



Healthy Ageing: Can our lifestyle change?

Shalini Shribalaji 

*Geriatric Physician, Department of Geriatric Medicine, Mahatma Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Sri Balaji Vidyapeeth (Deemed to be University), Puducherry (UT), India.

Abstract

Background: Healthy ageing refers to maintaining physical, mental and social wellbeing as people grow older. With rising life expectancy, the focus has shifted from merely living longer to living healthier. Lifestyle factors such as diet, physical activity, sleep, stress management, and avoidance of harmful habits play a crucial role in determining the quality of ageing. Understanding how lifestyle modifications influence ageing outcomes helps promote long term health and independence among the elderly.

Methods: In this study dietary habits, physical activity levels, sleep patterns, and stress management practices were described. The association between healthy lifestyle factors and indicators of healthy ageing (eg. Physical fitness, cognitive alertness, and absence of chronic diseases) were explained in detail

Observations: Elderly people who followed a balanced diet, engaged in regular physical activity, and practiced stress –reducing habits showed significantly better health indicators. They had lower BMI, normal blood pressure and better cognitive function compared to those with sedentary lifestyles and poor dietary patterns.

Conclusion: From this article, I have revealed that lifestyle changes have a measurable impact on healthy ageing. Regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate sleep and stress control promote longevity and enhance quality of life. Adopting these habits early in adulthood can prevent chronic diseases and support graceful ageing.

Keywords: healthy ageing, lifestyle factors, balanced diet, graceful ageing

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Corresponding Author: Dr. Shalini Shribalaji,
No. 64A, Reddiarpalayam, Pondicherry,
Puducherry (UT), India.
Email ID: shalinikaliaperumal@gmail.com

Introduction

What is health? Referring to the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), it clearly states that: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. [1] The statistics reported by Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) predicts that by the year 2030, the geriatric population will be 1 among 6 people. It is predicted that, by 2050, countries of low and middle income will comprise 80 percent of the elderly population [11]. So, what about Healthy ageing then: PAHO defines the same as: “*Healthy ageing* is a continuous process of optimizing opportunities to maintain and improve physical and mental health, independence, and quality of life throughout the life course”. [2] Following the above this article, provides a brief guideline of switching to a lifestyle which will lead to a healthy ageing for the geriatric population. [Table-1]

Physical Activity

Physical activity must be periodically carried out by the elderly people. Throughout a week period, the duration of the physical activity can be either moderate - lasting between 150 minutes to 300 minutes else of an intense workout - lasting between for 75 minutes to 150 minutes. Furthermore, activities involving strengthening of muscles are also to be followed for a minimum of 2 days a week; and various other multicomponent physical activities involving functional balance and strength training are to be followed for a minimum of 3-day duration. Replacing the time duration an elderly people spend being sedentary, with a greater amount of physical activity results in additional health benefits.

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Table–1 Basic Physical activities needed for older population [4]

Sl. No	Exercise	Activities involved	Diseases delayed or prevented	Parts involved	Results
1	Endurance	Climbing staircase	Diabetes	Heart	Improved stamina
		Shopping at retail store	Colon cancer	Lungs	
		Avoiding lifts	Heart disease		
			Stroke		
2	Strength	lifting moderate weights	osteoporosis	Muscles	Increase metabolism
		yoga			BMI control
		squats			Blood sugar control
3	Balance	Balancing on one leg	Falls	Leg muscles	Being independent
			Disability		
4	Flexibility	Stretching	Injuries	Muscles	Ability to move
			Falls	Tissues	Blend freely

Dietary patterns

As we are aware of the phrase “food is medicine”, a balance dietary pattern takes the ageing in a healthy pattern. A healthy dietary pattern can be considered as food intakes which contain i. high quantity of dry nuts, legumes, vegetables, whole grains, fruits and vegetable oils, ii. Low to medium quantity of sea food and poultry iii. low quantity of red and processed meats, refined sugar and grains and starchy vegetables [5].

