

VILLAGE WALK COMMUNITY WELLNESS CLINIC

Your lifelong health & wellbeing journey begins here -- and now.



Health Optimization

Learn about the current evidenced based-research therapies that help you function at an optimal level



Disease Prevention

Discuss the advanced protocols that are individually developed to prevent progression and possibly reverse the onset of disease



Improve Longevity

Learn about our anti-aging program focused, not just on enhancing lifespan, but on improving overall quality of life

PRESENTED BY:

F.I.T. Health + Wellness

Pain Management | Rehabilitation

OUR Mission: Build a Community of Health for Our Neighbors

Because physical and emotional health are paramount to our quality of life, and the success of our communities, we have embarked upon a journey to build a family of neighbors dedicated to bringing our community members a lifetime of health and wellness. By doing this, we can inspire and motivate those who need our support.

F.I.T. Health and Wellness is the vesicle to establish an active, healthy community. Our program serves as the “roots” of a tree, enabling and encouraging many wonderful branches to grow. Our focus is on improving the physical and mental health of our neighbors, bringing about a fundamental change to our community. Unlike many of our current healthcare facilities, which are reactive to public health concerns, our health and wellness services have a proactive approach for holistic health, reducing the occurrence of disease and mortality rates. Our services provide guidance pertaining to preventative care in the form of proper nutrition, stress reduction, and functional fitness. We offer physical rehabilitation in the privacy of your own home for those who need our support, assisting our most vulnerable neighbors to help “heal” our community.

Kind Regards,

Damian & Meghann



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Table of Contents

What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?	pages 4-11
For Seniors: A Checklist for Good Health	pages 12-15
Chronic Joint Pain: Seven Tips for Safe Pain Management	pages 16-18
Waking Up Tired? Try These Tips!	pages 19-20
Foods That Fight Inflammation	pages 21-22
Cognitive Health and Older Adults	pages 23-29
Preventing Alzheimer's Disease: What Do We Know?	pages 30-33
Fall Prevention Program	pages 34-38
10 Health Tips for Seniors	pages 39-41
Helpful Resources	pages 42
Appendix	pages 43-44

What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?

Many factors influence healthy aging. Some of these, such as genetics, are not in our control. Others — like exercise, a healthy diet, going to the doctor regularly, and taking care of our mental health — are within our reach. Research supported by National Institute of Aging (NIA) and others have identified actions you can take to help manage your health, live as independently as possible, and maintain your quality of life as you age. Read on to learn more about the research and the steps you can take to promote healthy aging.

Taking care of your physical health

While scientists continue to actively research how to slow or prevent age-related declines in physical health, they have already discovered multiple ways to improve the chances of maintaining optimal health later in life. Taking care of your physical health involves staying active, making healthy food choices, getting enough sleep, limiting your alcohol intake, and proactively managing your health care. Small changes in each of these areas can go a long way to support healthy aging.

Get moving: Exercise and physical activity

Whether you love it or hate it, physical activity is a cornerstone of healthy aging. Scientific evidence suggests that people who exercise regularly not only live longer, but also may live better — meaning they enjoy more years of life without pain or disability.

A study of adults 40 and older found that taking 8,000 steps or more per day, compared to only taking 4,000 steps, was associated with a 51% lower risk of death from all causes (JAMA 2020). You can increase the number of steps you get each day by doing activities that keep your body moving, such as gardening, walking the dog, and taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

Although it has many other benefits, exercise is an essential tool for maintaining a healthy weight. Adults with obesity have an increased risk of death, disability, and many diseases such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. However, thinner is not always healthier either. Being or becoming too thin as an older adult can weaken your immune system, increase the risk of bone fracture, and in some cases may be a symptom of disease. Both obesity and underweight conditions can lead to loss of muscle mass, which may cause a person to feel weak and easily worn out.

As people age, muscle function often declines. Older adults may not have the energy to do everyday activities and can lose their independence. However, exercise can help older adults maintain muscle mass as they age. In a 2019 investigation of data from NIA's Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, researchers found that moderate to vigorous physical activity is strongly associated with muscle function, regardless of age (J Am Geriatr Soc, 2019). This suggests that exercise may be able to prevent age-related decline in muscle function.

In addition to helping older adults live better, maintaining muscle mass can help them live longer. In another study, researchers found that in adults older than 55, muscle mass was a better predictor of longevity than was weight or body mass index (BMI).

What can you do?

Although many studies focus on the effects of physical activity on weight and BMI, research has found that even if you're not losing weight, exercise can still help you live longer and better. There are many ways to get started. Try being physically

active in short spurts throughout the day or setting aside specific times each week to exercise. Many activities, such as brisk walking or yoga, are free or low cost and do not require special equipment. As you become more active, you will start feeling energized and refreshed after exercising instead of exhausted. The key is to find ways to get motivated and get moving.

Healthy eating: Make smart food choices

Making smart food choices can help protect you from certain health problems as you age and may even help improve brain function. As with exercise, eating well is not just about your weight. With so many different diets out there, choosing what to eat can be confusing. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans provide healthy eating recommendations for each stage of life. The Dietary Guidelines suggest an eating pattern with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, healthy fats, and lean proteins.

Much of the research shows that the Mediterranean-style eating pattern, which includes fresh produce, whole grains, and healthy fats, but less dairy and more fish than a traditional American diet, may have a positive impact on health. A 2021 study analyzing the eating patterns of more than 21,000 participants found that people closely following the Mediterranean-style pattern had a significantly lower risk of sudden cardiac death (J Am Heart Assoc, 2021).

A low-salt diet called Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) has also been shown to deliver significant health benefits. Studies testing the DASH diet found that it lowers blood pressure, helps people lose weight, and reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Yet another eating pattern that may support healthy aging is the MIND diet, which combines a Mediterranean-style eating pattern with DASH. Researchers have found that people who closely follow the MIND diet have better overall cognition – the ability to clearly think, learn, and remember – compared to those with other eating styles.

What can you do?

Try starting with small changes by adopting one or two aspects of the Mediterranean-style eating pattern or MIND diet. Several studies have shown that incorporating even a part of these eating patterns, such as more fish or more leafy greens, into your daily eating habits can improve health outcomes. One study of 182 older adults with frequent migraines found that a diet lower in vegetable oil and higher in fatty fish could reduce migraine headaches (BMJ, 2021). Another study that followed almost 1,000 older adults over five years found that consumption of green leafy vegetables was significantly associated with slower cognitive decline (Neurology, 2018).

Even if you haven't thought much about healthy eating until recently, changing your diet now can still improve your well-being as an older adult. If you are concerned about what you eat, talk with your doctor or a dietician about ways you can make better food choices. There is more information about healthy eating in the "Foods that Fight Inflammation" and "Cognitive Health and Older Adults" sections.

Getting a good night's sleep

Getting enough sleep helps you stay healthy and alert. Even though older adults need the same seven to nine hours of sleep as all adults, they often don't get enough. Feeling sick or being in pain can make it harder to sleep, and some medicines can keep you awake. Not getting enough quality sleep can make a person irritable, depressed, forgetful, and more likely to have falls or other accidents.



Sleep quality matters for memory and mood. In one study of adults older than 65, researchers found that those who had poor sleep quality had a harder time problem-solving and concentrating than those who got good quality sleep (J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci, 2009). Another study, which looked at data from nearly 8,000 people, showed that those in their 50s and 60s who got six hours of sleep or less a night were at a higher risk of developing dementia later in life (Nat Commun, 2021). This may be because inadequate sleep is associated with the buildup of beta-amyloid, a protein involved in Alzheimer's disease. Poor sleep may also worsen depression symptoms in older adults. Emerging evidence suggests that older adults who were diagnosed with depression in the past, and do not get quality sleep, may be more likely to experience their depression symptoms again.

More generally, a 2021 study found that older adults who did not sleep well and napped often were at greater risk of dying within the next five years (Aging, 2021). Conversely, getting good sleep is associated with lower rates of insulin resistance, heart disease, and obesity. Sleep can also improve your creativity and decision-making skills, and even your blood sugar levels.

What can you do?

There are many things you can do to help you sleep better, such as following a regular sleep schedule. Try to fall asleep and get up at the same time each day. Avoid napping late in the day, as this may keep you awake at night. Exercise can help you sleep better, too, if it isn't too close to bedtime. Research suggests that behavioral interventions, such as mindfulness meditation, can also improve sleep quality.

Quit smoking

It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you've been smoking, research confirms that even if you're 60 or older and have been smoking for decades, quitting will improve your health. Quitting smoking at any age will:

- Lower your risk of cancer, heart attack, stroke, and lung disease
- Improve your blood circulation
- Improve your sense of taste and smell
- Increase your ability to exercise
- Set a healthy example for others



One study found that among men 55 to 74 years old and women 60 to 74 years old, current smokers were three times more likely to die within the six-year follow-up period than those who had never smoked (N Engl J Med, 2013).

What can you do?

If you smoke, quit. Quitting smoking is good for your health and may add years to your life. One study of nearly 200,000 people demonstrated that older adults who quit smoking between the ages of 45 and 54 lived about six years longer compared to those who continued to smoke. Adults who quit between the ages of 55 to 64 lived about four years longer (N Engl J Med, 2013). It is never too late to stop smoking and reap the benefits of breathing easier, having more energy, saving money, and improving your health.

Alcohol and other substances

Like all adults, older adults should avoid or limit alcohol consumption. In fact, aging can lead to social and physical changes that make older adults more susceptible to alcohol misuse and abuse and more vulnerable to the consequences of alcohol. Alcohol dependence or heavy drinking affects every organ in the body, including the brain.

A comprehensive study from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism shows that alcohol consumption among older adults, especially women, is on the rise (Neuropsychology, 2019). The researchers also found evidence that certain brain regions show signs of premature aging in alcohol-dependent men and women. In addition, heavy drinking for extended periods of time in older adults may contribute to poor heart health, as shown in a 2016 study (BMC Med, 2016). These studies suggest that stopping or limiting the use of alcohol could improve heart health and prevent the accelerated aging seen with heavy alcohol use.

In addition to being cautious with alcohol, older adults and their caregivers should be aware of other substances that can be misused or abused. Because older adults are commonly prescribed opioids for pain and benzodiazepines for anxiety or trouble sleeping, they may be at risk for misuse and dependence on these substances. One study of adults age 50 and older showed that misuse of prescription opioids or benzodiazepines is associated with thoughts of suicide (Int J Geriatr Psychiatry, 2019).

What can you do?

Learn about the current U.S. guidelines for drinking and when to avoid alcohol altogether. It's important to be aware of how much you are drinking and the harm that drinking can cause. If you or a loved one needs help with substance abuse or alcohol use, talk with your doctor or a mental health professional. You can also try finding a support group for older adults with substance or alcohol abuse issues.

Go to the doctor regularly

Going to the doctor for regular health screenings is essential for healthy aging. A 2021 study found that getting regular check-ups helps doctors catch chronic diseases early and can help patients reduce risk factors for disease, such as high blood pressure and cholesterol levels (JAMA, 2021). People who went to the doctor regularly also reported improved quality of life and feelings of wellness.

In recent years, scientists have developed and improved upon laboratory, imaging, and similar biological tests that help uncover and monitor signs of age-related disease. Harmful changes in the cells and molecules of your body may occur years before you start to experience any symptoms of disease. Tests that detect these changes can help medical professionals diagnose and treat disease early, improving health outcomes.

What can you do?

Visit the doctor at least yearly and possibly more depending on your health. You cannot reap the benefits of medical advancements without regular trips to the doctor for physical exams and other tests. Regular screenings can uncover diseases and conditions you may not yet be aware of, such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease. If you only seek medical attention when you're experiencing symptoms, you may lose the chance of having your doctor catch a disease in its earliest stages, when it would be most treatable. Regular check-ups can help ensure you could start treatment months or years earlier than would have been possible otherwise.

