



# SENIOR *Living*

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A special publication of *The Eagle-Tribune*, *The Salem News*,  
*The Daily News of Newburyport* and the *Gloucester Daily Times*

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# What to know about seniors and vaccines

Parents know that vaccination is a big part of caring for young children. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents to vaccinate children against a host of diseases and conditions in the first 12 to 18 months of a child's life. The AAP notes that early immunization helps children build immunity at the best time — before they're exposed to germs that can make them very sick.

The effectiveness of vaccines in relation to protecting young children is well documented, but what about seniors and vaccines? Are immunizations still a vital part of a wellness routine when adults reach their golden years? The National Institute on Aging advises older adults to speak with their doctors or pharmacists about the vaccines they need, which may help to prevent or reduce the



severity of various diseases.

## COVID-19

The NIA notes that age is a risk factor for serious illness from COVID-19. Due to the relative infancy of COVID-19, researchers are still learning about the effectiveness of vaccines against new variants of

the virus. But older adults are more likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19 than younger people, so it's imperative seniors discuss immunization against the virus with their physicians.

## Influenza

The World Health Organization notes that the flu

kills as many as 650,000 people across the globe each year. A 2009 study published in the journal *Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses* indicated that most deaths associated with influenza in industrialized countries occur among seniors age 65 and older. The flu is easily transmitted from one person to another and the NIA advises everyone age six months and older to get an annual flu vaccine. While the protection from a flu vaccine can lessen over time, a flu shot still reduces the likelihood of serious illness and/or hospitalization. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that seniors age 65 and older receive a higher-dose flu vaccine or an adjuvanted flu vaccine, the latter of which helps to create a stronger immune response than a normal flu

shot. Seniors are urged to speak with their physicians about which flu shot is right for them.

## Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

The NIA indicates that RSV is a common virus that often produces mild, cold-like symptoms. But older adults should know that they are at higher risk of developing severe symptoms if they are infected with RSV. The NIA notes RSV can be particularly dangerous for older adults with chronic diseases or weakened immune systems. Hospitalization or even death can occur after severe RSV symptoms develop. RSV vaccines can prevent serious health problems, and the CDC urges seniors to speak with their physicians regarding

immunization. Doing so prior to peak RSV infection season, which is fall and winter, is ideal.

## Pneumococcal disease

The CDC advises that all adults age 50 and older get pneumococcal vaccination. Pneumococcal disease is a serious infection that the NIA notes often causes pneumonia in the lungs. The risk of getting very sick and even dying from pneumococcal disease is higher among older adults than younger people. There are different forms of the pneumococcal vaccine, and seniors can speak to their physicians about which one is best for them.

Immunization schedules begin shortly after birth, and seniors still have much to gain from being vaccinated.



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# Seniors can look to various foods to eat a more nutritious diet

The right foods and beverages fuel the body and provide the nutrients necessary to maintain health. But it's worth noting that the foods a person enjoys during much of their life may not be ideal for them as they age.

Dietary needs change as a person gets older. Medline-Plus says the best foods for older adults prioritize nutrient-dense, easy-to-chew foods that are gentle on digestion. These foods also should incorporate a balance of lean proteins to help maintain muscle mass, fiber that promotes regular digestion, and healthy fats to support the brain and heart.

Here are some foods seniors can incorporate into their daily diets that may

provide that extra spring in their step, courtesy of the National Council on Aging and Healthline.

- **Dark, leafy greens:** Foods like kale and spinach are rich in carotenoids, which may protect the eyes against oxidative damage. Spinach is particularly high in vitamins A and C, which help moderate blood pressure to protect the heart. Vitamin K is another important nutrient in leafy greens that plays a role in osteoporosis prevention.

- **Lean protein:** Seniors need adequate protein to slow down or prevent the natural loss of muscle that occurs as one ages. A person can use the U.S. Department of Agriculture calculator to

figure out how much protein to eat based on their age and other factors. Good sources of protein include lean meat and poultry, seafood, eggs, lentils, beans, nuts, and seeds.

- **Cruciferous vegetables:** These vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and turnips are great sources of fiber, vitamins, and cancer-preventing phytochemicals.

- **Whole grains:** Whole grains provide lasting energy the body needs throughout the day. Quinoa, brown rice and oatmeal are some examples of whole grains.

