

The Canadian Multicultural LEAD Organization for Mentoring and Training

LEAD Seniors' Art Project



Welcome to the third edition of the LEAD Seniors' Art Project newsletter.

As fall slowly gives way to the first signs of winter, we begin to gather in warm, creative spaces while snow begins to settle outside. We are excited to share our third quarter's newsletter, highlighting a season filled with meaningful connections, learning, and art. Despite the early snowfall, or perhaps inspired by it, our program continues to shine through our education sessions, hands-on art workshops, and a concert that brought us together in celebration of creativity. Our education sessions encouraged curiosity and conversation, while our art workshops offered participants the chance to express and explore. We also received our 2026 LEAD calendars, each one filled with artwork created by seniors, youth and other participants. They showcase the talent and creativity found throughout our community.

As we move into the winter months, we reflect with gratitude on the creativity and collaboration that defined this season. Thank you to everyone who joined us, contributed their talents, and helped build a vibrant artistic community.

In this newsletter, you will read about the following:

- Password Management & Art Workshop
- Stress Management Education Session
- Trivia Event: Click It or Risk It
- Art Therapy Session
- Introduction to Dementia Education Session
- Snowflakes, Ornaments & Wreaths Decorating Workshop
- Healthy Aging and Healthy Minds Education Session
- EchoHorizon Concert
- 2026 Calendar

Password Management & Art Workshop

On October 14, participants attended a two-part event focusing on password management and art. The first half of the event covered the importance of strong passwords and password managers, and practiced evaluating strong versus weak passwords. The second part of the event shifted into an art workshop that encouraged participants to create art that inspired them.

The Importance of Passwords

Passwords protect:

- Bank details
- Personal information
- Cash and valuables

What Makes a Strong Password?

Make a password strong by:

- Making it long
- Mixing different characters
- Not using common words

How about a passphrase? The longer the better.

Examples:

- Ilike chicken Dinners \$teamy C0ol
- My Grands0nEats Pies in 3.5 bites
- ILuveLittle Richard!1957 Lucille
- Y0u, ar3 My \$unshlne My 0#ly

What is a Password Manager?

A password manager:

- Generates strong passwords
- Stores password securely
- Auto-fills online forms

**Thank you
Christine and Tovia for
facilitating the
Password Management
presentation.**



Strong Passwords

- 1x#4TU47@2&)^BaZUT@K
- Pec@tiCaliousX&@1876Burt
- Pizza#Cloud*42Jump

vs.

Weak Passwords

- Password
- 123456789
- Elephant

Stress Management Education Session

What is Stress?

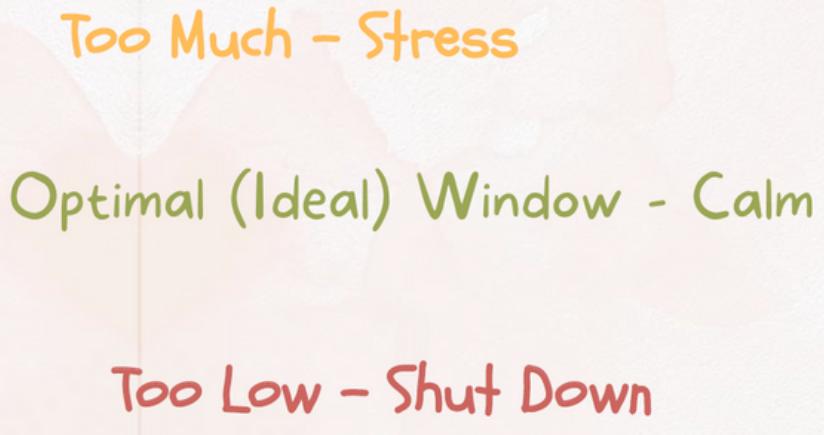
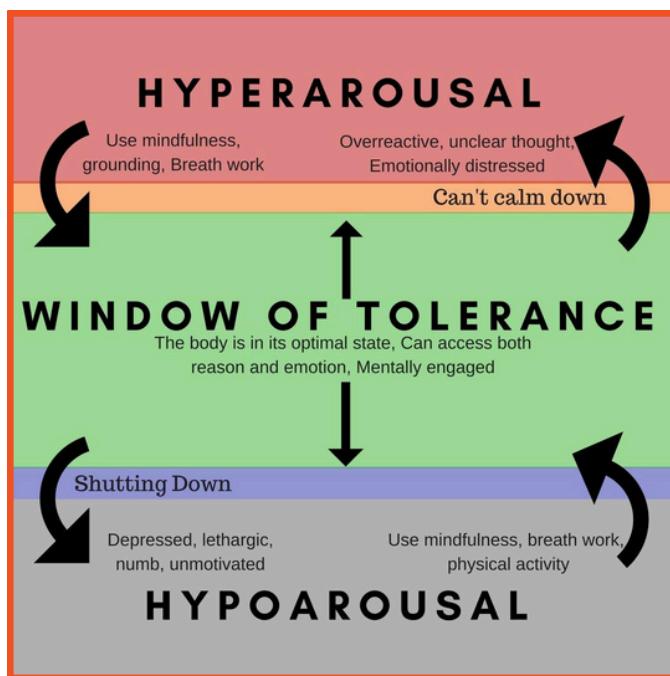
Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation (WHO, 2023).

Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives.

Stress can be a real OR perceived threat.

- Stress is a normal part of everyday life.
- Stress can be **positive**. It helps you get things done, and you feel good. It motivates us (e.g., to do our best).
- Stress can be **negative**. You can have too much stress or experience many stressors all at once, or you may not know how to cope with it, and it can make you feel overwhelmed.

Body & Brain Connection



When we are stressed, our:

- Blood pressure rises
- Breathing becomes more rapid
- Digestive system slows down
- Heart rate (pulse) rises
- Immune system goes down
- Muscles become tense
- Sleeping can be more of a problem

Types of Stressors

- **Personal & Emotional:** Relationship problems (conflict, family issues), major life changes (divorce, migration)
- **Work & Academic:** Job insecurity, heavy workloads, difficult bosses and colleagues
- **Financial:** Debts, sudden expenses (fixing car)
- **Internal:** Negative thinking pattern (perfectionism), worrying of things that you can't control
- **Health-related:** Caring for an ill relative, healing from injuries, being diagnosed with a chronic illness (Hepatitis C)

Stress Management Education Session

Cont...

Health-Related Stressors

They can be extremely difficult to face.

- Difficult threat to our lives
- Uncertainty and loss of control
- Overwhelming information
- Physical discomfort and limitations
- Emotional impact
- Implications to lifestyle (eating/mobility) and financial situation

Prevention Tips

Self-regulation is the ability to understand and manage your behaviour and your reactions to feelings and things happening around you.

Once you are able to self-regulate yourself, managing stress will become a natural skill to you.

What Can I Do?

- Practice mindfulness, meditation or yoga
- Stay active
- Have a regular sleep routine
- Avoid “doomscrolling” (constantly looking at your cellphone)
- Stay connected with family and friends
- Maintain a routine

Practicing Coping Skills

- Deep breathing
- Walk
- Dance
- Stretch
- Massage
- Hugs

Sensory Coping Skills

- Listen to calm music
- Ground yourself
- Warm drink

Cognitive Coping Skills

- Positive affirmation
- Challenge negativity
- Self-compassion
- Journaling
- Name emotions

Social Coping Skills

- Call or text someone
- Ask for help
- Support
- Spend time

Developing a Healthy Routine

- **Sleep:** 7-8 hours each night, at the same time; limit screen time 1 hour before bed; avoid caffeine before bed; relaxing activity before bed
- **Nutrition:** 3 balanced meals and snacks
- **Hydration:** Choose water, not caffeine
- **Physical Activity:** Exercise releases “feel good” chemicals; lifts your mood and reduces stress; fresh air can clear your mind



Trivia Event: Click It or Risk It



On November 6, we collaborated with Protexxa to host an engaging trivia event in the Community Hall. The event brought together teams for an afternoon of friendly competition, learning, and teamwork. Seniors tested their knowledge across four diverse trivia categories: Music, Cyber Protection, Movies, and Fraud Protection. The mix of topics kept everyone on their toes and sparked plenty of discussion and laughter throughout the event.

The competition was close from start to finish. Each category challenged participants in different ways, while highlighting the importance of online safety and fraud prevention.

Congratulations to the Wise Owls team for securing the win. A special thank you goes to Protexxa for their collaboration and support in helping create a memorable and enjoyable trivia event for our seniors.