Taking care of your mental health

Mental health, or mental wellness, is essential to your overall health and quality of life. It affects how we think, feel, act, make choices, and relate to others. Managing social isolation, loneliness, stress, depression, and mood through medical and self-care is key to healthy aging.

Social isolation and loneliness

As people age, changes such as hearing and vision loss, memory loss, disability, trouble getting around, and the loss of family and friends can make it difficult to maintain social connections. This makes older adults more likely to be socially isolated or to feel lonely. Although they sound similar, social isolation and loneliness are different. Loneliness is the distressing feeling of being alone or separated, while social isolation is the lack of social contacts and having few people to interact with regularly.

Several recent studies show that older adults who are socially isolated or feel lonely are at higher risk for heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline. A 2021 study of more than 11,000 adults older than age 70 found that loneliness was associated with a greater risk of heart disease (Int J Geriatr Psychiatry, 2021). Another recent study found that socially isolated older adults experienced more chronic lung conditions and depressive symptoms compared to older adults with social support (Ann Behav Med, 2018).

Feeling lonely can also impact memory. A study of more than 8,000 adults older than 65 found that loneliness was linked to faster cognitive decline (Int J Geriatr Psychiatry, 2017).

Research also shows that being socially active can benefit older adults. A study of more than 3,000 older adults found that making new social contacts was associated with improved self-reported physical and psychological well-being (Soc Sci Med, 2015). Being social may also help you reach your exercise goals. A 2019 study found that older adults who had regular contact with friends and family were more physically active than those who did not (BMC Public Health, 2019).

What can you do?

Staying connected with others may help boost your mood and improve your overall well-being. Stay in touch with family and friends in person or over the phone. Scheduling time each day to connect with others can help you maintain connections. Meet new people by taking a class to learn something new or hone a skill you already have.

Stress

Stress is a natural part of life and comes in many forms. Sometimes stress arises from difficult events or circumstances. Positive changes, like the birth of a grandchild or a promotion, can cause stress too. Research shows that constant stress can change the brain, affect memory, and increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's or related dementias.

Older adults are at particular risk for stress and stress-related problems. A recent study examined how levels of the stress hormone cortisol change over time (J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci, 2020). Researchers have found that cortisol levels in a person's body increase steadily after middle-age, and that this age-related increase in stress may drive changes in the brain. A meta-analysis funded by the National Institute of Mental Health supports the notion that stress and anxiety rewire the brain in ways that can impact memory, decision-making, and mood (Chronic Stress, 2017).

Finding ways to lower stress and increase emotional stability may support healthy aging. In an analysis of data from the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging, scientists followed 2,000 participants for more than five decades, monitoring their mood and health. The data reveal that individuals who were emotionally stable lived on average three years longer than those who had a tendency toward being in a negative or anxious emotional state (J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci, 2020). Long-term stress also may contribute to or worsen a range of health problems, including digestive disorders, headaches, and sleep disorders.

What can you do?

You can help manage stress with meditation techniques, physical activity, and by participating in activities you enjoy. Keeping a journal may also help you identify and challenge negative and unhelpful thoughts. Reach out to friends and family who can help you cope in a positive way. There is more information on ways to reduce stress in our “Cognitive Health and Older Adults” section.

Depression and overall mood

Although depression is common in older adults, it can be difficult to recognize. For some older adults with depression, sadness is not their main symptom. Instead, they might feel numb or uninterested in activities and may not be as willing to talk about their feelings. Depression not only affects mental health, but also physical health. A review article funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute summarizes hundreds of studies from around the world showing that depression increases risk of heart disease and metabolic disorders (Nat Rev Cardiol, 2017). Research has also shown that recurrent depression is a risk factor for dementia. In a study of more than 1,000 older adults, scientists found a relationship between the number of depressive episodes and increased risk of developing Alzheimer’s (Neurology, 2010).

Although different from depression, which is a serious medical disorder, mood changes can also influence aging. A 2020 longitudinal study demonstrated a link between positive mood and better cognitive control (Am J Geriatr Psychiatry, 2020). Further studies are necessary to determine whether changes that improve mood could improve cognition. The way you think about aging can also make a difference. Research shows that whether you hold negative or positive views about aging may impact health as you age. Negative beliefs about aging may increase undesirable health outcomes, Alzheimer’s disease biomarkers, and cellular aging. Meanwhile, positive beliefs about aging may decrease the risk of developing dementia and obesity.

What can you do?

Depression, even when severe, can be treated. As soon as you begin noticing signs, it’s important to get evaluated by a healthcare professional. In addition to deep sadness or numbness, lack of sleep and loss of appetite are also common symptoms of depression in older adults. If you think you or a loved one may have depression, start by making an appointment to see your doctor or health care provider. If you are thinking of harming yourself, get help immediately – call the 24-hour 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255).

Leisure activities and hobbies

Your favorite activities are not only fun – they may also be good for your health. Research shows that people who participate in hobbies and social and leisure activities may be at lower risk for some health problems. For example, one study found that participation in a community choir program for older adults reduced loneliness and increased interest in life (J Gerontol B Psychol Sci Soc Sci, 2020). Another study showed that older adults who spent at least an hour reading or

engaged in other hobbies had a decreased risk of dementia compared to those who spent less than 30 minutes a day on hobbies (Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen, 2010).

Research on music, theater, dance, creative writing, and other participatory arts shows promise for improving older adults' quality of life and well-being, from better cognitive function, memory, and self-esteem to reduced stress and increased social interaction. Even hobbies as simple as taking care of a pet can improve your health. According to a 2020 study, pet ownership (or regular contact with pets) was associated with better cognitive function, and in some cases, better physical function (Front Vet Sci, 2020).

What can you do?

Look for opportunities to participate in activities. Get out and about by going to a sporting event, trying a new restaurant, or visiting a museum. Learn how to cook or play a musical instrument. Consider volunteering at a school, library, or hospital to become more active in your community.

Taking care of your cognitive health

Cognition — the ability to clearly think, learn, and remember — often changes as we age. Although some people develop Alzheimer's or other types of dementia, many older adults experience more modest changes in memory and thinking. Research shows that healthy eating, staying active, and learning new skills may help keep older adults cognitively healthy.

How different factors affect cognitive health

If you think your daily choices don't make a difference, data from an NIH study with 3,000 participants show otherwise (Neurology, 2020). Researchers scored participants on five healthy lifestyle factors, all of which have important health benefits:

- At least 150 minutes per week of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity
- Not smoking
- Not drinking heavily
- A high-quality, Mediterranean-style diet
- Engagement in mentally stimulating activities, such as reading, writing letters, and playing games

The findings show that making these small, daily changes can add up to significant health benefits. Those who followed at least four of these healthy lifestyle behaviors had a 60% lower risk of developing Alzheimer's. Even practicing just two or three activities lowered the risk by 37%. While results from observational studies such as this one cannot prove cause and effect, they point to how a combination of modifiable behaviors may mitigate Alzheimer's risk and identify promising avenues to be tested in clinical trials.

New clinical trials are also testing the benefits of tightly controlling blood pressure on healthy aging. These trials are based on a 2019 study, with data supporting the idea that intensive blood pressure control may slow age-related brain damage and even mild cognitive impairment, which can increase the risk for Alzheimer's or a related dementia (Circulation, 2019).

Researchers continue work to understand how we might prevent Alzheimer's and other forms of age-related cognitive decline. NIA is currently funding more than 350 active clinical trials on Alzheimer's and related dementias, 100 of which use nondrug interventions, such as exercise, diet, cognitive training, sleep, or combination therapies.

How cognitive training affects health outcomes

Many brain training programs are marketed to the public to improve cognition. Although some of these computer or smartphone-based interventions show promise, so far there is no conclusive evidence that these applications are beneficial.

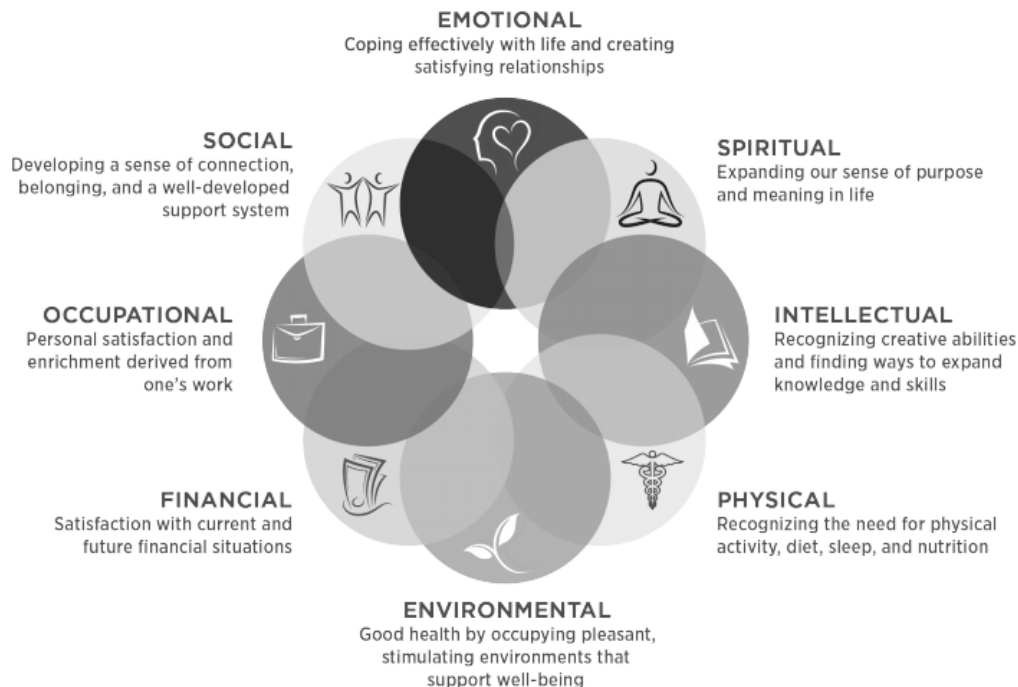
But there is some evidence that exercising your brain by learning a new skill can improve memory function. A study of adults 60 and older showed that sustained engagement in cognitively demanding, novel activity enhanced memory function (Psychol Sci, 2014). In particular, the new skills learned in this study were 1) learning how to use computer software to edit photos and 2) learning how to quilt. Learning a new game, instrument, craft, or other skill can be fun and may have the added benefit of staving off memory loss as you age.

Next Steps

Taking care of your physical, mental, and cognitive health is important for healthy aging. Even making small changes in your daily life can help you live longer and better. In general, you can support your physical health by staying active, eating and sleeping well, and going to the doctor regularly. Take care of your mental health by interacting with family and friends, trying to stay positive, and participating in activities you enjoy. Taking steps to achieve better physical and mental health may reduce your risk for Alzheimer's and related dementias as you age.

There is still a lot to learn, though, about how people age and what habits support healthy aging. Scientists are exploring these questions with studies that look at physical, mental, and cognitive health. You can be a part of scientific progress by joining a clinical trial or research study in person or online. All types of volunteers are needed, including caregivers, older adults with medical conditions, and those who are healthy.

To explore all trials funded by NIH, visit [ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov). To find Alzheimer's and related dementia research studies, visit the Clinical Trials Finder at [Alzheimers.gov](https://alzheimers.gov). Every treatment available today is due to people like you who choose to participate in clinical research.



For Seniors: A Checklist for Good Health

Staying healthy is important at any age, but for seniors, it is even more important for living a long, happy and active life. Here is a quick checklist to help maintain good health as you age.

1. Don't forget your wellness visits and recommended screenings

Studies show that about 10% fewer adults have annual contact with a medical professional when compared to kids. Although this may not be surprising, wellness visits are extremely important. Today's wellness exams go beyond the standard physical, allowing doctors to identify preventive measures that will keep you healthier and save you money.