- **Healthy fats:** Some seniors may have grown up thinking that fats are something

to avoid. However, healthy unsaturated fats are important for heart and brain health. They also are excellent for adding calorie density for those with smaller appetites. Olive oil, nuts and peanut butter are good choices for healthy fats.

- **Seeds:** A 2022 study found that the nutrients in chia seeds can help prevent cancer, GI tract-related diseases, and cardiovascular disease. Chia seeds also may help people manage their type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Seeds, including flax and hemp, also are high in inflammation-fighting omega-3 fatty acids.

- **Fruits:** Seniors should enjoy around 1.5 to 2 cups of



fruits each day. Fruits are an important source of potassium, fiber, vitamin C, folate, and vitamin A. Avocado is loaded with nourishing fats, antioxidants and other

nutrients that support health.

Dietary choices are important as people get older, and seniors should aspire to maximize the nutrients they consume.

# How seniors can best approach snacking

Snacking is a genuine phenomenon. In fact, it seems nearly every adult reaches for one or more snacks at one point in a typical day.

According to a 2023 review published in the journal *Nutrients*, more than 90 percent of adults in the United States report eating one or more snacks on any given day. A separate study published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* noted that snacking has been increasing in frequency and volume over the last several decades.

A trip to any grocery store would make consumers' love for snacking readily apparent, as snack foods take up a significant amount of real estate in the average supermarket. While children and young adults may easily burn off extra calories from snacking, metabolism naturally slows down as a person ages. That decline is gradual, but researchers at Duke University note that a



person in their 90s needs 36 percent fewer calories than someone in midlife. Seniors who have grown accustomed to snacking over the last several decades may wonder how to approach between-meal eating now

that their metabolisms are slowing down. These tips can help seniors navigate those waters in a healthy way.

- **Don't look at snacks as the villain.** Despite the popularity of snacking, it's not

uncommon for people to feel as though reaching for a snack is a guilty pleasure. But that's not necessarily the case. The senior health and wellness resource SilverSneakers notes that healthy snacking can be a great way

for seniors to ensure they get the recommended daily amounts of protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Many seniors prefer smaller portions during mealtime, so snacking can be a great means to meeting these nutritional requirements.

- **Avoid unhealthy snacks.** Choice of snacks is a notable variable that can make the difference between beneficial snacking and harmful snacking. A recent study published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* found that people who consumed unhealthy snacks like potato chips and cookies had a higher body mass index; more visceral fat, which WebMD notes is the body fat stored deep within the abdominal cavity that wraps around vital organs like the liver and the intestines; and higher levels of triglycerides than people who consumed healthy snacks. Each of those byproducts increase the risk for cardiovascular disease.

- **Choose healthy snacks.** Even seniors who eat nutritious, healthy meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner should reach for equally healthy snacks. That's because unhealthy snacks can negate the effects of healthy meals. SilverSneakers urges seniors to look for snacks with little or no added sugar that contain 250 or fewer calories. In addition, choose items made with whole grains instead of refined grains. High-protein, low-sodium items also make for a healthy snack. Seniors may have dietary restrictions due to their own unique health histories, so they are encouraged to speak with their physicians about which snacks are right for them.

Snacking may have a bad reputation, but choosing healthy snacks can be a great way for seniors to meet nutritional requirements each day.



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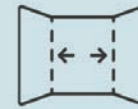
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# How to maintain balance

Fostering good balance is crucial for maintaining independence, staying active and preventing falls. According to West Hartford Health & Rehabilitation, falls are a leading cause of injury among older adults. By building better balance, seniors can ensure that a minor trip or stumble will not turn into a serious fall.

Balance training involves building strength in the lower back, core and legs. Should a fall occur, having stronger muscles and more nimble reflexes can help protect bones and joints. The following exercises courtesy of the Mayo Clinic are some activities that can improve balance and reduce

falls.

• **Single-leg stance:** While standing near a counter, lift one foot two to three inches off the ground and hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Then switch legs and repeat. This can be done while brushing teeth to build it into a daily routine.

• **Sobriety test:** Much like a police officer will conduct a sobriety test on a suspected offender, place your right heel directly in front of your left toe so they touch. Walk forward for 10 to 20 steps, focusing on a fixed point ahead.