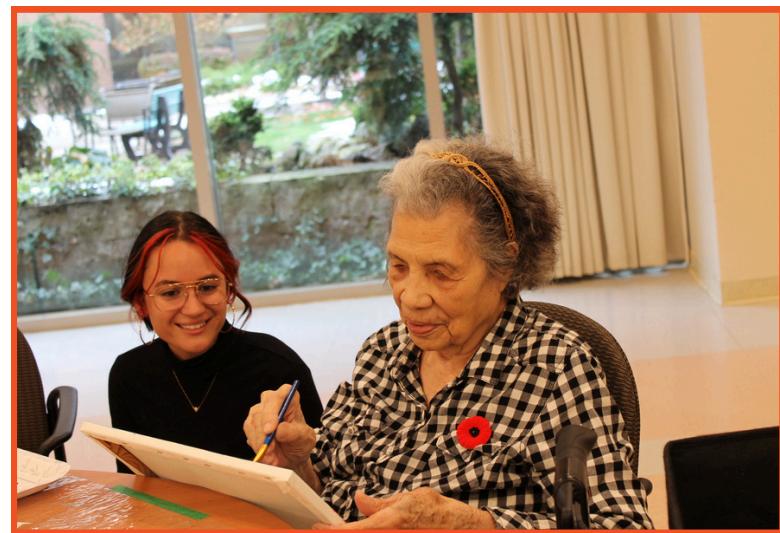
For more information about Protexxa:
silvershielders.com | help@silvershielders.com | 1-877-992-9237

Art Therapy Session

On November 12, we were delighted to welcome back Raquel McNamee, Student Art Psychotherapist from the Toronto Art Therapy Institute, to facilitate our third art therapy session. This session provided participants with a supportive and reflective space to explore their self-expression and creativity through art. The theme for this session was: *Make an artwork about something in your life that you are grateful for.*

Guided by Raquel, participants engaged in thoughtful discussion and artistic exploration, using various art materials to express gratitude. The theme encouraged reflection on positive experiences, moments of joy, and relationships, helping participants to connect with feelings of appreciation. Throughout the session, the atmosphere was calm and encouraging, allowing everyone to create art at their own pace and comfort level.

Thank you, Raquel, for facilitating another engaging and thoughtful experience for seniors and youth.



Introduction to Dementia Education Session

What is Dementia?

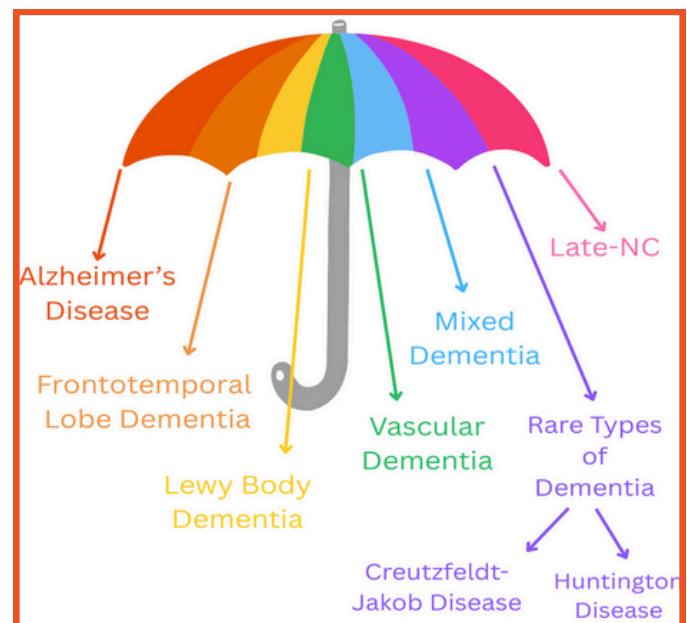
Dementia is an umbrella term used to describe a set of symptoms, including:

- A decline in memory, judgment, understanding and other cognitive thinking abilities
- Changes in mood, behaviour

Dementia is caused by irreversible disorders affecting the brain.

