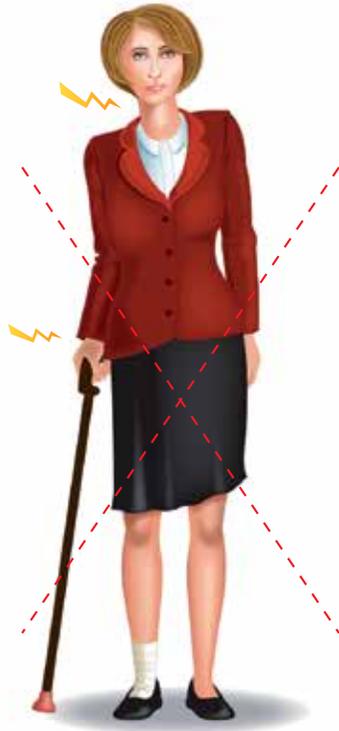


A CANE THAT'S TOO TALL

- Repetitive shoulder stress.
- Too much bend in the elbow means less support.

A CANE THAT'S TOO SHORT (LESS COMMON)

- Trouble balancing (not shown).



CANE ON THE AFFECTED SIDE

- Weight distributed unevenly: shoulder and hand pain.
- Poor posture and limping: pain in various spots.

■ Walker

A walker provides more support than a cane, helping you stay steady on your feet. It helps you walk safely by providing added stability, reducing your risk of a fall.



■ Rollator

Rollators are designed to give you more autonomy. They provide stable support, so you can walk farther and longer than with a cane. They come with a number of options—some have a basket or even a seat. They are usually lightweight and foldable for ease of transport.



Walkers and rollators are only effective if they are tailored to YOUR specific needs. They help you get around safely, and can also prevent injuries

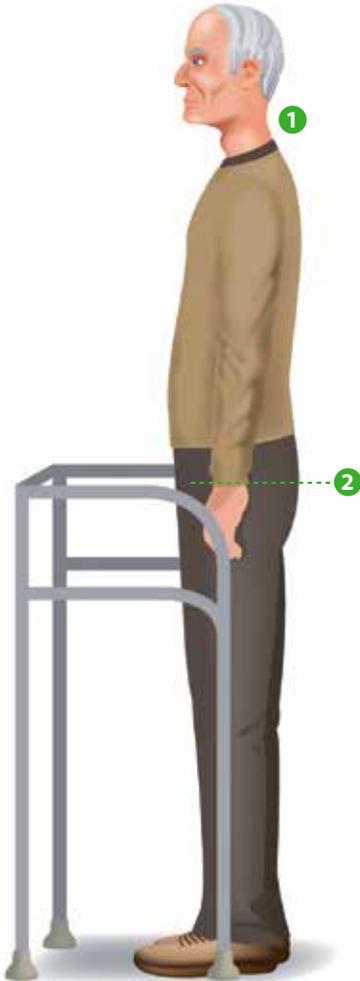
caused by poor posture. Take your time choosing the model that works with your lifestyle, and adjust it to fit your frame.

But don't get overly confident! Rollators require skill to maneuver and caution is key: always remember to engage the brake before sitting down!

Tips for using your walker or rollator safely:

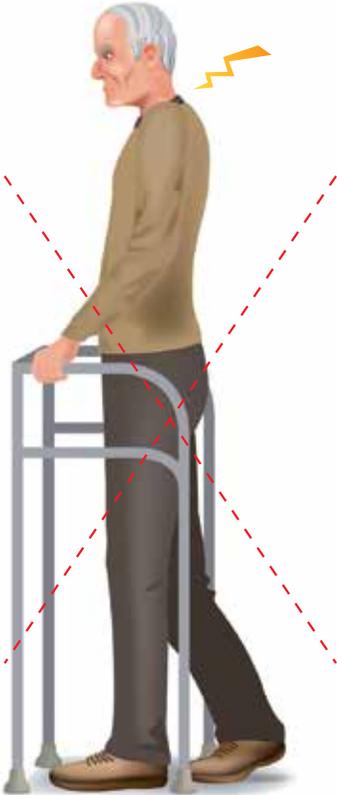
- Choose a model based on your weight.
- Wear comfortable, non-slip shoes with adequate support.
- Take time to check the condition of your walker or rollator, including the wheels, brakes, and tips.
- Ask your healthcare professional for help adjusting your walker.

> PROPER FIT



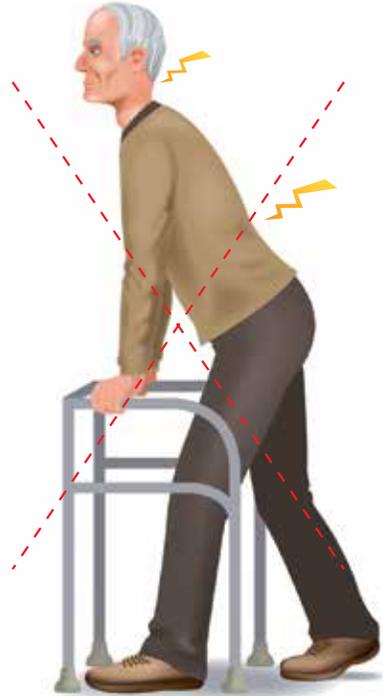
1. Stand tall and relax your shoulders.
2. Hand rests come to the crook of the wrist.