• **Shift weight:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart and slowly shift all weight to one foot, lifting the heel

of the opposite foot. Hold this for 10 seconds and then switch sides.

• **Tree pose:** Many yoga poses strengthen balance. Poses like the “tree pose” can train the center of gravity and improve flexibility.

• **Water exercises and swimming:** Swimming and pool exercises are great ways to build core and leg strength without straining the joints.

• **Pilates and tai chi:** These structured activities are good for building strength and improving flexibility, which can facilitate balance.

Older adults can engage in balance-building activities each day to promote greater health and reduce the risk of injury.



# Hazards that compromise senior safety at home

Homes are supposed to be sanctuaries where people can be comfortable and live independently. However, houses that are completely suitable for younger populations often harbor hidden threats that can compromise senior safety. At Heart Home Care notes aging in place remains a top priority for more than 90 percent of older Americans, but only 10 percent of modern homes feature the necessary modifications to safely support aging residents.

Falls pose a significant threat to seniors. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates falls are the leading cause of both fatal and non-fatal injuries among adults age 65 and older. More than 14 million seniors experience a fall each year. The Hospital for Special Surgery notes that around 60 percent of these incidents happen right in the home. Knowledge of the potential hazards lurking at home may help seniors identify the areas where they need to be especially cautious.



## Bathroom surfaces

Bathrooms are notorious for posing an injury risk because of slippery surfaces. Wet tile and pooled water can be a recipe for

hazardous conditions. These conditions are made even worse in spaces that are not equipped with non-skid mats or anchored grab bars.

## Tripping hazards

Many things can cause seniors to trip and fall. Loose area rugs, exposed electrical cords, cluttered hallways, and too much

furniture can make it difficult to safely navigate a space.

## Lighting

Inadequate lighting can be a hazard to seniors, many

of whom experience diminished vision. Dimly lit staircases, bedrooms and dark hallways can impair spatial awareness. Without enough light, navigating the changes in flooring or obstacles can become a challenge.

## Cooking hazards

The National Council on Aging says adults over 65 are 3.5 times more likely to die in residential fires than the general population. Cooking accidents and loose clothing or items catching fire near stovetops are a fire hazard. Seniors also may feel the cold more, and rely on space heaters or other less safe heating units to stay warm, which in turn increases the risk of a fire at home.

Many experts recommend a safety overhaul to secure a home for aging residents. Clearing all floor obstructions, securing loose carpets, installing bright lights, and anchoring heavy furniture are some steps that can be taken to keep a home a haven for older adults rather than a hazard.



# 5 reasons to draw up a will

It is easy to put off estate planning for another day. But having a legally binding will drawn up is one of the most important financial and personal decisions a person can make. A will is not merely a document for the wealthy who have significant portfolios and real estate holdings. A will is a vital tool that honors a person's wishes, protects their assets and spares their loved ones unnecessary hardships during a time of profound grief.

Here are the five reasons why drawing up a will is important.

## 1. Control asset distribution

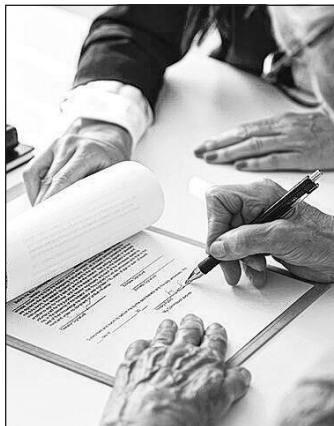
Without a will, a person will die intestate. According to MetLife, state intestacy laws dictate who inherits a person's property, regardless of the decedent's actual relationships or verbal promises. A will gives an individual sole authority to decide exactly who receives their real estate, savings, family heirlooms, and investments, preventing potential disputes among surviving relatives.

## 2. Appoint a guardian for minor children

For parents, this is often the most critical function of a will. If both parents pass away unexpectedly without naming a legal guardian for their minor children, a court will decide who raises them, indicates Snyder Law. A will allows people to choose a trusted individual who shares their values, ensuring children are cared for by someone who parents and children know and trust.

## 3. Streamline the probate process

All estates must go through probate in the United States. Investopedia says probate is the court-supervised process



of distributing assets. Dying without a will complicates and prolongs this process, requiring the court to appoint an administrator and trace legal heirs. A valid will accelerates probate, minimizes legal fees, and allows beneficiaries to access their inheritance much faster.