Meal planning

The elderly people should concentrate on consuming a variety of nutrients, and the consumption of food should be in divided portions. They must try to avoid oily, salty, and spicy foods to a greater extent. Possibility of dehydration should be minimized by having more water consumption. Calorie content to be less in their food plan as their physical activity will be decreasing due to ageing. A balanced diet containing sufficient quantities of carbohydrates, fiber, protein, minerals, fats and vitamins. To prevent or delay age related diseases, more amount of calcium, vitamin A, zinc, and iron are to be encouraged. [6]

Results of malnutrition in old age

Due to age factor, when there is a decrease in sense of taste and smell, it will have an adverse effect on reduced appetite; in addition to that, when they get themselves isolated, it also will result in reduced appetite too. Few elderly people who experience poor oral health may face hurdles in chewing. Finally unbalanced dietary patterns will result in lack of essential nutrients. Also determinants such as hearing loss, visual loss and financial constraints also have negative impacts in purchasing correct quantity and quality food for their consumption.[5]

Healthy patterns of few traditions

The Japanese consume vegetables, rice, fish, soy, green tea and seaweeds. The Okinawans include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, small number of fish and lean meats in their diet. The Nordic focuses on high consumption of fish, cabbages, root vegetables, pears, apples, berries, rapeseed oil. The Mediterranean prefers vegetables, low fat dairy and yoghurt, less consumption of sweets, red and processed meat. [5]

Mental Health

The major mental illnesses amongst the elderly people are depression and anxiety disorders, WHO reports that those with mental disorders constitutes around 14% of the older people. Contribution of this geriatric population to the society is by being part of the families and the communities. Therefore, their mental health is to be shaped effectively. [7]

Reasons for mental illness

Abuse of older people and loneliness play a vital role in affecting the mental health of the elderly population. i. Abuse could be of but not only limited to neglect, verbal, finance, physiological and physical. Moreover, these kinds of abuse are from their own carers. In addition, more older adults, who tend to be the care takers of their spouses with chronic health conditions, prove to be challenging for them which in turn incorporates them with the more stress. [7]

