

Why Ageing Well Depends On 3-Ms - Movement, Memory And Mates!

As the new year begins, many make resolutions to improve our health and lifestyle. But for most of us, our goals are short-term. Consultant Geriatrician **Dr. Shane O'Hanlon** from Mater Private Network encourages us to shift that focus to long-term health to ensure a better quality of life today, and for many tomorrows to come. To help achieve this goal, he has developed the Playlist for Ageing Well, a practical and engaging musical reminder to inspire people to make small, meaningful changes in their everyday lives.

"Ageing well isn't about chasing perfection or reversing time," Dr. O'Hanlon explains. "It's about making consistent choices now that will pay off in the long run. The Playlist for Ageing Well is a fun and practical way to remind yourself of those choices—and to find ways to make them part of your everyday routine. When I see patients, it's almost always after something has gone wrong with their health. The Playlist is a practical way for people to begin to future-proof their lifestyle today, in order to fully enjoy the years ahead, and that all comes down to education and awareness."

Dr. O'Hanlon's roadmap focuses on the three M's - Movement, Memory and Mates! So where do we start?

1. Physical Activity

One of the most effective ways to maintain overall health as you age is through regular exercise. Research involving nearly 480,000 adults¹ shows that combining

cardiovascular activity with strength training can reduce the risk of chronic diseases—including cancer and heart disease—by up to 40%. It also significantly lowers the risk of Alzheimer's disease. "Physical activity also helps to prevent frailty, which results from the development of multiple health conditions" says Dr. O'Hanlon. "Strength training, in particular, builds muscle and reduces the likelihood of falls, a concern for older adults."

2. Fall Prevention

Falls are one of the most common causes of injury among older adults, particularly in their own home. An example is a fall on the stairs - research shows that 85% of stair falls occur in people over the age of 65, and that 90% of these falls occur when coming down the stairs. As 2 out of 3 occur on the top or bottom three steps of the staircase, being mindful, avoiding distractions, and working on balance within your exercise rou-

tine can help reduce these risks, no matter your age.

3. Heart and Brain Health

"We've long known that the heart and the head are connected in most areas of our lives, but what people don't recognise immediately is that your cardiovascular health plays an important role in cognitive function as we age" Dr. O'Hanlon explains. A recent study found that individuals with better cardiovascular health had a reduced risk of cognitive impairment in later life². Having a healthy heart also reduces your risk of Alzheimer's disease, Vascular Dementia, and stroke.

4. Nutrition and Sleep

While it may seem simple, how we eat, and how we rest are crucial factors for our future health. Avoiding ultra-processed foods—which studies found have been linked to increased risks of dementia³—and getting the correct amount of quality sleep are simple yet effective steps to support long-term health.

5. Social Connections

Social isolation and loneliness are silent but significant health risks, linked to everything from high blood pressure and depression to Alzheimer's disease. Dr. O'Hanlon encourages us to embrace small acts of connection, such as greeting neighbours regularly or joining local community groups to help protect not only our mental health, but our overall wellbeing as we age. "Loneliness acts as a fertiliser for other diseases," he warns. "But small efforts to engage with others today can make a big difference to your overall wellbeing."

When Should We Start?

As we examine our lifestyle choices at the precipice of a new year, Dr. O'Hanlon emphasises that it's never too early to start planning for your health. "When people think 'geriatrician' they think of people in their late 70's and 80's. But the stark reality is, if you leave it too late, there is not much we can do for you when there is a signifi-

cant health deterioration. The ideal time for focusing on your lifestyle and social habits truly begins in your 40's and 50's. The Playlist for Ageing Well came about as a practical tool designed to help make these changes more engaging and accessible. But at the end of the day, how we live now impacts how we will live in the future, so my resounding message to people this new year is – Start as you mean to go on, make healthy choices fun with the soundtrack of your choosing, and continue to take the simple steps today that will lead to healthier days as we age.”

To start building your playlist today—visit www.materprivate.ie for more information and tips to help you take the first step toward a healthier future. You can also download Dr. Hanlon's Playlist For Ageing Well here, to help keep your healthy resolutions on track, or simply to give you inspiration to create your own Playlist for Ageing!