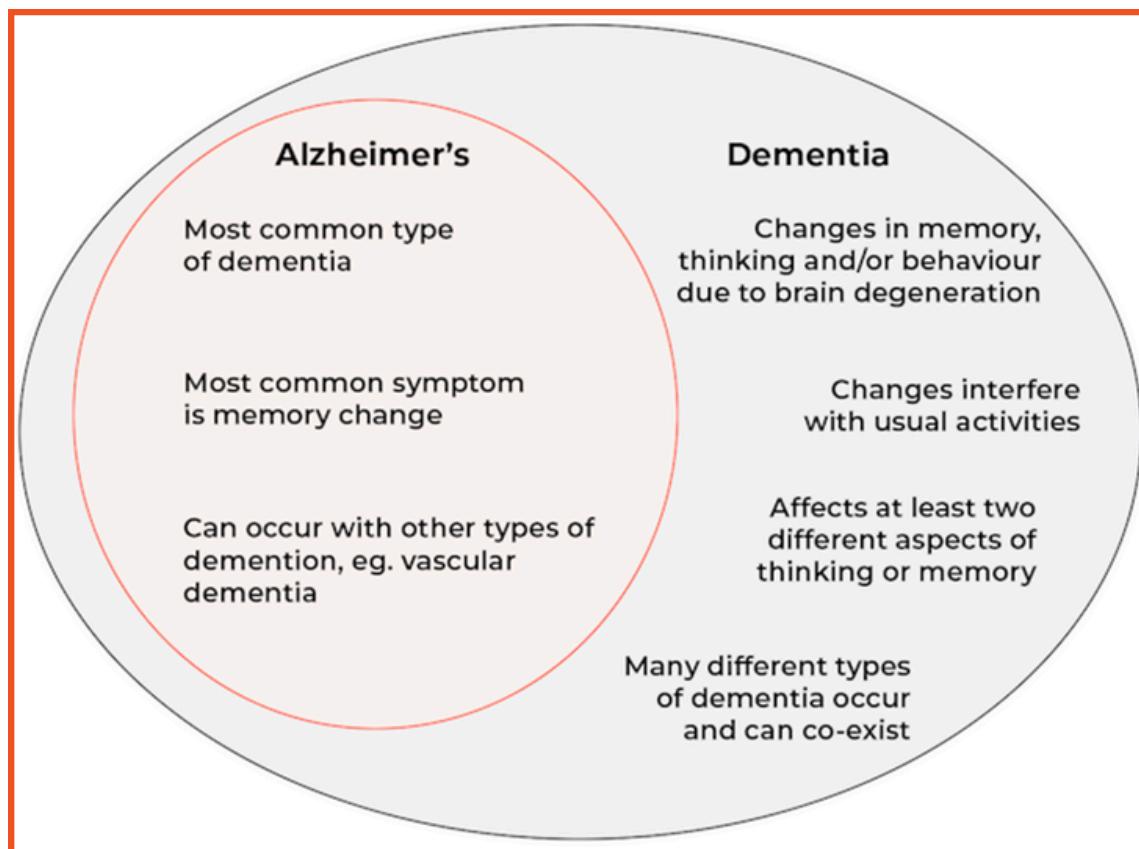
Dementia is not one specific disease. Rather, it's an umbrella term for a set of symptoms caused by physical disorders affecting the brain.

Mixed dementia is a condition where a person has more than one type of dementia, most commonly a combination of Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia.



Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

While the terms "Alzheimer's disease" and "dementia" are often used interchangeably, it's important to know the difference between the two. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for 60-80% of all diagnoses. In other words, every case of Alzheimer's disease is an example of dementia, but not every type of dementia is Alzheimer's.



Introduction to Dementia Education Session

Cont...

Risk Factors

Risk factors are aspects of your lifestyle, environment and genetic background that increase the likelihood of getting a disease. Risk factors on their own are not causes of a disease. Rather, risk factors represent an increased chance, but not a certainty, that dementia will develop. Similarly, having little or no exposure to risk factors does not necessarily protect a person from developing dementia.

Did you know? Research has shown that your heart health and brain health are connected. Your heart pumps blood through vessels to your entire body, including your brain. Healthy blood vessels make it easier for your heart to supply oxygen and other nutrients to your brain, nourishing your brain cells. Healthy lifestyle choices keep your blood vessels healthy, helping both your heart and your brain.

