



## Active Aging and the Role of the Nurse

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### Keyword

Old Age  
Active aging  
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### ABSTRACT

The World Health Organization (WHO) has introduced the definition of "active aging" since 2002, and in this regard, it recommends supporting the continuity of the elderly's participation in life in every sense. According to older individuals, active aging means maintaining and preserving functionality. Staying physically active and doing regular physical exercise is an effective and efficient measure to maintain and maintain functionality with advancing age. Regular physical exercise provides many benefits in terms of protecting and maintaining health with advancing age. However, despite all its benefits, regular physical exercise is insufficient among elderly individuals. WHO has put forward many suggestions to support active aging and also touched upon the roles of nurses for this purpose. In this article, after briefly mentioning the definition of the concept of active aging, the perceptions of elderly individuals about active aging, many factors that determine active aging will be summarized, and the roles of nurses in order to support active aging will be briefly touched upon.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization has adopted the term "active aging" to express the process of achieving this vision. What is "Active Aging"? Active aging is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and safety to improve quality of life as people age [1]. In 2002, the World Health Organization proposed the concept of active aging, which has six determinants: economic, social, health and social services, behavioral, personal and physical environment. The importance of the physical environment in affecting active aging was emphasized [1,19].

The human population is living longer than at any other time in history, and global life expectancy has doubled since the 1900s [2]. A 65-year-old today can expect to live to 85, about 10 years longer than their parents' generation. By 2041 one in four people living in the UK, approximately 20.7 million people, will be aged 65 or over [2,3]. Although they live longer, many people do not remain healthy in old age. Instead, they spend much of their later lives managing a multitude of long-term conditions and disabilities that could have been prevented or reduced by

measures taken early in life. The desire to create opportunities for healthy aging is highly productive in national and international health policies. WHO defines the concept in terms of health and social factors as follows: 'The process of developing and maintaining functional ability that ensures well-being in older ages.' WHO, 2020 Measures that support healthy aging include a combination of physical, cognitive and social factors; Many of these are more effective when applied early in a person's life (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Factors that support productive healthy aging [2].

Better physical health and mental well-being
Financial security and independence
Increasing endurance with physical and cognitive reserves
Maintaining good social connections, friendships and practical help
Engaging in activities with others, including high-quality work, care or volunteering have a sense of meaning and purpose by participating

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## 2. Improving Public Health in Later Years

To improve public health in the following years; Additional years of life provide great opportunities for individuals, communities, society and the economy. However, for many people, living in deprivation and having pre-existing chronic disease and disability means that they are unable to maintain their functional abilities and make the most of these opportunities [2,4]. To solve this problem, the UK Government is planning to give everyone an extra five years by 2035. The goal is to have a healthier life [5,7]. Studies show that encouraging healthy behaviors from midlife allows people to prevent the onset of chronic diseases and extend their physical and cognitive functioning into later life. For example, eating a healthy diet, engaging in regular physical exercise that includes activities that increase strength and improve balance, quitting smoking, and reducing alcohol consumption can contribute to prolonging health and independence [5]. Emotional, social, and cognitive health in old age is affected by interacting and connecting with others and social It has also been shown to benefit from isolation avoidance strategies. Hobbies and focused activities that instill a sense of belonging and purpose have all been shown to increase functioning in old age and therefore prolong health and independence [6]. All nurses have an important role in helping people prepare for healthy aging. As the most trusted healthcare professionals and the largest professional group in the UK's health and social care system, they are likely to meet people many times throughout their lives. Treating each meeting as an opportunity to share information about behavior change and healthy aging will help people understand the changes necessary to achieve health in later life [2,8].

Health messages and behavior change must be appropriate and sensitive to changes in context that affect health and lifestyle. A recent report by PHE found that inactivity among older adults during the national lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that many older people experienced a decline in their mobility, functionality, strength and balance, and an increase in the number of falls [9]. In the future, these people will need support to increase activity and functionality during the recovery phase of the pandemic to regain health in old age. The report predicts that these people will be exposed to more falls and associated morbidity unless measures are taken to reverse the fall. Additionally, research shows that health messages are effective at every stage of a person's life, and early messaging can influence thinking later in life. This is especially

important considering the behavioral changes required to prevent cognitive decline in old age [19]. Sharing information, providing support, and directing appropriate services helps individuals live healthy, happy, and active lives later in life [10].

## 3. Increasing Knowledge and Action on Healthy Aging

To support all health and care professionals to increase their knowledge and, importantly, take greater action on key public health issues such as healthy aging, the Office for Health Improvement and Inequalities has published free online e-learning resources as part of a programme. titled All Our Health [11]. The healthy aging e-learning resource aims to support professionals by providing short-term learning, focusing on evidence of what works and providing links to useful data sources, guidance and further education resources [12].

## 4. Building Back Better and More Justly

As we begin to focus on the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important for the nursing and midwifery workforce to consider lessons learned and consider what changes need to be made to ensure we truly recover better and more equitably. This will require our profession to use the 2020s as a decade of transformation in the nursing and midwifery workforce, focused on managing and treating disease as well as preventing, protecting and improving public health. Given our need to focus on productive healthy aging, nurses need to prioritize this area of practice as we move forward. The All Our Health program provides a useful framework that allows our profession to consider evidence-based interventions that nurses can implement or support at the individual, community and community levels [13].