## 4. Designate an executor

An executor manages the decedent's estate — paying off final debts, closing accounts, and distributing assets according to instructions, indicates TIAA. By drawing up a will, one can select a reliable, highly capable individual to handle these complex duties, rather than leaving them to the court.

## 5. Minimize estate taxes

A will can be structured to reduce the tax burden on heirs, says Empower. Through strategic asset distribution, establishing trusts or making charitable bequests, a person can shield a larger portion of their estate from inheritance or estate taxes.

Taking the time to draw up a will is a final act of care and responsibility that protects one's legacy and provides peace of mind for family.



# Necessary components of a useful estate plan

Estate planning can help solidify finances and secure a person's legacy upon their death. Despite that, this crucial and useful step is often delayed and sometimes even avoided entirely. Modern estate planning is a vital component that can preserve assets and shield family members from emotional and financial turmoil during a stressful time, according to Charles Schwab.

An effective estate plan goes far beyond a single legal document. Attorneys typically advise five essential documents to cover both asset management and health care transitions. Here's a deep look at the essential components of estate planning.

• **A last will and testament:** A will outlines how tangible and intangible assets should be distributed. A will also is where parents appoint legal guardians for minor children.

• **A living trust:** This document helps manage property during an individual's lifetime and facilitates a seamless transfer of assets to

beneficiaries, allowing families to avoid the lengthy, public, and costly probate court process, according to Drexel.

• **Durable power of attorney:**

MetLife says this grants a trusted individual the authority to oversee financial matters, pay bills and manage investments if the owner becomes incapacitated.

• **Health care power of attorney:**

According to New York Life Insurance, a health care power of attorney appoints a surrogate decision-maker to handle medical choices when an individual is unable to speak for themselves.

• **A living will:** Also called an advance directive, this explicitly states an individual's preferences regarding end-of-life medical treatments, such as mechanical ventilation or artificial nutrition, says the National Institute on Aging.

Despite the critical protection these documents offer, a gap remains between the necessity of estate planning and actual follow

through by the public. According to data from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority National Financial Capability Study, only 54 percent of surveyed investors have a will in place. Among the greater adult population, that percentage drops significantly, often driven by the misconception that a person is not old enough or wealthy enough to warrant an estate plan. Without these legal designations, the responsibility to dictate asset distribution will fall to the court, where the deceased's actual preferences may not be taken into consideration.

Ultimately, estate planning ensures that a person's final chapters are defined by their own choices, shielding loved ones from administrative chaos and securing a family's financial future. It's important that all adults speak with a qualified attorney about an estate plan at their earliest convenience.





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# Types of arthritis and what's behind each

Arthritis affects people all over the world. Approximately 53.2 million adults in the United States have doctor-diagnosed arthritis, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But many more suffer in undiagnosed silence. Globally, nearly 300 million people may live with arthritis.

Arthritis can range from mild to debilitating and stem from a variety of causes. Understanding what's behind arthritis can help people get the treatment they need. Here are the major types of arthritis and their causes.

• **Osteoarthritis:** Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, says the Cleveland Clinic. It forms as the result of wear-and-tear on cartilage, which breaks down over time. Aging, repetitive movements or previous joint injuries can cause osteoarthritis.

• **Gout:** Gout is a metabolic condition caused by the buildup of uric acid crystals in the joints. The Mayo Clinic says the buildup occurs when the kidneys cannot filter the uric acid effectively or when the body produces too much. Pain, swelling and tenderness

can occur in the joints, often in the big toe.

• **Autoimmune:** Some forms of arthritis are autoimmune in nature, meaning that the immune system mistakenly attacks the joints. This occurs with rheumatoid arthritis and psoriatic arthritis, according to Penn Medicine.

• **Infection/injury:** Sometimes viral or bacterial infections or acute joint injuries can trigger arthritis, says the Cleveland Clinic.

Certain risk factors elevate the chances of developing arthritis. Risk elevates as joints age and wear down, so older adults are more likely to experience arthritis. Carrying extra weight puts pressure on joints like the knees, so those who are overweight are more likely to get arthritis. Genetics can make a person more vulnerable to diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, and women are more likely to develop it.