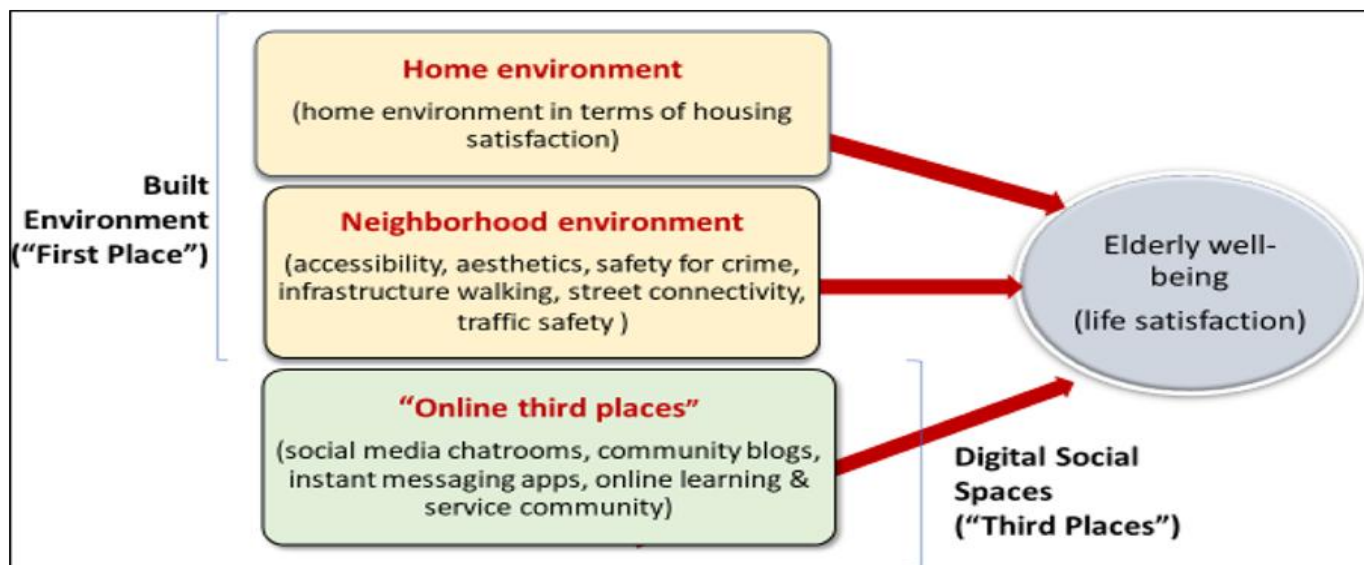
Results of mental illness

Some older adults who experience mental illness will experience mood disorders and suicidal thoughts, for which they might be forced to, because of their care takers attitude towards them and might end up feeling as a burden to the caretakers. Then they tend to have anxiety and personality disorders as well. Schizophrenia and Alzheimer disease will also add to the mental illness. In addition, they would not have a proper sleep pattern and finally also end up with alcohol and substance abuse. [8]

Reducing mental illness

Older community people can follow few steps to have a sound mind which they can start before getting old. Initially substance abuse, reducing tobacco and alcohol usage at their life will contribute lot when they get old by being more physically active. Secondly, making a financial plan for their future to avoid insecurities and manage income inequality for the old age population as this factor will make them economically stable. Finally, assessment such as neuropsychiatric, neuropsychological, and functional assessment can be carried out for them; followed by treatments such as behavioral and psychotherapeutic interventions and psychopharmacologic treatments, [8]

Figure – 1 Factors influencing social wellbeing of elderly adults



a. Home and neighborhood: Elderly people are very much concerned about their living spaces. They expect easy access to bathroom, kitchen, their room, and proper ventilation, aesthetics, and lighting also. The quality of life depends on a friendly neighborhood, therefore crime rate, safety of their own, streets, plants and trees for fresh air contribute to the life satisfaction for the older adults. Last but not the least, the way the other inmates' behavior towards the older generations. [9]

b. Work place: Though few people love to work after their retirement, and sometimes may volunteer for it, the salary limitation respective to their age might have a heavy impact as sudden decrease in their monthly income might have a negative impact in the family economy. In addition, equal respect would be expected by them from their co-workers. [9]

c. Public places and online social networking: Examples of public places where elderly people love to spend time are religious places, shopping complex, restaurants, recreational parks, and other few public places where they mostly could find peace. Since the communication stream has developed a lot, many love to get connected with their friends, classmates and their relatives who are very far from their living place. So social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter play a vital role and networking applications such as WhatsApp and telegram aid them to get connected with their loved ones and to share their emotions so that they will find a relief among them. [9]

Risk of social well-being due to ageing

As we are aware the social network of older adults gets narrow when compared to the younger adults, the risk of being isolated and chances of being left into emotional distress are high. The social roles of them

decreases as they get retired, they might come across many negative emotional situations where they tend to lose their families and friends, which in turn have an impact on satisfaction of life. [10] [Figure -1]

Conclusion

Healthy Ageing can be achieved only if our lifestyle is modified towards above factors. Importance of healthy ageing plays a pivotal role in reducing the hospitalization time, aiding the elderly people to be independent, being satisfied with their life, providing moral support to the other family members, and finally getting engaged in family activities. Wisdom is the valuable factor associated with the elderly population. Wisdom is the valuable factor associated with the elderly population, with which our society will have a high degree of development. Some elderly still continue contributing to the workplace or even volunteer themselves for the contribution to the betterment of the society therefore modifying our lifestyle which suits healthy ageing will have a contribution to both us and also to the society in a very positive manner. [11]

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