Types of Risk Factors

- Cardiovascular
 - High blood pressure (hypertension)
 - Smoking
 - Diabetes
 - Lack of physical activity
 - Obesity
 - Poor diet
- Alcohol consumption
- Low levels of cognitive engagement
- Depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- Social isolation
- Hearing loss
- Air pollution
- Age
- Sex
- Genetics



10 Possible Signs of Dementia

1. **Loss of initiative:** Losing interest in spending time with friends and family and in taking part in activities. Needing prompts to become involved.
2. **Misplacing things:** Putting things in strange places, like a remote in the refrigerator.
3. **Difficulty doing familiar tasks:** Forgetting how to do something you've been doing your whole life, such as preparing a meal or getting dressed.
4. **Problems with abstract thinking:** Having difficulty managing finances or not knowing what numbers are and how they are used.
5. **Changes in language and communication:** Forgetting words, substituting words or using the wrong words that don't fit the conversation.
6. **Memory changes that affect day-to-day abilities:** Forgetting who a family member is or not remembering new information.
7. **Disorientation in time and place:** Not knowing what day of the week it is or getting lost in a familiar place.
8. **Changes in mood, behaviour and personality:** Experiencing severe mood changes or behaving out of character, such as being suspicious or withdrawing.
9. **Impaired judgment:** Not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing light clothing on a cold day.
10. **Changes in sight or motion:** Not seeing objects when walking or difficulty placing items on a table.

Introduction to Dementia Education Session

Cont...

Compassionate Care Strategies

Not everyone living with dementia will experience all of the 7 A's of Dementia, but it is helpful to recognize these changes so you can find the strategies and responses that work best for you if you are caring for someone with dementia.

1. **Amnesia** is memory loss that usually impacts short-term memories first and eventually affects long-term memories as the disease advances. Amnesia is often the most obvious sign of dementia and is also thought to be the most heartbreakingly.

- Care strategies:
 - Speak slowly using short, simple sentences.
 - Be as patient as possible. If you're asked the same question repeatedly, try your best to respond as if it's the first time.
 - Use signs around the house for visual cues and display photos of family and friends. Reminiscing together can also help trigger memories of special people.
 - Follow a daily schedule to make it easier for your loved one to remember what usually happens during the day.

2. **Aphasia** refers to impaired communication skills affecting the ability to speak, understand language and read and write. Early in the disease's progression you may not notice that your loved one is struggling to understand you, but with time they may use inappropriate or non-existent words, revert to a first language or become very difficult to understand.

- Care strategies:
 - Speak slowly and clearly and give your loved one extra time to respond.
 - Use non-verbal communication including visual cues, gestures and touch when appropriate.
 - Try to avoid sudden movements, a tense face or frustrated tone as your loved one will focus on your body language as they try to understand you.
 - Watch for non-verbal cues that your loved one is in pain or discomfort if they can't communicate in traditional ways.

3. **Agnosia** is the inability to recognize objects or people using the senses. For example, a dementia patient may burn themselves with hot water, eat something that isn't food or brush their hair using a toothbrush. Agnosia can also cause distress during personal grooming times as a caregiver can be mistaken for a stranger.

- Care strategies:
 - Always introduce yourself and anyone else providing direct care.
 - Demonstrate how an object is used before giving it to your loved one.
 - Label regularly used items around the house including appliances and bathroom fixtures.
 - Keep dangerous items out of reach.

4. **Apraxia** is the loss of motor skills needed for movement and coordination. Activities of daily living like bathing, dressing, walking and eating can become difficult, and a loved one may struggle with buttons on remote controls, phones and microwaves. These cognitive changes can cause dementia patients to say 'no' when they're encouraged to do something—not because they don't want to, but because they forgot how.

Introduction to Dementia Education Session

Cont...

- Care strategies:
 - To encourage independence, break down tasks into small, individual steps. Use pictures, write down each step or set out clothes in the correct order, for example.
 - Always minimize distractions when you are giving instructions.
 - Use adaptive clothing with Velcro instead of buttons or zippers and assistive devices in the kitchen and bathroom.
 - If the task isn't essential and your loved one can't understand you, set it aside and try again later.

5. **Anosognosia** is often mistaken for denial, stubbornness or embarrassment. Awareness can change from day-to-day or even hour-to-hour, and this can make your loved one's behaviour unpredictable. They may resist help, refuse treatment, become angry and defensive or dangerously overestimate their abilities.

- Care strategies:
 - Don't try to convince your loved one that they have dementia and instead make changes to help them live safely.
 - Approach added support or care as an opportunity to do more of what they enjoy, instead of making it about chores around the house.
 - Try, "It's a beautiful day outside. Let's go for a walk together," rather than, "You can't go for a walk alone, you'll get lost."
 - Be discreet, choose your battles and try to let things go if they aren't an immediate safety issue.

6. **Altered perception** can make someone living with dementia misinterpret their environment and struggle with how high, long, wide, deep or near things are. This can make it hard to move through physical spaces and can cause paranoia and delusions.