In addition to your annual wellness visit, don't forget the recommended health screenings for prostate, colon, and breast cancer.

2. Exercise and stay active

As you get older, it can be easy to find excuses to let yourself slow down. However, exercise is vitally important for seniors. "Exercise improves your quality of life, meaning everything from how much activity we can do, to what kind of mood we're in," said Kristina Balague, MD, a geriatrician at Banner - University Medical Center Phoenix.

No matter your fitness level, there are always activities to help keep you moving. And don't forget, keeping your mind active is as important as exercising your muscles and joints. Keep your mind engaged by taking classes, learning new skills and hobbies, playing games or reading, and most importantly, keeping up your social relationships with friends and family.

3. Maintain strong bones

Most of us really don't think about our bones until one breaks. However, bone health, like other aspects of your health, needs to be worked on for years. The good news is that it's never too late to take care of your bones and slow bone loss.

5 Tips for Keeping Your Bones Strong:

Maintain a Healthy Weight

For many, this is easier said than done. But research has shown maintaining a healthy or slightly higher normal weight is your best bet when it comes to protecting your bone health and mobility in the long-term. This means not being too heavy or too thin. Being underweight increases the risk of osteopenia and osteoporosis. Being obese has been shown to impair bone quality and increase the risk for fractures due to the stress of excess weight. And yo-yoing between weight loss and gain can also contribute to significant bone loss.

Get Moving

One of the keys to keeping your bones strong and your body mobile is through physical activity. Like muscles, bones become stronger through weight-bearing and strength-building exercises. Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day. Activity can include:

- Walking, running or jogging
- Dancing

- Cycling
- Swimming
- Yoga and Pilates
- Weight training
- Light stretching

Eat a Balanced Diet

Eating a well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is important to maintaining overall health as well as your bone health. Calcium and vitamin D have both been shown to strengthen bones, yet many Americans aren't getting enough. Aim for five servings of fruits and vegetables and at least three servings of dairy a day, and about nine servings of protein per week. Limit your intake of foods that are processed or high in sugar, salt, fat or carbohydrates.

Tip: Lacking in nutrients? Before reaching for an over-the-counter supplement, check with a dietician first. They can determine if you could benefit from a supplement, the right dosage you should be taking, and any drug interactions with prescription medications you may be on.

Avoid Alcohol, Caffeine and Tobacco

We all have our vices, but there are few you may want to consider kicking to the curb. Those who smoke and drink a lot of alcohol and caffeine are at greater risk for osteoporosis.

Helpful Tips:

- Trying to limit caffeine? Try swapping out coffee and tea and caffeinated soft drinks with decaffeinated.
- Trying to limit alcohol? For women, limit to no more than one drink a day. For men, limit to no more than two drinks a day.
- Trying to kick a cigarette habit? Find a class or program that can help you quit.

Get a Bone Density Scan

If you are concerned about your bone health or risk factors for osteoporosis, schedule an appointment with your doctor. If they are concerned you may be at risk, they may recommend a bone density test, also known as a DEXA (DXA) bone densitometry scan. It is a common screening test for women over 65 and can help predict your risk of fractures or osteoporosis. While the scan won't strengthen your bones, it can provide you with a baseline on how strong or dense your bones are and whether you are at greater risk for osteoporosis.

4. Don't let joint pain slow you down

Aging gracefully can sometimes be a pain ... in your joints, that is. Whether from disease or injury, any damage can interfere with your movement and take a toll on your entire body. Please refer to our chronic joint pain literature for additional information on ways to reduce symptoms and manage your pain.

5. Eat a heart healthy diet

Taking care of your heart should be a top priority for everyone. The good news is there are some easy ways to keep your heart ticking for years to come. Eating a heart healthy diet is an important first step. Not sure where to start? Please refer to our healthy diet literature for additional information on proper nutrition.

6. Take care of your eyes

People see primary care doctors, the dentist and even mental health specialists on a regular basis. But are you taking proper care of your eyes, especially if you don't already use corrective lenses? It's important to have your eyes checked regularly to prevent eye diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, low vision and even dry eyes. Set up an appointment for a routine eye exam.

Whether you're at work, home or outdoors, there are also preventive measures you can take to protect your eyes. Wearing sunglasses, even on a cloudy day, is one of the most important ways to protect your eyes from ultraviolet rays and avoid lasting damage to your cornea. Yes, your eyes can get sunburned too!

7. Make sure your hearing is loud and clear

Have you noticed that sometimes it's hard to understand what people are saying even though you can hear them? Does your partner complain that you have the TV volume up too high? Do you have a persistent ringing in your ears? If so, you might be experiencing hearing loss, or a related condition called tinnitus.

Don't let hearing loss interfere with your day-to-day activities. Make an appointment with your health care provider today to see if hearing aids may be right for you.

8. Keep a skip in your step

Your feet and ankles are put under constant pressure making them susceptible, in some instances, to inflammation, pain and limited movement and flexibility. Taking care of your feet and wearing appropriate footwear is important to maintaining an active lifestyle.

9. Keep your medications organized and safe

Especially as we age, you might need to take different medications to manage different health conditions. It's important to review your medications regularly with your pharmacist and your health care provider to make sure everything is necessary and to identify possible interactions.

Half of the calls made to the Poison & Drug Information Center are about adult poisonings. All adults and especially older adults should keep the poison control number, (800) 222-1222, on their refrigerator, near the phone, and in their cell phone in case of emergencies.

Helpful Tips:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you determine when to take medication that says take twice or three times a day.
- Do not save medication for the next time and dispose of any medications that have expired.
- Do not take anyone else's medication or share yours.

- Do not take your medication in front of children. They might copy what you do.
- If you have young grandchildren come over be sure that all medication is out of their reach.
- Keep an up to date list of the medications that you are taking. It is a good idea to keep a copy of this list with you at all times.
 - Include on the list all over the counter medications and herbal medications that you are taking – vitamins, Tylenol, echinacea, etc.
 - Know what each medication is for. If you don't know, ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you.
 - Mark which medications need to be taken with food and those that should not be taken with food.
 - Write down when medications are to be taken.
 - Write down which side effects you should watch for and know what to do and who to contact if you experience any of the symptoms.
 - Even if you don't have questions, go over this list with your doctor so they are fully aware of all the medications you are taking.
- Put your glasses on before taking any medication.
- Take all of your medication as prescribed.
- Try to get your prescriptions from the same pharmacy so you get to know the pharmacy staff and they can be sure to check for medications that do not go together.
- Turn the lights on when taking medication at night.

10. Get your beauty rest

Why does restful sleep get more elusive the older we get? Studies have shown that 50% of Americans over the age of 65 suffer from sleep problems; and as we age, losing sleep at night can also lead to other health concerns, like an increased risk of falling and daytime fatigue. Please refer to our improved sleep literature for additional tips on how to have a more restful night's rest.



Chronic Joint Pain? Seven Tips for Safe Pain Management

Aging gracefully can sometimes be a pain ... in your joints, that is. Over the years, your joints have provided you much-needed support to move, jump and run. Now, whether from disease or injury, any damage – whether mildly irritating or downright debilitating – can interfere with your movement and take a toll on your entire body—and your mental health.

But there is hope. Aging doesn't have to hold you back from still living your best life. Here are nine ways to help reduce symptoms and get yourself some much-needed relief.

1. *Keep it moving.*

When you're in pain, the last thing you may want to do is get up and move, let alone exercise. But staying active is actually one prescription to relieve joint pain. It can decrease pain and stiffness, increase range of motion and strengthen the muscles that support your joints.

"Low-impact exercise programs like swimming, cycling or walking are a great way to get moving," suggested Brian McCardel, MD, an orthopedic surgeon with Banner Health Center in Glendale, AZ. "I have a family member who avoided regular aerobic exercise for years owing to osteoarthritis in her knees, worried that she would 'wreck them even sooner.' It turns out that she is doing much better since she started working out regularly."

2. *Maintain a healthy weight.*

If you're overweight, losing some can relieve the added pressure extra weight places on your painful joints. An effective way to do this is to stick to low-impact exercises (and a healthy diet).

3. *Ice, ice it baby.*

Ice can help reduce blood flow to the areas of pain and swelling. An easy way to determine, "How long should I leave the ice on?" There is an acronym to help clear up any confusion. C.B.A.N. – Cold. Burn. Ache. Numb. When you first apply ice to your skin it will feel cold. After a few minutes, the cold will start to become more of a burning sensation. Within five to seven minutes, you will begin to sense an aching feeling. Finally, your skin will be numb to the touch ...that is when you will want to remove the ice.

Should you apply ice or heat? →

4. *Use pain relievers wisely.*

For moderate-to-severe joint pain with swelling, an over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen, aspirin or naproxen can help. For pain without swelling, acetaminophen can help, however, check with your doctor first.

Heat vs. Ice
Your Guide For Treatment

Heat	Ice
When to Use It: Heat is usually recommended to treat chronic pain, such as acute and chronic low-back pain and tension headaches.	When to Use It: Ice is usually recommended immediately following an injury, such as acute sprains and strains.
What It Does: Heat can help reduce muscle stiffness and maintain mobility in muscles and joints. It may reduce the need for pain medication.	What It Does: Ice can help reduce blood flow to the areas of injury and may help to reduce further damage to tissues immediately after an injury. It may reduce the need for pain medication.
Don't Use: On recent injuries or bruising	Don't Use: On stiff joints

If you find them helpful and you're going to take them on a sustained basis, you should talk to your primary care doctor about it, and should do so before starting them if you have known liver, kidney, ulcer or clotting problems, or you are taking a blood thinner of any kind. If your pain is very severe, and OTC medicines aren't cutting it, your doctor may prescribe a stronger opioid medication such as codeine, tramadol or morphine. Because there are risks with using this type of medication, it's important to discuss with your doctor first before using them.

"You would think that you wouldn't have to say that, but many people who become addicted do so on 'borrowed' pills from friends or family members," Dr. McCardel said. "In some communities, it is the most common source."

5. Brace or wrap it up.

If the pain is too great, try to immobilize the area with a splint, wrap or brace. Immobilization should be used with caution. The consequence of reduced blood flow to the region, results in a reduction in oxygenated blood to the region, which slows the overall healing process.

6. Work with a physical therapist or physiotherapist.

A specialist trained in human movement can help strengthen the muscles around the joint, stabilize the joint, correct muscle imbalances, improve your range of motion, and provide relief through various soft tissue therapies. More recently, instrument assisted soft tissue mobilization has shown to reduce inflammation and swelling around the joint, reducing overall pain.

7. Consider alternative treatments.

You may find some pain relief from trying yoga, meditation, massage and acupuncture. It's a good idea to talk with your doctor first. Here are six complementary and alternative medicine approaches you can try, and the benefits you might see.

Yoga

- What it is: Yoga is a mind-body practice that combines postures and movements, breathing, and relaxation. It can have long-lasting benefits for easing pain symptoms.
- What the science says: A study published in the Journal of Pain Research asked women with fibromyalgia to attend a yoga class twice a week for eight weeks. Researchers reported improvements in pain levels, psychological functioning, and mindfulness (J Pain Res, 2011).

Tai chi

- What it is: Tai chi is a Chinese martial art form where you slowly move through a series of motions while focusing on your breathing. It's gentle and almost anyone can do it. Like yoga, it offers lasting benefits for joint pain relief.
- What the science says: According to research published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), tai chi is more effective than aerobic exercise for alleviating chronic joint pain symptoms. Tai chi works a lot like aerobic activities and allows patients to focus on maintaining good form in every pose. This is especially good because many people with chronic joint pain find they are too tired or in too much pain to exercise aerobically (BMJ, 2018).

Massage

- What it is: Massage is a treatment where a therapist rubs and kneads your muscles and soft tissues to reduce stress and alleviate pain. Dr. Virgil said massage can bring short-term relief.

