

Exploring - and Getting the Most Out of - Increased Longevity



January 2018, Volume 13

Living Longer Lives

Across the world people are living longer than they ever have before, and this includes individuals with disabilities. In 1950 the average life expectancy in the United States was 68.2 years. Now the average is around 79 years, and it is expected to reach 83.9 years or higher by the year 2050. The life expectancy for people with intellectual & developmental disabilities is similar to that of the general population, with the mean age at death ranging from the mid-50s (for those with more severe disabilities or Down syndrome) to the early 70s for adults with mild or moderate intellectual & developmental disabilities. The number of adults with intellectual & developmental disabilities age 60 years and older is projected to nearly double from 641,860 in 2000 to 1.2 million by 2030. The reasons for the increase in life expectancy can be traced back to better health care, improved medical technology, more pharmaceutical interventions, better sanitation, and better diet and exercise.

Studies have been done on those who reach 100 years old. Some of the common similarities found between people who have reached this advanced

age are: they eat a good diet; they do not smoke or drink; they engage in physical as well as mental exercise; they have a high degree of spirituality, (i.e., a belief in a higher power); and they live in a very caring environment and have important relationships with others.

One important benefit of having increased life expectancy is the richness and diversity of society which is gained from having so many people of various ages. Families benefit from the opportunity to have multiple generations to love and share wisdom and responsibilities. Communities have varied perspectives shared with them, which come from a lifetime of experiences.

Some of the impacts of the increased life expectancy are:

- Increased number of people with diagnoses commonly seen in older people, such as Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease, and osteoporosis, as well as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes;
- Increased medical costs for the health needs of the elderly;
- More caretakers needed in homes, including family members who will have added responsibilities of caring for aged parents and family members of all ages with a disability;
- More long term care facilities needed, from assisted living to nursing homes and rehabilitation centers; and
- Increased financial strain from living longer on resources.

The fact is that increased life expectancy has both positive and negative outcomes. The question comes to mind: is a longer life always a good quality of life? Longevity can be enhanced by loving relationships and good self-care, among other things. Some parts of a long life are out of the person's control, but striving for good relationships and making those a priority can lead to a more fulfilling life. In addition, a good quality of life in this time of longevity is also dependent on having resources for future health and caretaking needs as well as living expenses. Individuals can help their loved ones prepare for the future by exploring resources and creating a life plan which will take into account the needs which will come.

Resources:

<https://www.seguetech.com/the-impact-of-the-increase-in-life-expectancy/>

<http://www.rgs.org/OurWork/Schools/Teaching+resources/Key+Stage+3+resources/Who+wants+to+live+forever/Why+are+people+living+longer.htm>

Organizational Highlight

A new feature in Aging Gracefully is a section highlighting a local organization that serves seniors. We are starting out with the Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio.

Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio

Information and services to live a long, quality, independent life

They help older adults and their family caregivers live long, quality, independent lives. The Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio provides programs and services that help younger and more active older adults remain healthy, active and vibrant for as long as possible; programs and services that help frail older adults remain as independent as possible; and services and programs for everyone in between.

PROGRAMS

Assisted Living Waiver Program

The Assisted Living Waiver Program helps bridge the gap between an older adult living in their own home independently and living in a nursing home.

Family Caregiver Support Program

Families are the main providers of long-term care for older adults. Under this program five basic services are available: information about available services, assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services; counseling, support groups, and caregiver training; respite care; and supplemental services, to complement the care provided by family caregivers.

Grandparents and Relatives Raising Children Program

This program connects grandparents and relatives raising children to information and services in our community, including educational, financial assistance, health care for the children & more.

In-Home Care Programs

This program for frail, low-income older adults allows older adults to live in their own home by providing home-delivered meals, a home health aide, emergency response systems, home medical equipment and supplies, adult day services, transportation and more.

Other Programs

Managed Care Programs, Senior Dining Site Program, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Volunteer Programs are available.

Events

See the website for upcoming events

Senior Centers

Community facilities are where older adults can gather and make new friends. A senior center is a place where older adults can congregate to eat and fulfill many of their social, physical, emotional, and intellectual needs. The Area Office on Aging provides funding to senior centers.

An Older Adults Resource Guide is published annually and available to community members.

The Area Office on Aging
2155 Arlington Avenue
Toledo, Ohio 43609
419-382-0624
<https://www.areaofficeonaging.com>

