

STAYING HEALTHY - A GREAT INVESTMENT

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Invest in What You Know - Your Body

In the world of investing holding on to what we have is known as capital preservation. This is also true about health, our most important asset. Maintaining, or better yet, improving our bodies is a great investment. Although, much is written on the subject of health with hundreds of studies supporting the importance of diet, balance and exercise there's little discussion as to how improving our health impacts us financially. Well, here are some reasons why it's time to focus on living healthy and strong.

Retiring at 75

Working longer - Build our Energy

Most of us Boomers never imagined we'd be smack dab in the middle of our careers at the ripe age of 50 or in many cases 60, but that's exactly what is happening today, courtesy of the recession. The reality is that many people will work far longer than they ever intended. The economic upheaval over the past decade has resulted in shriveled investment portfolios, an inability to save enough and losses in real estate causing the assets set aside for retirement to be insufficient to provide for decades of retirement.

Then there are those who hope to work forever and feel retirement is an early death. Whatever the reason, working longer means competing with an ever-younger work force. Let's face it those 10 to 16 hour days of our 40's and 50's seem a whole lot longer in our 60s! Work demands take their toll on everyone, but it extracts more at 60 and 70 taking longer to bounce back into equilibrium. Building greater mental and physical endurance for those marathon days, pressure cooker deadlines, demanding travel and the perpetual mantra of higher productivity can give you an edge. Thankfully, we baby boomers have wisdom on our side and by now have probably mastered ways of working smarter.

The Doctor's Out

Health Care: Cost and Access

It's pretty apparent that the cost of healthcare is going up and will continue well into the future. Medical technology continues to move forward, as do the costs. Pharmaceutical costs have risen above annual inflation rates for some time now. This trend shows no signs of slowing. Soon the shortage of newly minted primary care physicians will become painfully apparent. Many of the older primary care physicians are retooling their careers with MBAs or more lucrative specialties leaving a serious gap in basic medicine. Staying healthy with a disciplined approach to exercise, food, sleep, stress management and avoiding excesses will likely lessen health care costs and reduce visits to the doctor, where it may be harder and harder to get an appointment.

Healthcare reform is intended to give greater access to care and extend the viability of Medicare. Yet how long Medicare can be sustained depends on many complex economic variables. As healthcare costs increase and shift it's a pretty good bet that the level of services currently paid for by the government will diminish with a greater portion to be borne by affluent seniors.

I Can See Clearly Now

Avoiding Brain Fog

Being healthier can improve our odds of using sound judgment. Why? Because some illnesses and/or medications can cause side effects that impair critical thinking, cause sleep deprivation or affect alertness. Energy levels can be depleted by medications or illness, sapping our desire to be thoroughly involved in decisions, particularly decisions around money and investments. When we're tired and sick the motivation to tackle complex decisions can easily evaporate.

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What to Do

Naturally, we can't control our genetic codes or what illnesses may await us. But there is plenty we can do to stay healthy and financially sound as we age. Working to improve your odds of pushing off health problems into the future, or avoiding them entirely is serious work with the potential for serious returns in our health.

So put down the fork and strap on the weights. Read exercise books, find a coach, join a gym, buy exercise DVDs, walk with a friend and learn healthy eating habits. Set up a routine and create measurable results. Commit, now. Measure – weight, cholesterol levels, blood pressure. Move those feet and dials.

Know Your Numbers

Body Mass Index - go to cdc.gov to calculate your BMI, a formula indicating your percentage of body fat. Weight is a significant factor in managing health.

Blood Pressure – a healthy blood pressure is around 120/80. High blood pressure can cause serious problems: stroke, heart attacks, kidney disease.

Cholesterol – less than 200 mg/dl is desirable. Go to heart.org to learn more.

Smoking – zero! Stomp it out. You'll be much healthier, look younger and smell better.

Alcohol – in excess contributes to cancer, stroke, violence and much more. Know your limits.

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