



DYNAMIC AGING

Series Introduction

This is the first of a new series of articles on aging. My focus will be on practical, well-researched information that can be used to enhance health, fitness, and therefore, a sense of well-being, in our senior years.

AGING! This is a word that I only use when talking about OTHER people. Of course, we all *know* that we age from the day we are born. But who really thinks about it when we are young and seemingly invincible?

As we become wrapped up in raising children and developing careers, we often let our fitness and health habits fall by the wayside. Suddenly, we wake up one day to find that we're now called a "senior citizen"! And we wish we had paid more attention to those two pounds-per-year we've gained over the last 30 years, as we now find that we're 60 pounds heavier than when we were 30. And it doesn't take much effort to get out of breath. Where did all the time go?

As a long time tennis player, I was amazed to learn that age 50 is considered a "senior". AARP says this too. Restaurants, however, wait until you are in your 60's to give you "senior" discounts. Medicare, retirement plans.....all claim different ages that qualify you for senior benefits. With the surge of medical technology that prolongs both quantity and quality of life, we should all have a very keen interest in aging better!

What does it mean to age successfully? We wonder about the wide variations we see in an individual's fitness. "Does it all come down to good genes? Is aging well just a matter of luck? How much control do we have over our experience of "getting older"? Authors Himes, Oettinger, and Kenny ask, and answer these questions in their book, *Aging in Stride*, and all share the perspective that no matter where you are in the aging process, there are always steps you can take to improve your life.

This column will focus on those positive steps...steps you can take right here, right now. Steps that will maximize your health, fitness and enjoyment of senior life. Steps that will maximize your health provider's recommendations.