- Care strategies:
 - Ensure that your loved one has regular eye tests and that their prescription is correct on any glasses they wear.
 - Try to remember how your loved one may be seeing the world and why this can be scary and stressful instead of trying to convince them that they are wrong.
 - Walk across a floor surface or place a clean foot in the tub to demonstrate the depth to reassure your loved one.
 - Upgrade your lighting, add assistive equipment where helpful and keep the living space uncluttered.

7. **Apathy** can make someone with dementia lose interest in what is happening around them because of problems with the brain's motivation pathways. They may find it hard to start and complete a task, have low energy or show very little emotional response to events—both good or bad.

- Care strategies:
 - Change the way you suggest activities. Instead of, "Do you want to go visit your sister?" say, "It's time to see Doris. Here are your coat and shoes."
 - A person with apathy may find it easier to do an activity once it becomes a habit. As much as possible, schedule activities and outings on consistent days/times.

For caregiver wellness, contact caregiverwellness@schc.ca or nlizurej@schcontario.ca.

For more information, contact cssintake@schcontario.ca or call (416) 847-4134.

Snowflakes, Ornaments & Wreaths Decorating Workshop

On December 18, we collaborated again with Protexxa to host a festive art workshop that invited youth and senior participants to decorate snowflakes, ornaments and wreaths. The workshop held an open-studio concept, where participants could experiment with different art materials and techniques while creating their own holiday-inspired pieces. From intricate paper and wooden snowflakes to colourful ornaments and decorative wreaths, each piece reflected creativity and personal style.

The session began with a brief introduction and explanation of the different stations around the Community Hall. Participants were encouraged to try new ideas, mix different art materials, and express themselves freely. Laughter and collaboration filled the Community Hall as participants admired one another's creations and enjoyed the music. By the end of the session, participants hung their decorated snowflakes and ornaments on our Christmas tree, which will be featured in our art exhibit in March 2026. The event not only celebrated the winter session but also provided an opportunity to connect with others in a positive and creative environment.



Healthy Aging and Healthy Minds Education Session

What is Aging and How Does It Affect Us?

Did you know? Seniors represent 19% of the population in Canada. 73% of individuals aged 65+ years have at least 1 of 10 common chronic diseases.

Aging is a gradual, continuous process of natural change that begins in early childhood. Aging can impact the way your body may look or function.

Changes in Your Body as You Age

The following changes are a natural part of aging and are normal.

Bones, Joints, Muscles & Fat

- Bones become less dense because of low calcium and low vitamin D levels.
- Less muscle mass and strength, which makes muscles weaker.
- Less physical activity can contribute to weight gain.



Vision, Hearing & Taste

The lens in the eyes begins to stiffen, making it difficult to focus.

- Hearing high-pitched sounds becomes difficult and can cause hearing loss.
- Taste buds are less sensitive.
- Less saliva in the mouth can cause dryness.



Skin

- Skin loses collagen and elastin, so it becomes thinner and more fragile.
- When skin begins to thin, wrinkles are more likely to form.
- Become less sensitive to pain or pressure, which is why injuries are common.

Hair

- Hair gradually thins on the scalp and other areas of the body.
- Greying of the hair occurs as the pigment in the hair follicles stops producing melanin.

Urinary Tract, the Heart & Lungs

- Bladder muscles become weak, and you may have to urinate more often.
- Lungs become less able to fight off infection.
- The muscles we use to breathe become weaker.
- Heart rate is slower.
- Blood pressure may increase.



How to Cope with these Changes in the Body

- Engage in regular physical activity, such as walking and strengthening activities, to make your muscles stronger.
- Increase intake of foods rich in calcium and/or vitamin D. You may need to support to supplement with vitamins, after consulting with your doctor.
- Have your vision checked regularly with an optometrist and wear eyeglasses, if required.
- If you are having challenges with your hearing, consider a hearing test or an audiologist.
- Maintain good oral hygiene and stay hydrated by drinking lots of water. Consider using oral rinses or mouth sprays to moisten your mouth.
- Practice good skin care and moisturize your skin regularly.

Healthy Aging and Healthy Minds Education Session

Cont...