- What the science says: A meta-analysis of nine studies that included more than 400 people found massage is helpful in managing pain, anxiety, and depression in people with chronic pain (PLoS One, 2014).

Acupuncture

- What it is: Acupuncture is a technique where a practitioner inserts thin needles at specific points on your body. It originates with traditional Chinese medicine. According to Dr. Virgil, acupuncture can reduce your pain and fatigue and improve your energy and mood. An estimated 20 percent of people with chronic joint pain try acupuncture.
- What the science says: A meta-analysis of 12 studies published in the Journal of Pain Research found that acupuncture was effective at relieving pain and improving quality of life in people with chronic joint pain (J Pain Res, 2019).

Hydrotherapy

- What it is: Also called water therapy or “water cure,” hydrotherapy uses water to help improve health. There are lots of different types of hydrotherapy, from in-water workouts to steam baths.
- What the science says: A 2019 study in the Journal of Pain Research found that both aquatic exercise and soaking in mineral water can help people with chronic joint pain by reducing their pain and fatigue and improving their quality of life (J Pain Res, 2019).

Stretching

- What it is: Stretching is a gentle form of exercise where you lengthen your muscles to increase flexibility and range of motion.
- What the science says: Researchers who reported their results in the European Journal of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine evaluated people with chronic joint pain. The participants stretched for 40 minutes twice a week for 12 weeks, following recommendations from the American College of Sports Medicine. They found that stretching improved physical functioning and quality of life and reduced pain (Eur J of Phys and Rehab Med, 2018).



Waking Up Tired? Try These Tips

Just because you've turned 65 doesn't mean that your body and mind will just be more tired - this isn't part of aging. The world revolves around sleep. Prioritize getting adequate, restful sleep and you will feel younger, healthier and happier.

If you have had teenagers in the house, you know that they have a few special talents - leaving dishes in their room, sassy comebacks and sleeping in until 1 pm on Sundays.

It's been a long time since you could sleep in like that. Ironically, you are more tired than ever. You can fall asleep on the couch after dinner, but by the time you've laid down in bed, the sleepiness is gone. Something just isn't adding up. Why does restful sleep get more elusive the older we get? We thought it would be beneficial to provide you with some tips for better sleep as we age.

How much sleep is just right?

"The older you get, the less sleep you need," said Dr. Lee-lannotti. "Not only are young kids growing and developing new skills every day. They are also playing from dawn to dusk. It's no surprise that they would need several more hours of sleep than an adult." Dr. Lee-lannotti explained that adults (age 18 to 64) need about 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Surprisingly, studies have shown that seniors (age 65+) may need an hour less. However, it is still very important to obtain adequate amounts of sleep on a consistent basis regardless of your age, as sleep deficiency can have harmful health consequences.

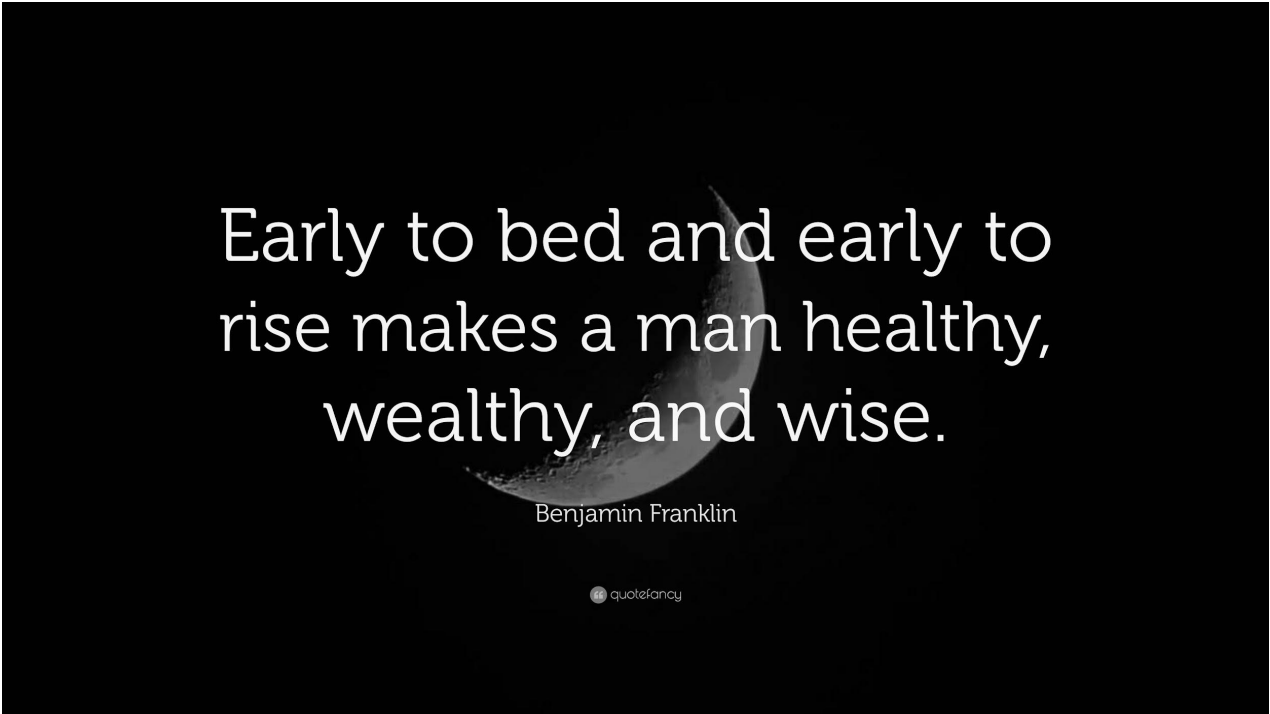
Is getting restful sleep more difficult as we age?

Dr. Lee-lannotti explained that certain disorders become more common as we age. "Adults tend to be lighter sleepers than children. Your sensitivity to light, noise and temperature is likely contributing to your difficulty with sleep. Additionally, we see a higher likelihood for insomnia, restless leg syndrome and sleep apnea in aging adults." These conditions are all treatable. Meet with your Primary Care Physician to get a diagnosis and begin treatment.

10 tips for more restful sleep


1. ***Be consistent*** - Even on weekends and on vacation, you should set a consistent bedtime. This is one of the hardest things to do. But if you can be consistent, your body will know when it's time to sleep.
2. ***No electronics*** - We've heard this one before. Studies have confirmed that the blue light on your phone's screen will keep you from getting sleepy by suppressing your nighttime production of melatonin, even with "night mode" activated, it's best to keep all screens out of view.
3. ***Keep it cool and dark*** - This is your energy company's favorite tip. Ideal sleep temperatures are between 65 and 68 degrees. Lowering your temperature that far in the summer may feel a little excessive. But the point is that a cool, dark room is ideal for sleep. Just imagine you're a bear, settling in for hibernation.
4. ***Bed is for sleep and sex*** - If you have a TV in your bedroom, then your body is likely confused about what your bed is for. Reading, watching TV or scrolling the interwebs are activities you should do on the couch, so that your body knows that bedtime is sleep time.
5. ***No pets allowed*** - Ever wake up to a 15-minute licking session? Even tiny cats and dogs can be disturbing to your deep sleep. It is recommended to keep pets outside the bedroom so that you can rest. If banishing your pet breaks your heart (like it does us), at least make them their own comfortable bed on the floor.

6. **Eliminate disturbances** – Does your partner go to bed much later than you? Do they snore or steal the sheets? Couples that have poor sleep habits can cause a lot of anxiety and tension. If you are really struggling to sleep, separate beds (or even rooms) may be the best thing you can do for your relationship. Plus, distance makes the heart grow fonder, right?
7. **Don't eat or exercise before bed** – Try to limit exercise and food within four hours of bedtime.
8. **Bed is for the tired** – If you've been lying awake in bed with no distractions for more than 20 minutes, you might not be tired yet. It is recommended to get up for 20-30 minutes before getting back in bed to sleep.
9. **Make it a ritual** – Aside from a consistent bedtime, you may have other rituals that your body can use to signal sleepiness. Washing your face, brushing your teeth, getting into pajamas and reading can all be part of your nightly ritual.
10. **Limit naps** – "Napping has its place." A 15- to 30-minute power nap on a particularly exhausting day can be healthy. But as soon as you see the naps impacting your ability to sleep, you should sacrifice that rest for deeper sleeping at night.



Early to bed and early to
rise makes a man healthy,
wealthy, and wise.

Benjamin Franklin

 quote fancy

There is no such thing as a small stroke...

Strokes are the fifth leading cause of death in the United States and a significant cause of disability. Learn from Harvard Medical School experts how to understand your odds for having a stroke, evidence-based steps that can lower your risk, how to recognize the early signs of a stroke, and what to do to get rapid, brain-saving treatment.

Unhealthy foods also contribute to weight gain, which is itself a risk factor for inflammation. Yet in several studies, even after researchers took obesity into account, the link between foods and inflammation remained, which suggests weight gain isn't the sole driver. "Some of the food components or ingredients may have independent effects on inflammation over and above increased caloric intake," Dr. Hu says.

Anti-inflammatory foods

An anti-inflammatory diet should include these foods:

- tomatoes
- olive oil
- green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale, and collards
- nuts like almonds and walnuts
- fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna, and sardines
- fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, cherries, and oranges

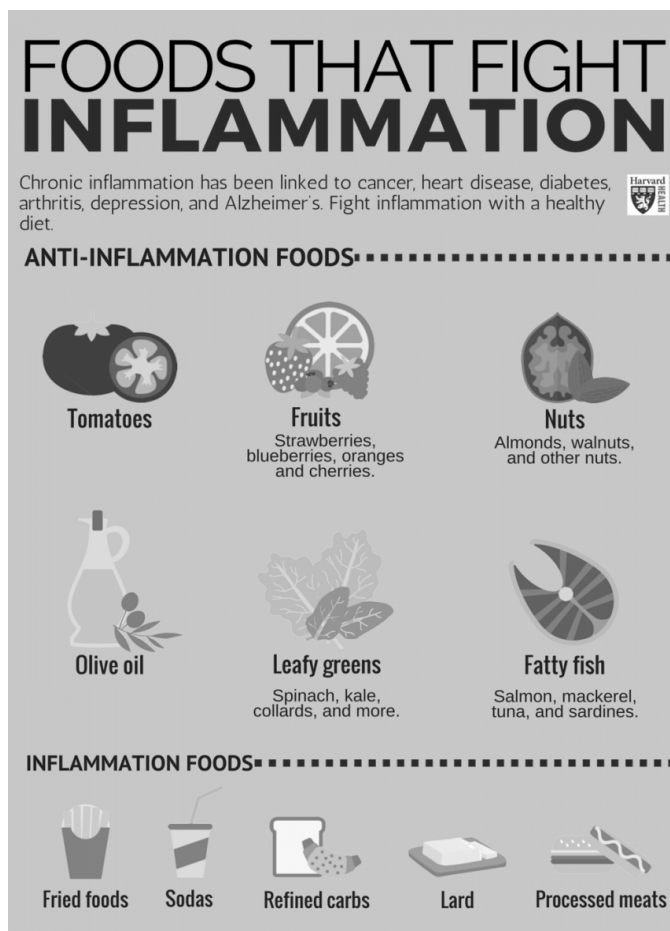
Benefits of anti-inflammatory foods

On the flip side are beverages and foods that reduce inflammation, and with it, chronic disease, says Dr. Hu. He notes in particular fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, apples, and leafy greens that are high in natural antioxidants and polyphenols—protective compounds found in plants. Studies have also associated nuts with reduced markers of inflammation and a lower risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Coffee, which contains polyphenols and other anti-inflammatory compounds, may protect against inflammation, as well.

