

Older and Wiser: September is a great starting point for new adventures

Exercising the body and mind is the key to healthy aging

Aug 25, 2021 12:54 PM By: Margaret Coates



A group of seniors head out on a hike. September is a great time to reset and try out new things, writes columnist Margaret Coates. Getty Images

Last year about this time I wrote about keeping up our activities in the fall as a health and wellness imperative for seniors.

Despite continued uncertainty at that time, I had also assumed that by spring of the next year we would have been out of the “pandemic woods.” But my optimism was misplaced as unfortunately we still seem to be in a pandemic quagmire. Can we expect a full “back to normal” or will we have to keep ourselves pandemic safe for more months to come? Even with these uncertainties, it is important to keep up our activities throughout the fall and winter.

I have always seen September as a starting point, a renewal if you will, for the year ahead in terms of new adventures or taking on new or old programs or projects. It’s hard to miss those back to school or work sales ads which impel us to think anew to the coming year. Or perhaps it is just leftover feelings from going to school myself. After the summer of outdoor activities (albeit with some

serious heat and smoke issues) gave us a little more freedom from pandemic rules and kept us moving, it would be good to search out fall and winter activities in the community.

The health benefits to keeping up our activities are important to our well. I know I keep banging on about this (check out my last column), but exercising our mind and body is closely linked to healthy aging. At this time of year, we can start thinking about what activities we can get back to or to begin anew. It could be taking a class virtually or on site at a centre, you could take up your old hobby or start a new one, or you could volunteer. As organizations are opening up somewhat, it seems as though there may be more volunteer opportunities.

Many organizations on the North Shore are offering programs both on site and by virtual means depending on their safety protocols with the (hopefully) waning pandemic. There is still a lot of uncertainty about just how far organizations can go in terms of programming and keeping people safe.

In any case, you might try a program at Elder College, the libraries, seniors and recreation centres, and centres which offer seniors programs. Whatever your comfort level is, you can probably find something that suits you. I for one will be looking to continue some of my virtual programs and meetings, and perhaps sticking my toe in gradually to access in-person programs. I am still waiting for the arrival of the safest possible community with most people double vaccinated and many of the COVID variants in check.

To find programs and the centres that offer them, look for the new 2021 Seniors Directory published by the North Shore News and North Shore Community Resources. I have seen copies at many centres, and you can access them online at NSCR or phone them for a copy at 604-985-7138. It's one of the best magazines outlining seniors' programs and services on the North Shore.

With the cooler temperatures looming, we can look for ways to safeguard our health and safety. It is a good time to think about getting our flu, pneumonia, and shingles shots. We might want to prepare for bad weather by getting in proper clothing and checking that our home is weather- and safety-proofed. Make sure to have plenty of backup supplies, first aid items and batteries. Also make sure to connect with people who could potentially assist you when the weather turns nasty.

Another bonus from joining the fall programs means we stay connected to the community, avoiding unhealthy isolation, and enjoying the company of old and new friends.

Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 51 years and has worked for and with seniors for 26 of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome – email lions_view@telus.net.