Tips and Suggestions to Live a Healthier Life

Nutrition

The Mediterranean Diet suggests having *more of*:

- Plant-based foods such as fruits and vegetables, including legumes such as beans, lentils or tofu
- Nuts and seeds, if tolerated
- Fish and seafood, if tolerated
- Using olive oil or avocado oil to cook with
- Water as your drink of choice

The Mediterranean Diet suggests having *less of*:

- Saturated fats, as found in fried foods, baked goods and chips
- Red meats and deli, such as beef, pork or lamb
- Processed meats
- Sugary beverages such as pop or fruit-flavoured drinks

Nutritional Supplements

Canada's Food Guide recommends eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grain food, protein and limiting highly processed foods. Sometimes it is difficult to meet all your nutritional need through diet alone, which is when vitamin or mineral supplements can help!

Disclaimer: ALWAYS talk to your healthcare practitioner before taking any supplements.

Physical Activity

Aerobic activities

- Help make your heart and lungs strong
- Improve your energy
- Help you sleep better
- For example: walking, swimming, dancing
- It is recommended to do more than 150 minutes a week, or 30 minutes a day for 5-7 days a week.



Walking



Running



Swimming

Muscle strengthening

- Helps maintain muscle and strengthen bones
- Can help protect knees and other joints
- Includes climbing stairs, using resistance bands, or even carrying heavy groceries
- Aim to do at least twice a week



Stretching

- Gives you a better range of motion in joints and muscles
- Helps with day-to-day activities
- Includes arm stretched, calf stretched and gentle yoga
- Try to aim for twice a week, especially after your muscles are warmed up from other activities.

Healthy Aging and Healthy Minds Education Session

Cont...

Lifestyle

Aging is an inevitable part of life. Following the Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults (65+ years) can help you stay strong, mentally fit and independent.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	SLEEP	SEDENTARY BEHAVIOUR
<p>Performing a variety of types and intensities of physical activity, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activities such that there is an accumulation of at least 150 minutes per weekMuscle strengthening activities using major muscle groups at least twice a weekPhysical activities that challenge balance <p> Several hours of light physical activities, including standing</p>	<p> Getting 7 to 8 hours of good-quality sleep on a regular basis, with consistent bed and wake-up times</p>	<p> Limiting sedentary time to 8 hours or less, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">No more than 3 hours of recreational screen timeBreaking up long periods of sitting as often as possible

Three simple ways to stay healthy:

1. Build strong social bonds: Staying socially connected reduces the risk of depression or dementia as you age.

- Build strong social bonds with your family, friends and local social clubs.

2. Keep your mind and body active: Regular exercise reduces the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

- Exercise your brain
- Don't stop learning
- Exercise regularly

3. Stay positive: A positive attitude increases longevity and reduces the chances of heart attacks and depression.

- Don't dwell on negative events
- Accept things you can't change
- Surround yourself with optimistic people

Remember that some changes in our bodies are unavoidable and expected to happen.

Aging well looks different for everyone, but the goal is to maintain good physical and emotional health.

EchoHorizon Concert

On December 29, we concluded 2025 with a heartwarming holiday concert that celebrated music, community and connection. We were joined by EchoHorizon, a youth-led organization dedicated to enriching the lives of seniors through live musical performances. Talented young artists, aged 5 to 19 years old, performed a variety of instruments, filling the Community Hall with festive energy and holiday spirit.

The audience enthusiastically participated throughout the concert, clapping along and engaging with the performers. These shared moments highlighted the powerful role music plays in bringing people together and creating meaningful intergenerational connections. The warmth and joy in the room reflected the positive impact of live performances on both the audience and performers.

Thank you to EchoHorizon for collaborating with us to offer another successful concert.



2026 Calendar

Our 2026 Calendar is here! It contains some beautiful paintings done by program participants over the last couple of months.

A huge thank you to our senior participants, planning committee members, youth volunteers, and those who shared their artwork with us.

We look forward to the winter season, where we will have more events and activities in the last quarter of this program.

Featured Artists in the 2026 Calendar

- Sarah Manila
- Sydney Baxter
- Joy Chellaiah
- Zorka Stamenova
- Enid Harrison
- Janet Desroches
- Kapka Stovel
- Lenore Carter
- Gulshan Lakhani
- Maria Rimando
- Martina Gill
- Matthias Blackman
- Angelica Tantengco
- Tariro Saungweme

LEAD Word Search Puzzle



CALENDAR
AGING
DEMENTIA
ART
LEAD
CONCERT
HEALTHY
CARE
PROTEXXA
PASSWORDS
NUTRITION
THERAPY
STRESS