Anti-inflammatory diet

To reduce levels of inflammation, aim for an overall healthy diet. If you're looking for an eating plan that closely follows the tenets of anti-inflammatory eating, consider the Mediterranean diet, which is high in fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, fish, and healthy oils.

In addition to lowering inflammation, a more natural, less processed diet can have noticeable effects on your physical and emotional health. "A healthy diet is beneficial not only for reducing the risk of chronic diseases, but also for improving mood and overall quality of life," Dr. Hu says.



Cognitive Health and Older Adults

Cognitive health – the ability to clearly think, learn, and remember – is an important component of performing everyday activities. Cognitive health is just one aspect of overall brain health.

What Is Brain Health?

Brain health refers to how well a person's brain functions across several areas. Aspects of brain health include:

- Cognitive health – how well you think, learn, and remember
- Motor function – how well you make and control movements, including balance
- Emotional function – how well you interpret and respond to emotions (both pleasant and unpleasant)
- Tactile function – how well you feel and respond to sensations of touch – including pressure, pain, and temperature

Brain health can be affected by age-related changes in the brain, injuries such as stroke or traumatic brain injury, mood disorders such as depression, substance use disorder or addiction, and diseases such as Alzheimer's disease. While some factors affecting brain health cannot be changed, there are many lifestyle changes that might make a difference.

A growing body of scientific research suggests that the following steps are linked to cognitive health. Research shows that a combination of these healthy lifestyle behaviors may also reduce the risk for Alzheimer's disease (Neurology, 2020). Small changes may really add up: Making these part of your routine could help you function better.



Take Care of Your Physical Health

Manage High Blood Pressure

Eat Healthy Foods

Be Physically Active

Keep Your Mind Active

Stay Connected with Social Activities

Manage Stress

Reduce Risks to Cognitive Health

Take Care of Your Physical Health

Taking care of your physical health may help your cognitive health. You can:

- Get recommended health screenings.
- Manage chronic health problems like diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, and high cholesterol.
- Consult with your health care provider about the medicines you take and possible side effects on memory, sleep, and brain function.
- Reduce risk for brain injuries due to falls and other accidents.
- Limit use of alcohol (some medicines can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol).
- Quit smoking, if you currently smoke. Also avoid other nicotine products such as chewing tobacco.
- Get enough sleep, generally seven to eight hours each night.

Manage High Blood Pressure

Preventing or controlling high blood pressure, not only helps your heart, but may help your brain too. Decades of observational studies have shown that having high blood pressure in midlife – the 40s to early 60s – increases the risk of cognitive decline later in life. In addition, the SPRINT-MIND study, a nationwide clinical trial, showed that intensive lowering

of blood pressure (even below the previous standard target of 140 for systolic blood pressure) lowers the risk for mild cognitive impairment, which is a risk factor for dementia (JAMA, 2019).

High blood pressure often does not cause signs of illness that you can see or feel. Routine visits to your doctor will help pick up changes in your blood pressure, even though you might feel fine. To control or lower high blood pressure, your doctor may suggest exercise, changes in your diet, and if needed – medications. These steps can help protect your brain and your heart.

Eat Healthy Foods

A healthy diet can help reduce the risk of many chronic diseases such as heart disease or diabetes. It may also help keep your brain healthy.

In general, a healthy diet consists of fruits and vegetables; whole grains; lean meats, fish, and poultry. You should also limit solid fats, sugar, and salt. Be sure to control portion sizes and drink enough water and other fluids.

Researchers are looking at whether a healthy diet can help preserve cognitive function or reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. For example, there is some evidence that people who eat a Mediterranean diet have a lower risk of developing dementia. While scientists aren't sure yet why the Mediterranean diet might help the brain, its effect on improving cardiovascular health might in turn reduce dementia risk. In contrast, the typical Western diet often increases cardiovascular disease risk, possibly contributing to faster brain aging.

Researchers have developed and are testing another diet, called MIND, a combination of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. According to observational studies of more than 900 dementia-free older adults, closely following the MIND diet was associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer's and a slower rate of cognitive decline (Alzheimer's Dement, 2015).

Description of the DASH Eating Plan:

The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and instead provides daily and weekly nutritional goals. This plan recommends:

- Eating vegetables, fruits, and whole grains
- Eating fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and healthy oils like avocado, olive, or coconut oil
- Limiting foods that are high in saturated fat and unhealthy oils such as vegetable, palm, sunflower, or canola oil
- Limiting sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets
- Limiting soy and plant protein like pea protein
- Limiting sodium to ~1500 mg. or less

When following the DASH eating plan, it is important to choose foods that are:

- Low in saturated and trans fats
- Rich in potassium, calcium, magnesium, fiber, and protein
- Lower in sodium

Be Physically Active

Being physically active – through regular exercise, household chores, or other activities – has many benefits. It can help you:

- Keep and improve your strength
- Have more energy
- Improve your balance
- Prevent or delay heart disease, diabetes, and other concerns
- Perk up your mood and reduce depression

Studies link ongoing physical activity with benefits for the brain and cognition as well, although a strong link between physical activity and Alzheimer's disease prevention has not yet been documented.

In one study, exercise stimulated the human brain's ability to maintain old network connections and make new ones that are vital to cognitive health (Proc Natl Acad Sci USA, 2011). Other studies have shown that exercise increases the size of a brain structure important to memory and learning, resulting in better spatial memory. Aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, is thought to be more beneficial to cognitive health than anaerobic stretching and toning exercise. One study found that the more time spent doing a moderate level of physical activity, the greater the increase in brain glucose metabolism – or how quickly the brain turns glucose into fuel – which may reduce the risk for developing Alzheimer's disease (J Alzheimers Dis, 2017).

Federal guidelines recommend that all adults get at least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of physical activity each week. Walking is a good start. You can also join programs that teach you to move safely and prevent falls, which can lead to brain and other injuries. Check with your health care provider if you haven't been active and want to start a vigorous exercise program.

Clinical Trials on Exercise for Cognitive Health

Volunteers are needed for clinical trials that are testing different forms of exercise for cognitive health. By joining one of these studies, you may learn new ways to be physically active and also contribute useful information to help other older adults in the future! To learn more, visit the [Alzheimers.gov](https://www.alzheimers.gov) Clinical Trials Finder to search for a trial in your area.

Keep Your Mind Active

Being intellectually engaged may benefit the brain. People who engage in personally meaningful activities, such as volunteering or hobbies, say they feel happier and healthier. Learning new skills may improve your thinking ability, too. For example, one study found that older adults who learned quilting or digital photography had more memory improvement than those who only socialized or did less cognitively demanding activities (Psychol Sci, 2014). Some of the research on engagement in activities such as music, theater, dance, and creative writing has shown promise for improving quality of life and well-being in older adults, from better memory and self-esteem to reduced stress and increased social interaction (Neuron, 2018).

Additional research is needed, and in large numbers of diverse older adults, to be able to say definitively whether these activities may help reduce decline or maintain healthy cognition. Lots of activities can keep your mind active. For example, read books and magazines. Play games. Take or teach a class. Learn a new skill or hobby. Work or volunteer. These types of mentally stimulating activities have not been proven to prevent serious cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's disease, but

they can be fun! Plus, findings from observational studies suggest that some informal mentally stimulating activities, such as reading or playing games, may lower the risk of Alzheimer's-related cognitive impairment and dementia.

Some scientists have argued that such activities may protect the brain by establishing "cognitive reserve." They may help the brain become more adaptable in some mental functions so it can compensate for age-related brain changes and health conditions that affect the brain.

Some types of cognitive training conducted in a research setting also seem to have benefits. For the Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly (ACTIVE) trial, healthy adults 65 and older participated in 10 sessions of memory training, reasoning training, or processing-speed training. The sessions improved participants' mental skills in the area in which they were trained with evidence suggesting these benefits persisted for two years (J Aging Health, 2013).

Be wary of claims that playing certain computer and online games can improve your memory and other types of thinking as evidence to back up such claims is evolving. There is currently not enough evidence available to suggest that computer-based brain training applications offered commercially have the same impact on cognitive abilities as the ACTIVE study training. NIA and other organizations are supporting research to determine whether different types of cognitive training have lasting effects.

Stay Connected with Social Activities

Connecting with other people through social activities and community programs can keep your brain active and help you feel less isolated and more engaged with the world around you. Participating in social activities may lower the risk for some health problems and improve well-being.

People who engage in personally meaningful and productive activities with others tend to live longer, boost their mood, and have a sense of purpose. Studies show that these activities seem to help maintain their well-being and may improve their cognitive function (Perspect Psychol Sci, 2015).

So, visit with family and friends. Consider volunteering for a local organization or join a group focused on a hobby you enjoy. Join a walking group with other older adults. Check out programs available through your Area Agency on Aging, senior center, or other community organizations. Increasingly, there are groups that meet online too, providing a way to connect from home with others who share your interests or to get support.

Manage Stress

Stress is a natural part of life. Short-term stress can even focus our thoughts and motivate us to take action. However, over time, chronic stress can change the brain, affect memory, and increase the risk for Alzheimer's and related dementias. To help manage stress and build the ability to bounce back from stressful situations, there are many things you can do:

- Exercise regularly. Practicing tai chi or going for a walk, especially in nature, can restore a sense of well-being.
- Write in a journal. Putting your thoughts or worries on paper can help you let go of an issue or see a new solution.
- Try relaxation techniques. Practices such as mindfulness – which involves focusing awareness on the present moment without judgment – or breathing exercises can help your body relax. These can help lower blood pressure, lessen muscle tension, and reduce stress.
- Stay positive. Release grudges or things beyond your control, practice gratitude, or pause to enjoy the simple things, like the comfort of a cup of tea or the beauty of a sunrise.

Reduce Risks to Cognitive Health

Genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors are all thought to influence cognitive health. Some of these factors may contribute to a decline in thinking skills and the ability to perform everyday tasks such as driving, paying bills, taking medicine, and cooking.

Genetic factors are passed down (inherited) from a parent to child and cannot be controlled. But many environmental and lifestyle factors can be changed or managed to reduce your risk. These factors include:

- Some physical and mental health problems, such as high blood pressure or depression
- Brain injuries, such as those due to falls or accidents
- Some medicines, or improper use of medicines
- Lack of physical activity
- Poor diet
- Smoking
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Sleep problems
- Social isolation and loneliness



What Is Dementia?

It's normal to be a little more forgetful as we age. However, some difficulties with cognitive function, such as dementia and mild cognitive impairment (MCI) are more serious.

Dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning – thinking, remembering, and reasoning – and behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with daily life and activities. Symptoms may include problems with language skills, visual perception, or paying attention. Some people have personality changes. There are different forms of dementia including Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal disorders, and Lewy body dementia.

MCI is a condition in which people have more memory or thinking problems than other people their age but can still do their normal daily activities. People with MCI are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those without. However, not everyone with MCI will develop Alzheimer's disease.

Physical and Mental Health Problems

Many health conditions affect the brain and pose risks to cognitive function. These conditions include:

- Heart disease and high blood pressure – can lead to stroke and changes in blood vessels in the brain that can lead to dementia
- Diabetes – damages blood vessels throughout the body, including in the brain; increases risk for stroke and heart attack; increases risk for Alzheimer's
- Alzheimer's disease and related dementias – cause a buildup of harmful proteins and other changes in the brain that lead to memory loss and other thinking problems
- Stroke – can damage blood vessels in the brain and increase risk for vascular dementia
- Depression – can lead to confusion or attention problems and has been linked to dementia
- Delirium – shows up as an acute state of confusion, often during a hospital stay, and is associated with subsequent cognitive decline

It's important to prevent or seek treatment for these health problems. They affect your brain as well as your body and receiving treatment for other conditions may help prevent or delay cognitive decline or thinking problems.

Brain Injuries

Older adults are at higher risk of falls, car accidents, and other accidents that can cause brain injury. Alcohol and certain medicines can affect a person's ability to drive safely and also increase the risk for accidents and brain injury. Learn about risks for falls by reviewing our fall prevention program literature.

