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OLDER AND WISER: All's well that ages well

[Margaret Coates](#) / Contributing writer

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file photo Cindy Goodman, North Shore News

We all age. But do we all age well?

To age well implies that we live in an environment which is age-friendly. The World Health Organization states that: "Healthy aging is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives. Creating environments that are truly age-friendly requires action in many sectors: health, long-term care, transport, housing, labour, social protection, information and communication, and by many actors – government, service providers, civil society, older people and their organizations, families and friends."

Living long is not enough – we need to age well as we live longer. To age well means staying healthy enough to continue doing the things we love. Having good genes certainly helps, but how well we age depends on you and what you do.

On the B.C. government's website on healthy aging it states that "only about 30 per cent of the way you age can be explained by biology and genetics. You can actually reduce your risk of chronic disease and disability by staying physically active, eating a healthy diet, living smoke-free, avoiding falls and related injuries, and remaining socially engaged."

Other sources on healthy aging tell us that getting the right amount of sleep, drinking less alcohol, finding a good health-care professional, keeping your mind healthy and sharp, and getting out and about are also ways to age well. If you read my column on a regular basis this must sound all too familiar.

If you want to dig deeper on this subject, the North Shore Seniors' Health Expo is a great opportunity to explore healthy aging. The expo will be held at the West Vancouver Community Centre and West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre on Sept. 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The event, presented by Amica Mature Lifestyles, Maison Seniors Living and the District of West Vancouver will focus on five topics, including cognitive, nutritional, financial, social and fitness themes. The expo will also feature a trade show with approximately 35 exhibitors highlighting products, demonstrations, innovative speakers, food and music.

At the start of the day, guests can listen to keynote speaker Dr. Bryn Hyndman talk about the latest science and secrets on staying healthy and aging well. Hyndman poses the question: "Did you know that your age isn't the best predictor of your health? There are in fact different pathways of aging, like water through a river delta we get to the end of our journey through different channels."

Her talk will help you "learn about the pathways you can choose to maximize your health and wellness – your energy and vitality, your mobility, your cognitive function, and maybe most importantly, your happiness."

Speakers will be on hand to present on the many tips for healthy aging listed above. You can hear speakers talk about healthy sleeping for seniors, end of life preparations, like estate planning and funeral arrangements, better hearing to improve overall health and cognitive well-being, balance loss, fraud and scams, transportation options, how we can advocate for ourselves in the health-care system, a guide to a long and happy life and happiness itself. A comprehensive guide for the event can be viewed on the District of West Vancouver's website.

The entrance to the event is free, so come on out. Judging by previous expos you'll find it well worth the effort. And don't forget: getting out and about is one of the ways we can all age well.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 48 years and has worked for and with seniors for 20 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome Email: lions_view@telus.net.

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