## 5. The Role of Nurses in Supporting Healthy Aging

A country's primary healthcare system is built on nurses who serve as health guardians and work to ensure health awareness and disease prevention to people of all ages, in a variety of social contexts. No matter the country, nurses are on the front lines of healthcare and are often the first point of contact for the elderly population seeking medical assistance. Older people are more susceptible to a variety of chronic and acute health conditions due to the decline in physiological and

psychological functions associated with aging, and many also experience multiple diseases as they age [14]. Nursing plays a vital role in improving and maintaining the health of the elderly person. Nurses are often the primary care provider for seniors, especially when their health needs require them to be placed in a senior care facility. However, nurses are also vital in ensuring people's health and well-being and in helping them live their lives to their potential. Nurses play an active role in the diagnosis and treatment of many conditions in the elderly [15]. Nurses often provide initial care in facilities for the elderly, especially when people there need medical treatment. They play a special role in promoting healthy ageing as they are charged with the care and support of older Australians with a range of medical conditions. This includes providing preventive treatment, supporting older people, and helping older people manage persistent conditions [16]. One of the key ways nurses promote healthy aging is by focusing on preventive care. Shifting to successful prevention techniques is even more important today due to the rapidly changing nature of healthcare. It is the nurse's responsibility to implement recommendations and evidence-based research to improve patient health in preventive health care. This involves working with older Australians to identify potential health risks and develop strategies to reduce these risks [17].

Nurses also play a vital role in supporting older people in managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis. This includes providing ongoing support and education to help them understand and manage their condition effectively. This may include providing medication management support, wound care, and advice on lifestyle changes such as diet and exercise [18]. In addition to providing medical care, nurses also play an important role in supporting older people to maintain their independence and quality of life. This is bathing, it may include providing support with activities of daily living such as dressing and mobility. It may also include providing emotional support and helping seniors maintain social connections [16,19].

To help older individuals age well, nurses have critical thinking, clinical assessment, clinical decision-making, care coordination, and clinical and administrative leadership skills that are important. The contribution of nurses in the care of the elderly is important in improving their health and quality of life. Nurses also act as catalysts for healthier lifestyles, inspiring people to embrace healthy lifestyles through leadership, mentoring and instruction [17,19].

## 6. What is the Role of Nurses in Elderly Patients?

### *The Role of Nurses in the Care of Elderly Patients*

Nurses understand the importance of preserving the dignity and autonomy of older patients. They work with them to develop personalized care plan that maximize their independence in daily activities such as bathing, dressing, and eating. This empowers patients and improves their sense of control over their lives. Older adults have a changing perspective. They mostly want to continue their previous lives, they attach great importance to the quality of life, and therefore they expect more service from their families. Healthy aging should be encouraged, regardless of disease; it is a process of growth and development. It is the maintenance of functional ability that ensures well-being during the aging process. In other words, active aging is the process of enabling people to increase and improve their own control. [19].

In a systematic review, unclear professional boundaries, inadequate knowledge and skills, and unsupportive organizational and workplace environments all appear to limit the work potential of nurses, the assumption of new nursing roles in practice, limited scope of practice at the health system level, low pay levels, and reimbursement policies. With the limited number of nurses and the large amount of healthcare services requiring qualified practitioners, nurses face difficulties in fulfilling their roles in healthcare. This should be the top priority; understanding the reality and eliminating the barriers to practice that nurses currently experience changes roles. In this context, nurses' own clinical experiences in health promotion are important for active aging [18].

## 7. Conclusion

According to the results of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK) report, it has been reported that the elderly population rate is 9.9% in 2022. According to TÜİK Population projections, the elderly population rate was predicted to be 12.9% in 2030, 16.3% in 2040, 22.6% in 2060 and 25.6% in 2080 [20]. With the increase in the elderly population, the special needs of the elderly individual increase and it is inevitable to encounter many problems. With the aging process, many health and social problems occur, such as many anatomical and physiological changes, a decrease in the ability to adapt to environmental factors, deficiencies in social relations, disabilities, and mental confusion. As a result, the need for health services is increasing. The increasing survival time has brought to the agenda the question of how the

quality and time of healthy life can be extended. For a quality life, especially developed countries are creating many policies to maintain and protect healthy and active aging.

Healthy and active aging is to offer a quality of life in which individuals of all ages can remain healthy and socially active. Ensuring regular and adequate nutrition during the aging process, increasing physical exercise opportunities, arranging social and economic opportunities that may endanger the health of elderly individuals in every aspect, and planning early diagnosis and treatment of chronic diseases are very important and necessary for healthy aging. In addition, training health personnel who will care for elderly individuals and creating and organizing health systems specific to the elderly are very important for healthy and active aging. Active aging process is the ability of individuals to continue their cultural, social and economic activities in their daily lives, as well as to live in a healthy and safe environment in terms of physical, mental and social aspects. It also includes the aging of older individuals by making their social participation process permanent through their work and production.

In order to maintain or increase the standard of living, elderly people's opportunities in terms of security, health and participation must be maximized. In improving the quality of life of elderly individuals, it is essential that they are supported with care developed specifically for individuals, in line with their needs. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that, within the scope of the goal of active and healthy aging, there is a need to make and develop healthy lifestyle changes in order to prevent diseases and protect and improve the quality of life in elderly individuals. It is among the duties of nurses to protect and improve the health of elderly individuals and to support the formation of a positive perception of aging in society [2,19].

### Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is declared by the authors. In addition, no financial support was received.

### Author Contributions

Study Design, NG,GK; Data Collection, NG,GK; Statistical Analysis, NG,GK; Data Interpretation, NG,GK; Manuscript Preparation, NG,GK; Literature Search, NG,GK All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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