Wear helmets and seat belts to help prevent head injuries as well. But don't let a fear of falling keep you from being active. Overcoming this fear can help you stay active, maintain your physical health, and prevent future falls.

Medicines

Some drugs and combinations of medicines can affect a person's thinking and the way the brain works. For example, certain ones can cause confusion, memory loss, hallucinations, and delusions in older adults.

Medicines can also interact with food, dietary supplements, alcohol, and other substances. Some of these interactions can affect how your brain functions. Drugs that can harm older adults' cognition include:

- Antihistamines for allergy relief
- Medicines for anxiety and depression
- Sleep aids
- Antipsychotics
- Muscle relaxants
- Some drugs that treat urinary incontinence
- Medications for relief of cramps in the stomach, intestines, and bladder

Talk with your doctor if you're concerned that your medications may be causing cognitive problems. Do not stop taking any medications you've been prescribed without first talking with your healthcare provider.

Lack of Physical Activity

Lack of exercise and other physical activity may increase your risk of diabetes, heart disease, depression, and stroke — all of which can harm the brain. In some studies, physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive performance and reduced risk for Alzheimer's disease. In general, staying active is known to lower the risk of high blood pressure, stroke, and symptoms of depression, all of which in turn can improve cognitive health.

Poor Diet

A number of studies link eating certain foods with keeping the brain healthy and suggest that other foods can increase health risk. For example, high-fat and high-sodium foods can lead to health problems, such as heart disease and diabetes, that can harm the brain.

Smoking

Smoking is harmful to your body and your brain. It raises the risk of heart attack, stroke, and lung disease. Quitting smoking at any age can improve your health.

Alcohol

Drinking too much alcohol affects the brain by slowing or impairing communication among brain cells. This can lead to slurred speech, fuzzy memory, drowsiness, and dizziness. Long-term effects may include changes in balance, memory, emotions, coordination, and body temperature. Staying away from alcohol can reverse some of these changes.

As people age, they may become more sensitive to alcohol's effects. The same amount of alcohol can have a greater effect on an older person than on someone who is younger. Also, some medicines can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Sleep Problems

At any age, getting a good night's sleep supports brain health. Sleep problems — not getting enough sleep, sleeping poorly, and sleep disorders — can lead to trouble with memory, concentration, and other cognitive functions.

Social Isolation and Loneliness

Social isolation and feeling lonely may be bad for brain health. Loneliness has been linked to higher risk for dementia, and less social activity has been linked to poorer cognitive function.

By taking steps now to reduce your risks for cognitive decline, you'll help to maintain your cognitive health for the future.

For More Information About Cognitive Health

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.gov

www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers



Preventing Alzheimer's Disease: What Do We Know?

As they get older, many people worry about developing Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. If they have a family member with Alzheimer's, they may wonder about their family history and genetic risk. As many as 6.5 million Americans age 65 and older live with Alzheimer's. Many more are expected to develop the disease as the population ages—unless ways to prevent or delay it are found.

Although scientists have conducted many studies, and more are ongoing, so far nothing has been proven to prevent or delay dementia caused by Alzheimer's disease. But researchers have identified promising strategies and are learning more about what might—and might not—work.

We know that changes in the brain can occur many years before the first symptoms of Alzheimer's appear. These early brain changes point to a possible window of opportunity to prevent or delay debilitating memory loss and other symptoms of dementia. While research may identify specific interventions that will prevent or delay the disease in some people, it's likely that many individuals may need a combination of treatments based on their own risk factors.

Researchers are studying many approaches to prevent or delay Alzheimer's. Some focus on drugs, some on lifestyle or other changes. Let's look at the most promising interventions to date and what we know about them.

Evaluating the Latest Alzheimer's Disease Prevention Research

A recent review of research looked carefully at the evidence on ways to prevent or delay Alzheimer's dementia or age-related cognitive decline. Led by a committee of experts from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), the review found "encouraging but inconclusive" evidence for three types of interventions (2017):

- Increased physical activity
- Blood pressure control for people with high blood pressure (also called hypertension)
- Cognitive training

The evidence for other interventions, such as medications and diet, was not as strong. However, scientists are continuing to explore these and other possible preventions.

Can Increasing Physical Activity Prevent Alzheimer's Disease?

Physical activity has many health benefits, such as reducing falls, maintaining mobility and independence, and reducing the risk of chronic conditions like depression, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Based on research to date, there's not enough evidence to recommend exercise as a way to prevent Alzheimer's dementia or mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a condition of mild memory problems that often leads to Alzheimer's dementia.

Years of animal and human observational studies suggest the possible benefits of exercise for the brain. Some studies have shown that people who exercise have a lower risk of cognitive decline than those who don't. Exercise has also been associated with fewer Alzheimer's plaques and tangles in the brain and better performance on certain cognitive tests.

While clinical trials suggest that exercise may help delay or slow age-related cognitive decline, there is not enough evidence to conclude that it can prevent or slow MCI or Alzheimer's dementia. One study compared high-intensity aerobic

exercise, such as walking or running on a treadmill, to low-intensity stretching and balance exercises in 65 volunteers with MCI and prediabetes. After 6 months, researchers found that the aerobic group had better executive function—the ability to plan and organize—than the stretching/balance group, but not better short-term memory.

Several other clinical trials are testing aerobic and anaerobic exercise to see if they may help prevent or delay Alzheimer's dementia. Many questions remain to be answered: Can exercise or physical activity prevent age-related cognitive decline, MCI, or Alzheimer's dementia? If so, what types of physical activity are most beneficial? How much and how often should a person exercise? How does exercise affect the brains of people with no or mild symptoms?

Until scientists know more, experts encourage exercise for its many other benefits. Learn more about exercise and physical activity for older adults.

Can Controlling High Blood Pressure Prevent Alzheimer's Disease?

Controlling high blood pressure is known to reduce a person's risk for heart disease and stroke. The NASEM committee of experts concluded that managing blood pressure when it's high, particularly for middle-aged adults, also might help prevent or delay Alzheimer's dementia.

Many types of studies show a connection between high blood pressure, cerebrovascular disease (a disease of the blood vessels supplying the brain), and dementia. For example, it's common for people with Alzheimer's-related changes in the brain to also have signs of vascular damage in the brain, autopsy studies show. In addition, observational studies have found that high blood pressure in middle age, along with other cerebrovascular risk factors such as diabetes and smoking, increase the risk of developing dementia (JAMA Neurol, 2017).

Clinical trials—the gold standard of medical proof—are underway to determine whether managing high blood pressure in individuals with hypertension can prevent Alzheimer's dementia or cognitive decline.

One large clinical trial—called SPRINT-MIND (Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial–Memory and Cognition in Decreased Hypertension)—found that lowering systolic blood pressure (the top number) to less than 120 mmHg, compared to a target of less than 140 mmHg, did not significantly reduce the risk of dementia. Participants were adults aged 50 and older who were at high risk of cardiovascular disease but had no history of stroke or diabetes (JAMA, 2019).

However, the multiyear study did show that this intensive blood pressure lowering significantly reduced the risk of MCI, a common precursor of Alzheimer's, in the participants. In addition, researchers found that it was safe for the brain.

The results of SPRINT-MIND provide further evidence of the connection between cardiovascular health and brain health. Further studies are needed to determine which people, at what age, might benefit most from particular blood pressure management approaches, and how these approaches affect the risk of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease.

While research continues, experts recommend that people control high blood pressure to lower their risk of serious health problems, including heart disease and stroke. Learn more about ways to control your blood pressure.

Can Cognitive Training Prevent Alzheimer's Disease?

Cognitive training involves structured activities designed to enhance memory, reasoning, and speed of processing. There is encouraging but inconclusive evidence that a specific, computer-based cognitive training may help delay or slow age-related cognitive decline. However, there is no evidence that it can prevent or delay Alzheimer's-related cognitive impairment.

Studies show that cognitive training can improve the type of cognition a person is trained in (J Aging Health, 2013). For example, older adults who received 10 hours of practice designed to enhance their speed and accuracy in responding to pictures presented briefly on a computer screen ("speed of processing" training) got faster and better at this specific task and other tasks in which enhanced speed of processing is important. Similarly, older adults who received several hours of instruction on effective memory strategies showed improved memory when using those strategies. The important question is whether such training has long-term benefits or translates into improved performance on daily activities like driving and remembering to take medicine.

Some of the strongest evidence that this might be the case comes from the NIA-sponsored Advanced Cognitive Training for Independent and Vital Elderly (ACTIVE) trial (J Aging Health, 2014). In this trial, healthy adults aged 65 and older participated in 10 sessions of memory, reasoning, or speed-of-processing training with certified trainers during 5 to 6 weeks, with "booster sessions" made available to some participants 11 months and 3 years after initial training. The sessions improved participants' mental skills in the area in which they were trained (but not in other areas), and improvements persisted years after the training was completed. In addition, participants in all three groups reported that they could perform daily activities with greater independence as many as 10 years later, although there was no objective data to support this.

Findings from long-term observational studies—in which researchers observed behavior but did not influence or change it—also suggest that informal cognitively stimulating activities, such as reading or playing games, may lower risk of Alzheimer's-related cognitive impairment and dementia. For example, a study of nearly 2,000 cognitively normal adults 70 and older found that participating in games, crafts, computer use, and social activities for about 4 years was associated with a lower risk of MCI (JAMA Neurol, 2017).

Scientists think that some of these activities may protect the brain by establishing "reserve," the brain's ability to operate effectively even when it is damaged or some brain function is disrupted. Another theory is that such activities may help the brain become more adaptable in some mental functions so it can compensate for declines in others. Scientists do not know if particular types of cognitive training—or elements of the training such as instruction or social interaction—work better than others, but many studies are ongoing.

Can Eating Certain Foods or Diets Prevent Alzheimer's Disease?

People often wonder if a certain diet or specific foods can help prevent Alzheimer's disease. The recent NASEM review of research did not find enough evidence to recommend a certain diet to prevent cognitive decline or Alzheimer's. However, certain diets and healthy eating patterns have been associated with cognitive benefits. Studies of diets, such as the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet—a combination of the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets—are underway. Learn more about what we know about diet and the prevention of Alzheimer's disease in our "Cognitive Health and Older Adults" section.

Targets of Alzheimer's Disease Prevention Research

The National Institute on Aging (NIA) is currently supporting 442 active clinical trials on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (AD/ADRD). These trials reflect diverse drug and mechanistic targets, as well as diversity in the stages of AD/ADRD they address. NIA's active trials include: early stage clinical drug development (57), late stage clinical drug development (8), non-pharmacological interventions (139), dementia care and caregiver interventions (212), and other types of trials (26), including trials for clinical therapy development for neuropsychiatric symptoms of dementia and trials for evaluating diagnostic tools. Other research targets include:

- New drugs to delay onset or slow disease progression
- Diabetes treatment
- Depression treatment
- Blood pressure- and lipid-lowering treatments
- Sleep interventions
- Social engagement
- Vitamins such as B12 plus folic acid supplements and D
- Combined physical and mental exercises



**National Institute
on Aging**

Be Cautious About Alzheimer's "Cures"

Because Alzheimer's disease is so devastating, some people are tempted by untried or unproven "cures." Check with your doctor before trying pills or any other treatment or supplement that promises to prevent Alzheimer's. These "treatments" might be unsafe, a waste of money, or both. They might even interfere with other medical treatments that have been prescribed.

