

Retirement planning

Retirement can be a most enjoyable period of the life cycle, one of productivity and self-realisation. However, for many people it can bring considerable unforeseen sadness and stress. This is mainly brought about by inadequate planning and changes of relationships. A person's work in most cases is a means of providing a sense of purpose, personal fulfilment and mateship. Studies show that very few people plan for retirement until just before the time.

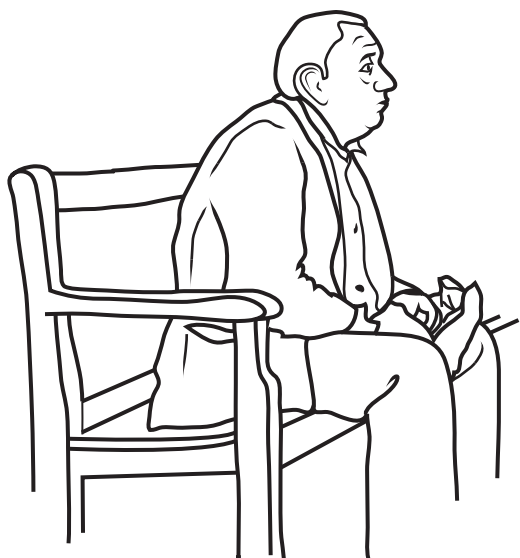
Planning your after-work lifestyle

It is important to think this through and perhaps plan a combination of rest and recreation, travel and activity. It is worth considering that the average person can expect to live to a certain age—83 for women and 77 for men. You should plan with at least this life expectancy in mind.

What are the main problems?

Common problems in retirement are:

- loneliness
- boredom
- financial worries.



Loneliness

Loneliness is a terrible problem; it can lead to depression and a feeling of worthlessness. A common mistake is to sell the family home and move to another location, usually in a small unit. This separation from old friends, neighbours and family can cause much heartache. It often happens to country people who move to the city. You need your family around you, especially if your

spouse dies. You should give consideration to keeping your family home, because it encourages your family to visit you. Children often interpret a move to a small unit as 'don't come and stay with us,' although this may not be the intention.

Financial security

You really need sound advice for a secure financial future, including investments. Try to work out your finances 5 years in advance and allow for inflation and home maintenance. If you own your home and car, you have a good basis. You should consider your means of paying for your future health services including health insurance if necessary.

Health

You need good health to enjoy your deserved retirement. Take care not to get into bad eating and exercise habits. Plan a sensible, healthy, balanced diet. Avoid smoking and excessive drinking. Regular and effective exercise is important. Appropriate exercises are walking for 20 to 30 minutes each day, swimming, cycling and golf.

Activities

Retirement gives you the opportunity to devote more time to those interests and hobbies that you already enjoy. It will also give you the chance to pursue new ones. There are many agencies that will provide information on programs for the retired, adult education courses (especially in the arts and crafts) and community work. If your hobby can supplement your income, that is a bonus.

Useful activities include sports such as bowls, golf and tennis, travel, nature walking and voluntary or part-time work. Many retired people get considerable pleasure out of carpentry and woodwork.

Housing

Keep your family home if you can. Carefully weigh up the pros and cons of moving—it can bring much stress, worry and financial problems. As you get older it is most important to have transport, shopping and medical facilities nearby.

Companionship

Good friends and neighbours are excellent 'insurance policies' for a happy retirement. Try to keep in contact with your valued friends. The relationship between husband and wife will be tested, as you have to spend much more time together. Sadly some couples cannot cope with this 'under my heels' syndrome and marital breakdowns do occur. Make sure this does not happen to you.