There are various treatments for arthritis, and anyone in pain can work with a doctor to make lifestyle changes that can alleviate symptoms and help them live fuller lives.



## Safety and smarts necessary when exercising with arthritis

Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. While the recommendations for exercise may vary for each individual, general guidelines from public health agencies typically suggest most people should get around 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per day.

People with arthritis may be hesitant to head to the gym or engage in home workouts because the instinct to rest is strong when joints feel stiff or painful. However, health care advocates note that movement is one of the most effective treatments for arthritis.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says arthritis remains a leading cause of disability in

2026. Roughly one in four adults in the United States have been diagnosed with some form of arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says exercise is not just a lifestyle choice, but an essential component of joint health. People who engage in physical activity report a 40 percent reduction in pain on average. Here is a prescription for safely navigating physical activity while managing arthritis.

• **Emphasize exercise that improves flexibility.** The Better Health Channel says people with arthritis should focus on exercises that reduce stiffness and keep joints moving through their full range-of-motion. Examples include gentle neck rotations, shoulder rolls and finger stretches daily, especially in the morning

during flare-ups.

• **Incorporate low-impact aerobic movements.** Cardiovascular exercises improve heart health and help with weight management, which is essential for people with arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says losing just one pound of body weight can remove four pounds of pressure from the knees. Walking, cycling and water exercises are low-impact ways to get the cardio a body needs, says the Mayo Clinic.

• **Make resistance training part of your routine.** Building strong muscles can help protect the joints by acting as shock absorbers. People can use bodyweight exercises like chair squats, resistance bands or light dumbbells to build muscle. The Arthritis Foundation

recommends focusing on the muscles surrounding joints experiencing the most pain, such as quadriceps for knee arthritis or abdominals to protect the hips and spine.

• **Assess pain.** Experts suggest using something called the “two-hour rule” to determine if exercise added to or diminished arthritis pain. If joint pain is higher two hours after exercising, then it's important to reduce the duration or intensity of exercise the next time.

During a flare-up, do not stop moving entirely, but shift to gentle range-of-motion stretching only, suggests the Mayo Clinic. Exercise can remain a key component of daily life, even for those with arthritis.







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When planning for the future, many people overlook one of the most important steps they can take to protect their loved ones: estate planning and asset protection. At the Law Office of Julie Low, based in Beverly, we are dedicated to helping individuals and families navigate this process with care, compassion, and expertise.

### What Is Estate Planning?

Estate planning is more than just drafting a will. It's about creating a comprehensive plan to ensure your assets are distributed according to your wishes, your loved ones are cared for, and your legacy is preserved. Whether your goal is to minimize estate taxes, protect assets from long-term care costs, or provide for a family member with special needs, estate planning is a critical step toward peace of mind.

At the Law Office of Julie Low, we guide clients through the planning process with a focus on education and empowerment. Our team works closely with clients to design customized, will-based and trust-based plans tailored to their unique needs.

We also ensure each estate plan is fully funded, meaning every asset is titled correctly to achieve the desired outcome. This critical step, often overlooked by other firms, ensures your estate plan works as intended when it matters most.

### Why Is Estate Planning Important?

Life is unpredictable, and planning for the unexpected is an act of love for those you care about. Estate planning ensures that

your wishes are honored in the event of incapacity or death. It can also help avoid costly and time-consuming probate processes, reduce family disputes, and provide financial security for your descendants.

For families with loved ones who have special needs, estate planning can be a lifeline. Our firm specializes in creating plans that protect and provide for individuals with disabilities while preserving their eligibility for essential government benefits.

### Expertise in Medicaid Planning

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Additionally, we have over 15 years of experience drafting irrevocable asset protection trusts for nursing home protection. We have safeguarded over \$50 million in assets, providing clients with unparalleled security and peace of mind.

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In addition to estate planning, we offer services in probate and estate administration. Losing a loved one is never easy and settling an estate or probating a will can be overwhelming. Our

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We also assist families with guardianships and conservatorships, helping them navigate the legal process to protect loved ones who are unable to manage their own affairs.

### A Vision for Client-Focused Legal Services

Attorney Julie Low founded her firm with a vision of practicing law in a way that prioritizes clients and quality. Our team is not only knowledgeable but also compassionate, ensuring every client feels supported and understood throughout the process.

