

As baby boomers continue to age, they are increasingly more interested in strategies to slow down the aging process. While a desire to live longer is certainly one of the reasons for this drive, maintaining a high quality of life is proving to be even more important.

There is a distinct difference in attitude and belief regarding the complications of aging between baby boomers and their parents. The older generation is more likely to have the attitude that illness and loss of function is a normal part of aging. They are more likely to put their ailing health completely in the hands of the medical profession. They routinely take handfuls of drugs every day to try to keep illness at bay or at least to try to stave off the immediate consequences of their diseases.

Although not the majority yet, at least an increasing number of the younger baby boomer generation are more likely to accept personal responsibility for their health. They are more likely to look for alternatives to drugs to keep them healthy. They use their medical physicians as just one component of their health care strategy. More and more are looking to lifestyle changes and non-medical healthcare practitioners as their primary tools.

The primary reason for this difference in attitude regarding health and disease comes from the easy access to information that the younger of these two generations has available to them. The parents of the baby boomers had limited access to health information and what they did receive was primarily from their doctors. Medical doctors in the 1970's, 1980's and some even in the 1990's had little regard for the influence that lifestyle had on health. Few cardiologists of that era considered diet to be a factor in the development of heart disease.

More and more medical physicians today understand the importance of lifestyle in the prevention of disease. Unfortunately medical education does not prepare most doctors to be effective lifestyle coaches for their patients. Since medical insurance does not compensate doctors well for providing this service to their patients, there is little incentive for doctors to acquire this information on their own. Most of their patients have not yet realized that being healthy requires a personal investment, not only in time and effort, but financially as well.

There are a number of approaches that need to be included in a successful anti-aging program. The science of anti-aging medicine continues to advance, providing proven strategies to living a long and active life. Over the next few columns, I will discuss some of these strategies.

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