

Celebration of ageing

The Health Column

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'Old age' is always 10 years older than you are today.

While this may be a quaint adage, it highlights that we generally only think of other people as being 'old'.

Officially there are ages when we are deemed to be a 'senior' or an older Australian. For example, Seniors Cards are provided to people aged 60 and not working more than a set numbers of hours per week in paid employment. From a health and medical point of view you are generally considered 'senior' after the age of 65.

Australians are also living longer and the country has an ageing population. People aged 70 and over currently account for about 10 per cent of the population and by 2050 this is expected to increase to 20 per cent.

Each year The Every Generation Festival runs for the month of October, and aims to bring together the community to celebrate longer lives. Events are held for Australians of all ages to celebrate the valuable contribution made by older Australians to the community. It is a time for older people to share their achievements with people of other generations. The festival sends the message that people improve with age, and that their contributions to society are valuable, welcomed and essential.

Living longer is a great thing, but we also need to remain healthy to enjoy our longer lives to their fullest. Unfortunately, debilitating conditions such as heart and kidney disease, diabetes, and some types of arthritis are more common in older people.

Lifestyle changes can minimise the risk of these problems occurring, but medicines are often the best way to manage the symptoms of these conditions. In fact, the oldest 10 per cent of the population use more than 20 per cent of all prescribed medicines.

The good news is that as the population ages worldwide, we are also getting healthier. A US study has shown that on average, elderly people are growing healthier, happier and more independent. Another report in *New Scientist* magazine has found that diseases usually associated with old age are affecting fewer people and, when they do strike, it is much later in life.



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Regardless of our age or physical condition, we benefit when we take control of our health. This includes making informed decisions based on the advice of doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other healthcare professionals.

Questions to ask health professionals are listed on the *Wise Use of Medicines* Fact Card, available from pharmacies around Australia providing the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information.

Your local pharmacy is your health destination and can provide a range of products, medicines, services and advice to support you as you age. These include:

- mobility aids
- prescription medicine
- medicine management services (e.g. Dose Administration Aids and other Medication Management Initiatives (e.g. Home Medicines Review, MedsCheck & Diabetes MedCheck)
- compression garments
- health and medicines advice
- blood pressure monitoring
- services to help you lose weight and quit smoking
- services to allow you to maintain your independence such as home delivery.

Visit your local pharmacy today and find out what they have available.

There are also Fact Cards available on topics of special interest to us as we age – *Arthritis, High Blood Pressure, Osteoporosis, Prostate Problems, Preventing Falls, Carer Support, Vision Impairment and Sleeping Problems.*

If you want to stay in control and be better informed about ageing, phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772 for the location of your nearest Self Care pharmacy, or go to www.psa.org.au 'Supporting practice' then 'Self Care', and then 'Find a Self Care pharmacy'.