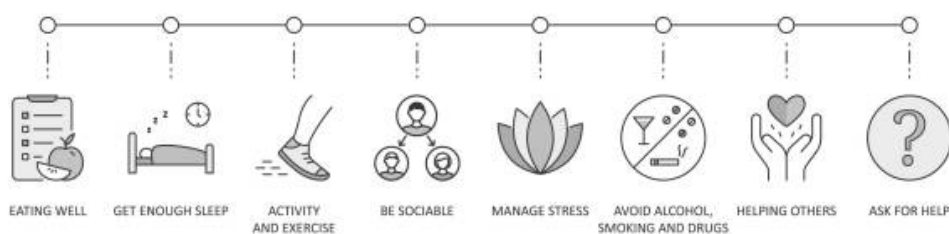
What's the Bottom Line on Alzheimer's Prevention?

Alzheimer's disease is complex, and the best strategy to prevent or delay it may turn out to be a combination of measures. In the meantime, you can do many things that may keep your brain healthy and your body fit.

You also can help scientists learn more by volunteering to participate in research. Clinical trials and studies are looking for all kinds of people—healthy volunteers, cognitively normal participants with a family history of Alzheimer's, people with MCI, and people diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

To find study sites near you, contact NIA's Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center at 1-800-438-4380 or email the ADEAR Center. Or, visit the Alzheimers.gov Clinical Trials Finder to search for trials and studies.

MENTAL HEALTH



Falls and Fractures in Older Adults: Causes and Prevention

A simple accident like tripping on a rug or slipping on a wet floor can change your life. If you fall, you could break a bone, which thousands of older adults experience each year. For older people, a broken bone can also be the start of more serious health problems and can lead to long-term disability.

If you or an older adult in your life has fallen, you're not alone. More than one in four people age 65 years or older fall each year. The risk of falling — and fall-related problems — rises with age. However, many falls can be prevented. For example, exercising, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your home safer are all steps you can take to prevent a fall.

Many older adults fear falling, even if they haven't fallen before. This fear may lead them to avoid activities such as walking, shopping, or taking part in social activities. But staying active is important to keeping your body healthy and actually helps to prevent falls. So don't let a fear of falling keep you from being active! Learn about what causes falls and how to lower your risk of falling so you can feel more comfortable with staying active.

What causes falls in older adults? Many things can cause a fall:

- Your eyesight, hearing, and reflexes might not be as sharp as they were when you were younger.
- Certain conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, or problems with your thyroid, nerves, feet, or blood vessels can affect your balance and lead to a fall.
- Conditions that cause rushed movement to the bathroom, such as incontinence, may also increase the chance of falling.
- Older adults with mild cognitive impairment or certain types of dementia are at higher risk of falling.
- Age-related loss of muscle mass (known as sarcopenia), problems with balance and gait, and blood pressure that drops too much when you get up from lying down or sitting (called postural hypotension) are all risk factors for falling.
- Foot problems that cause pain, and unsafe footwear such as backless shoes or high heels, can also increase your risk of falling.
- Some medications can increase a person's risk of falling because they cause side effects such as dizziness or confusion. The more medications you take, the more likely you are to fall.
- Safety hazards in the home or community environment can also cause falls.

Steps to take to prevent falls:

If you take care of your overall health, you may have a lower chance of falling. Most of the time, falls and accidents don't just happen for no reason. Here are a few tips to help lessen your risk of falls and broken bones, also known as fractures:

- Stay physically active. Plan an exercise program that is right for you. Regular exercise improves muscles and makes you stronger. Exercise also helps keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible. Mild weight-bearing activities, such as walking or climbing stairs, may slow bone loss from osteoporosis, a disease that makes bones weak and more likely to break

- Try balance and strength training exercises. Yoga, Pilates, and tai chi can all improve balance and muscle strength. You can also try lifting weights or using resistance bands to build strength.
 - *Please reach out if you would like to learn various types of exercises to improve balance and strength.*
- Fall-proof your home. Check out our tips below for changes you can make to your home that will help you avoid falls and ensure your safety.
- Have your eyes and hearing tested. Even small changes in sight and hearing are linked to an increased risk for falls. When you get new eyeglasses or contact lenses, take time to get used to them. Wear your glasses or contacts as your eye doctor advises. If you have a hearing aid, be sure it fits well and wear it.
- Find out about the side effects of any medicines you take. If a drug makes you sleepy or dizzy, tell your doctor or pharmacist.
- Get enough sleep. If you are tired, you are more likely to fall.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. Too much alcohol can lead to balance problems and falls, which can result in hip or arm fractures and other injuries.
- Stand up slowly. Getting up too quickly can cause your blood pressure to drop. That can make you feel wobbly. Get your blood pressure checked when lying and standing.
- Use an assistive device if you need help feeling steady when you walk. Using canes and walkers correctly can help prevent falls. If your doctor tells you to use a cane or walker, make sure it's the right size for you. Walker wheels should roll smoothly. If you borrow walking support equipment from a friend, ask your health care provider to make sure the equipment is the correct size and is safe to use. This is exceptionally important when you're walking in areas you don't know well or where the walkways are uneven. A physical or occupational therapist can help you decide which devices might be helpful and teach you how to use them safely.
- Take extra caution when walking on wet or icy surfaces. These can be very slippery! Use an ice melt product or sand to clear icy areas by your doors and walkways.
- Keep your hands free. Use a shoulder bag, fanny pack, or backpack to leave your hands free to hold on to railings.
- Choose the right footwear. To fully support your feet, wear non-skid, rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes. Don't walk on stairs or floors in socks or in shoes and slippers with smooth soles.
- Consider staying inside when the weather is bad. Some community services provide 24-hour delivery of prescriptions and groceries, and many take orders over the phone.
- Always tell your doctor if you have fallen since your last check-up, even if you did not feel pain when you fell. A fall can alert your doctor to a new medical problem or issues with your medications or eyesight that can be corrected. Your doctor may suggest physical therapy, a walking aid, or other steps to help prevent future falls.

What to do if you fall:

Whether you are at home or somewhere else, a sudden fall can be startling and upsetting. If you do fall, stay as calm as possible and take the following steps:

- Breathe. Take several deep breaths to try to relax. Remain still on the floor or ground for a few moments. This will help you get over the shock of falling.
- Decide if you are hurt. Getting up too quickly or in the wrong way could make an injury worse.
- Crawl to a sturdy chair. If you think you can get up safely without help, roll over onto your side. Rest again while your body and blood pressure adjust. Slowly get up on your hands and knees, and crawl to a sturdy chair.

- Slowly sit down in the chair. Put your hands on the chair seat and slide one foot forward so that it's flat on the floor. Keep the other leg bent so the knee is on the floor. From this kneeling position, slowly rise and turn your body to sit in the chair.
- Get help. If you are hurt or cannot get up on your own, ask someone for help or call 911. If you are alone, try to get into a comfortable position and wait for help to arrive. Prepare for a fall by keeping a well-charged cordless or mobile phone with you at all times and arrange for daily contact with a family member or friend. Emergency response systems are another option: These systems enable you to push a button on a special necklace or bracelet to call for help. Some smartwatches also have this feature.

Keep your bones strong to prevent fall-related fractures

Having healthy bones won't necessarily prevent a fall, but if you do fall, healthy bones may help prevent serious injury, such as breaking a hip or other bone. Bone breaks and fractures can lead to a hospital or nursing home stay, long-term disability, or even death. Getting enough calcium and vitamin D can help keep your bones strong. So can staying active. Try to get at least 150 minutes per week of physical activity.

Other ways to maintain bone health include quitting smoking and avoiding or limiting alcohol use. Tobacco and alcohol use may decrease your bone mass and increase your chance of fractures. Additionally, try to maintain a healthy weight. Being underweight increases the risk of bone loss and broken bones.

Osteoporosis is a disease that weakens bones, making them thin and brittle. For people with osteoporosis, even a minor fall may be dangerous. Talk to your doctor about osteoporosis.

Falls are a common reason for trips to the emergency room and for hospital stays among older adults. Many of these hospital visits are for fall-related fractures. You can help lower your risk of fractures by keeping your bones strong and following the tips above to avoid falls.

Preventing Falls at Home: Room by Room

Many falls happen at home, where we spend much of our time and tend to move around without thinking about our safety. There are many changes you can make to your home that will help prevent falls and better ensure your safety.

Floors, stairways, and hallways

- Ensure there are handrails on both sides of any stairs, and make sure they are secure. Hold the handrails when you go up or down stairs, even when you are carrying something. Don't let anything you're carrying block your view of the steps.
- Ensure there is good lighting with light switches at the top and bottom of stairs and on each end of a long hall. Consider using motion-activated lights that plug into electrical outlets and automatically turn on when you walk by them to help illuminate stairwells and pathways.
- Keep areas where you walk tidy. Don't leave books, papers, clothes, or shoes on the floor or stairs.
- Check that all carpets are fixed firmly to the floor, so they won't slip. Put no-slip strips, which you can buy at any hardware store, on tile and wooden floors.
- Avoid using throw rugs or small area rugs.
- Don't walk on slippery, newly washed floors.

Bathrooms

- Mount grab bars near toilets and on both the inside and outside of your tub and shower.
- Place non-skid mats, strips, or carpet on all surfaces that may get wet.
- Remember to leave a light on in the bathroom at night or use a night light that turns on automatically in the dark.

Bedrooms

- Put night lights and light switches close to your bed.
- Keep a flashlight by your bed in case the power goes out and you need to get up.
- Place a landline or well-charged phone near your bed.

Kitchen

- Keep frequently used pots, pans, and kitchen utensils in a place where they are easy to reach.
- Clean up spills immediately.
- Prepare food while seated to prevent fatigue or loss of balance.

Outdoor spaces

- If you have steps leading to your front door, make sure they are not broken or uneven.
- Add non-slip material to outdoor stairways.
- Keep the lawn, deck, or porch areas clear of debris, such as fallen branches.
- Consider installing a grab bar near the front door to provide balance while you are locking or unlocking the door.
- Turn on your porch light at night and if you leave during the day but plan on returning home after dark.
- In the winter, treat outdoor walkways with an ice melt product or sand to make them less slippery.

Other living areas

- Keep electrical cords near walls and away from walking paths.
- Arrange your furniture (especially low coffee tables) and other objects so they are not in your way when you walk.
- Make sure your sofas and chairs are the right height for you to get in and out of easily.
- Keep items you use often at waist level or within easy reach.
- Don't stand on a chair or table to reach something that's too high – use a "reach stick" instead or ask for help. Reach sticks are special grabbing tools that you can buy at many hardware or medical-supply stores. If you use a step stool, make sure it's steady and has a handrail on top. Have someone stand next to you.
- Don't let your cat or dog trip you. Know where your pet is whenever you're standing or walking.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers in large print near each landline phone and save them under "favorites" on your mobile phone.

If you have fallen, your doctor might suggest that an occupational therapist, physical therapist, or nurse visit your home. These health care providers can assess your home's safety and advise you about making changes to lower your risk of falls.