> THINGS TO AVOID



WALKER TOO HIGH

- Strain on the neck and shoulders.
- Too much bend in the elbow means weaker support.



WALKER TOO LOW

- Tension and pain.
- Too much weight on the hands and wrists.

Adapting your environment

*"Aging is still the only way we've found to live longer."
CA Sainte-Beuve*

Finding an age-friendly new home

People change homes for a variety of reasons during their lifetime: they may decide to change careers or start a family. As we age, we may have to change homes to accommodate for certain losses. Maintaining a house may become too much of a challenge, or we may decide to move to alleviate loneliness after the loss of a loved one. Our reasons for changing our living environment are as diverse as we are.

Before deciding whether to choose an apartment or retirement home, there are certain questions you should ask to make sure your new environment will meet your needs. Here are a few things to consider to help you determine what those needs are:

1 If you have children, will they be involved in choosing your housing? Will they be able to help you if needed?

2 Where will your new home be located?

It's important to choose a location based on what matters to you and the activities you would like to continue doing:

- Close to shopping centres, the grocery store, church?
- Close to your children and friends?
- Close to medical facilities?

3 What is your situation?

- How healthy are you and your spouse?
- Is having a doctor or nurse on site crucial for you?
- Would you feel safer living in an environment with tighter security?
- Does the bathroom need to be adapted to meet certain needs?
- Do you need assistance feeding yourself, dressing yourself, in the bath, or getting around?

4

What is your budget?

Making a budget means taking a look at your income and expenses. A budget will help you live within your means. Affordability is one of the most important factors when it comes to choosing a place to live. Financial institutions offer a range of budget-building tools, and more are available on the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada's website. Don't be shy about asking your friends and family for help.

There's also an independent living tax credit for seniors aimed at people age 70 or older who want to continue living in their home for as long as possible.

Visit the Revenu Québec website to learn more.

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What type of housing are you looking for?

There are many options in the senior housing real estate market. There are apartments for adults age 55 and up. There are also independent and semi-independent living facilities. But do your homework: not all residential facilities offer services for people with reduced autonomy, which means it's important to identify your needs. Your CLSC can even refer you to a senior housing specialist.

There are long-term care centres (CHSLDs) for those who need extended care and have lost virtually all autonomy. But to be admitted to a CHSLD, you must apply for assistance from the CLSC unless you opt for a private CHSLD.

You can expect private CHSLDs to be more expensive than those in the public system.

Making the move to a retirement home isn't easy—it can come as quite a shock. Take time to visit multiple facilities, ask questions, and even ask to sample a meal to reassure you! Above all, remember to be prepared and to ask your friends and family for help.

How do you ensure your choices will be respected if you become unable to make your own decisions?

Becoming legally incapacitated means being unable to make decisions in your own best interests or administer your own needs. For instance, a person suffering from dementia such as Alzheimer's could be declared incapacitated. There are things you can do in advance to make sure your decisions are honoured in such a situation. ***A mandate in anticipation of incapacity*** allows you to name someone to take care of you and manage your property. You can also include your wishes about housing in a section of your living will.

Ageism: A word about elder abuse

"When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground."
African proverb

Ageism is stereotyping or discriminating against individuals or groups on the basis of their age. It is comparable to sexism and racism. Ageism is a societal phenomenon that widens the gap between the young and the old. It's a negative attitude that can make seniors feel rejected, belittled, and disrespected, causing them to lose interest in social activities.

How do you fight ageism?

Being aware that ageism exists is the first step. If you observe discriminatory behaviour, it's important to call it out. Know that if you are a victim of elder abuse, there are resources available to help you. Don't hesitate to talk to your healthcare professional, who can point you in the right direction.

Did you know that...

you can be an ageist against yourself! Looking down on yourself or telling yourself you can't do things because you're too old is a form of ageism!

Conclusion

Getting old is an inevitable part of life, but it's up to each of us to make the transition as painless as possible. Make time to take a step back and analyze your needs and your reality before making any decisions. Keep your body active, but don't forget about your brain! And remember that there are tools you can use to adapt your environment and make it as safe as possible. Surround yourself with the people you love and include them in the major decisions you make.



Useful services

Programs and services for seniors:

This website contains information on various programs and services for seniors offered by government ministries and agencies. Information is organized by category.

<http://www4.gouv.qc.ca/EN/Portail/Citoyens/Evenements/aines/Pages/accueil.aspx>

Elder law: ÉDUCALOI

Éducaloi has created a special guide covering important issues specifically affecting seniors. It has information on housing, family law, fraud, estate planning, healthcare, wills, and many more topics.

<https://www.educaloi.qc.ca/en/seniors-short-guide>

Association québécoise des droits des retraités et préretraités (AQDR)

The sole mission of this association is to defend the cultural, economic, political, and social rights of retirees.

<http://www.aqdr.org/>

Sources and handy links:

- Osteoporosis Canada:
www.osteoporosecanada.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada:
<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>
- Financial Consumer Agency of Canada:
<http://www.fcac-acfc.gc.ca/Eng/Pages/home-accueil.aspx>
- Quebec Government:
<http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/index.php>
- World Health Organization:
www.who.int
- Société québécoise de gériatrie:
www.sqgeriatrie.org
- Immunize Canada:
www.immunize.cpha.ca

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