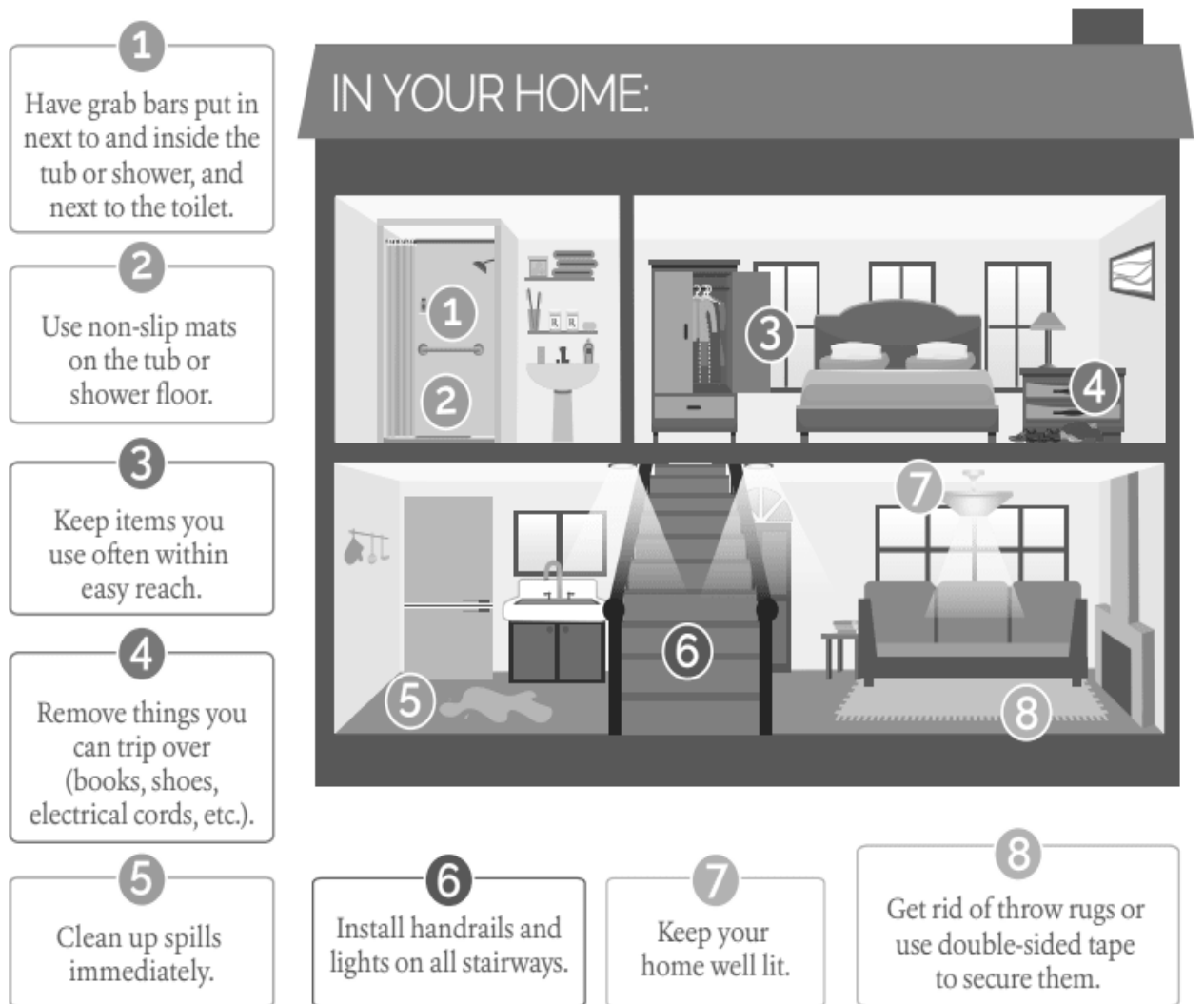
Tools to get help

Help spread the word about how to help prevent falls.

If you're concerned about falling, set up systems to ensure you can get help if you fall. One option is installing an emergency response system. If you fall or need emergency help, you push a button on a special necklace or bracelet to alert 911. There is a fee for this service, and it's usually not covered by insurance.

Another option is to carry a well-charged cordless or mobile phone with you as you move throughout the house. Have close friends and family on speed dial. Consider setting up a smart home device (a small speaker that listens and responds to commands when you call its name) that can quickly connect you to contacts or emergency response teams. Some smartwatches can be set up to make emergency calls at the push of a button and others can even detect sudden fall-like movements and automatically call for help.

→ Please reach out if you would like help setting up these tools or assessing areas of risk throughout your home.



10 Health Tips for Seniors

Seniors experience many changes as they age, and they may need to alter their lifestyles to remain healthy: dietary changes, dental check-ups, medications, physicals — the list goes on. Not to mention, a caregiver's health may suffer in the midst of putting a senior's health first. It's beneficial to be aware of a senior's health requirements, especially those with chronic illnesses or other serious health issues.

People who had good, healthy habits when they were younger tend to become healthy seniors, but it's never too late to start leading a healthy lifestyle. Good health habits make a difference even to seniors who are prone to illness or have not made their health a priority in the past.

There are many health secrets for seniors to apply to their lives. Consider incorporating these 10 helpful care tips to improve overall health and wellness.

1. Eat healthy

Maintaining a healthy diet as you age is essential for living well. The digestive system slows down with age, so it becomes necessary to incorporate important vitamins and high-fiber foods — such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains — into your diet. Not only does adding fiber help seniors with maintaining a healthy diet, but it also can lower the risk of major health problems like stroke and heart disease.

Another health secret for seniors is to stay hydrated. Because they tend to generally feel less thirsty as they age, seniors are prone to dehydration. Make sure you drink plenty of water to stay energized and to avoid constipation and urinary tract infections.

Lack of appetite is a common cause of poor senior nutrition. It's important to first address the causes of appetite decline in older people, according to research from the National Institute of Health Research. There can be many causes, but researchers concluded that simply improving the "mealtime ambiance" and "enhancing the flavor of food" can work wonders for a senior's appetite.

Along with trying these tips to stimulate appetite in the elderly, you can really help support healthy eating habits by:

- Having shared meal times with friends and family
- Having visually appealing food
- Having a regular schedule for meals, snacks, and drinks

2. Focus on prevention

Many preventive care visits — including health screenings for cholesterol levels, colon cancer, heart problems, and more — can prevent seniors from missing a serious diagnosis. Current guidelines suggest that women over the age of 45 should schedule mammography screening for breast cancer annually, and men over age 50 should consider regularly testing for prostate cancer, according to the American Cancer Society.

3. Stay informed on medication management

If you take any medication, it's important to review each prescription with their physician on a regular basis. Consider possible drug interactions and take note of any new symptoms or side effects – such as allergic reactions, drowsiness, or loss of appetite – after changing or starting medications.

4. Get some sleep

Frequent waking and insomnia are common among seniors. But, it's important to maintain a regular sleep schedule to maintain health. "Sleep hygiene" refers to a set of healthy sleep habits that can improve one's ability to fall asleep and stay asleep, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

Simply waking up and going to bed at the same time can help seniors' internal clock sync to their daily schedule. Avoid taking naps during the day, and stay away from alcohol or caffeine in the evening. It may also help to turn the lights down in the evening to spur drowsiness. And, always make sure your bedroom is comfortable, cool, and quiet.

5. Remember cognitive health

Staying mentally active and learning new skills may even lead to improved thinking ability, according to the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health. Seniors should keep their minds sharp through various brain games and other engaging activities: Completing crossword puzzles, reading, writing, and trying new hobbies can stimulate your mind and help you engage with your surrounding environment to ward off cognitive decline.

6. Screen for vision changes

Most people notice a change in their vision by age 50. Seniors who wear glasses should have their prescription checked every year for changes, and you should have their eyes screened for issues such as glaucoma, a leading cause of blindness worldwide. Having the right pair of glasses can also reduce your chance of falling.

7. Socialize

According to the Journal of Health and Social Behavior, isolation and lack of socialization among seniors leads to low self-esteem, difficulty coping, and higher levels of stress hormones that could cause additional issues. Inflammation is common to stress-related diseases and can be triggered by the release of stress hormones. Research in the journal Frontiers in Human Neuroscience concludes that persistent inflammation over time can lead to serious health outcomes, including:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Metabolic disorders
- Neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's

There are many opportunities for seniors to stay connected and social, from attending the local senior center to volunteering in our community. Time spent with family and grandchildren can always help seniors combat loneliness,

especially if they have mobility issues that keep them from getting around. Such visits leave you feeling more positive, and that's the best medicine of all.

8. Stay physically active

Exercise is important in all stages of life, but especially for seniors. Staying physically active may help you maintain a healthy weight and avoid chronic health problems, according to the National Institute of Health. Regular exercise can also make it easier for seniors to complete activities of daily living, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Along with alleviating depression, physical activity can improve your energy levels, memory, and sleep. But what are the best exercises for seniors? Healthy seniors should focus on incorporating a combination of aerobic, balance, strength training, and other low-impact exercises. With health under control, you can do more and remain active, which boosts overall well-being!

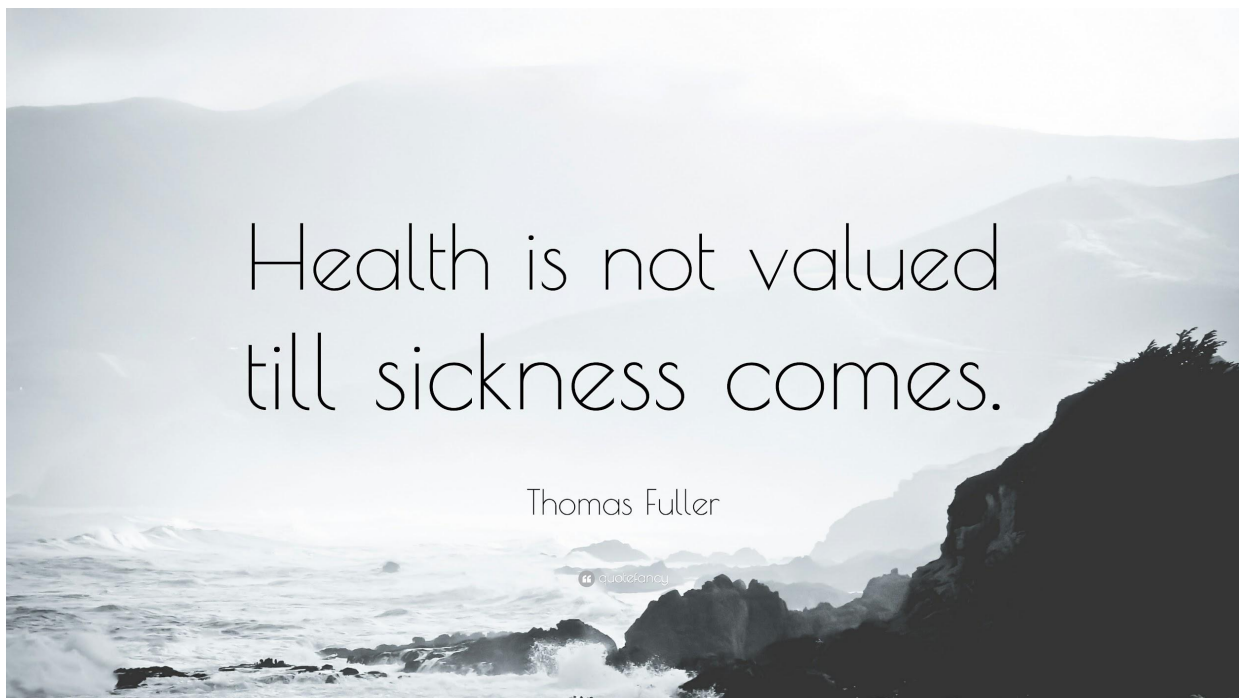
→ *If you need assistance for what is best for you, please reach out to us to find what type of exercise program best suits your needs.*

9. Take advantage of free physicals

Seniors newly enrolled in Medicare can access a free Initial Preventive Physical Examination. After having Medicare Part B for a year, seniors also receive a free annual "Wellness" visit every 12 months.

10. Visit the dentist every 6 months

The risk for cavities goes up with age. Furthermore, oral health is directly related to overall health: Many mouth infections can be linked to serious health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Lastly, in addition to brushing and flossing daily, you should regularly see your local dentist to maintain healthy teeth and gums.



Helpful Resources:

Poison Control at (800) 222-1222

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or 800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)

For More Information About Alzheimer's Prevention

NIA Alzheimer's and related Dementias Education and Referral (ADEAR) Center

800-438-4380

adear@nia.nih.gov

www.nia.nih.gov/alzheimers

The NIA ADEAR Center offers information and free print publications about Alzheimer's and related dementias for families, caregivers, and health professionals. ADEAR Center staff answer telephone, email, and written requests and make referrals to local and national resources.

Explore the Alzheimers.gov portal for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

info@alz.org

www.alz.org

Appendix:

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