The Law Office of Julie Low is a proud member of Wealth-Counsel, the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA), and the Academy of Special Needs Planners. Our commitment to excellence has earned us recognition as a Top Medicaid Planning Firm in 2025.

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# Medicare's GUIDE program offers new support for dementia caregivers

## Cheryl Field

Caring for a loved one with dementia often begins quietly at home—with sleepless nights, medication confusion, repeated questions, missed appointments and growing concerns about safety. For many families, the diagnosis comes with little guidance about what to do next.

A Medicare program known as GUIDE, short for Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience, aims to help fill that gap. Launched in July 2024 through the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Innovation Center, the eight-year demonstration program is designed to improve care for people living with dementia while providing support for family caregivers.

Through participating dementia care programs, eligible families may receive coordinated services that include a comprehensive assessment, an individualized care plan, a dementia care navigator, medication review, caregiver education, care coordination, ongoing follow-up and 24-hour access to a support line or care team member. Some participants may also qualify for respite services, giving caregivers time to attend appointments, run errands or simply take a break.

The program recognizes that dementia affects the entire household. Family caregivers often take on multiple roles, including medication manager, transportation provider, advocate and safety monitor. Many are older adults managing their own health concerns while caring for a spouse or family member.

GUIDE is not available through every medical practice. Instead, services are provided through participating organizations, and availability varies by community.

In general, eligible participants must have a documented dementia diagnosis, be enrolled in Original Medicare Parts A and B with Medicare as their primary insurance, and live in the community rather than in a nursing home or hospice. Individuals enrolled in most Medicare Advantage plans generally are not eligible for the GUIDE model.

Families interested in the program should speak with their primary care provider, neurologist, geriatrician, memory clinic, social worker or care manager. Asking whether a Medicare GUIDE program serves the area is a good first step. Bringing



**Cheryl Field's book, *Prepared! A Healthcare Guide for Aging Adults*, offers information and resources for older adults and family caregivers, including guidance on dementia care and Medicare's GUIDE program.**

a current medication list, Medicare card and notes about concerns such as falls, wandering, hospitalizations or caregiver stress can help guide the conversation.

Experts encourage families not to wait until a crisis occurs before seeking assistance. Early planning and access to support services can help people with dementia remain safely at home while easing the burden on caregivers.

Additional information about dementia caregiving, the Medicare GUIDE program, respite services and caregiver resources is available online at [www.cherylfield.com](http://www.cherylfield.com), under the Resources section.

(Editor's note: Cheryl Field is a senior care consultant and nurse with 35+ years of experience. She is a multi-time international best-selling author, including *Prepared! A Healthcare Guide for Aging Adults*. More free resources are available at [www.cherylfield.com](http://www.cherylfield.com).)





# Making sense of the information on food labels

Nutritious food is necessary to sustain life, and that's one reason why food packages contain lists of ingredients. But all ingredients are not created equal. A growing number of consumers desire greater transparency about the foods they are eating, including sourcing, production, preparation details, and nutritional content. While that can be challenging to ascertain when dining out, people have more control over what they eat at home.

According to the plant-based food advocacy company ProVeg International, 62 percent of people are paying more attention to ingredient lists now than they did five years ago. In addition, nearly two-thirds of adults say the ingredients in a food or beverage have at least a moderate influence on whether they buy it.

One of the ways to be mindful of food ingredients is to understand food labeling. Pertinent information is included on the label, and it pays to study these labels when choosing foods. Here's how to navigate the Nutrition Facts Label, according to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration.

• **Servings per container:** The first thing people will come across is the servings per container. This tells a person how many servings are in the package.

• **Serving size:** The serving size indicates how much of the food equates to one

serving. It may be measured in cups, grams, ounces, or even pieces.

• **Calories:** The calories pertain to the number of calories in one serving. As a general guide for nutrition advice, 2,000 calories a day is used. A person's calorie needs may be higher or lower depending on variables like age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level.

• **% daily value:** These numbers will appear next to the various nutrients in the product and show the percentage of each nutrient's recommended daily value is in the food. Daily values are listed in grams, milligrams or micrograms. By understanding daily values, one knows how many nutrients to consume each day. As a general rule, 5% DV or less of a nutrient per serving is considered low, while 20% DV or more of a nutrient per serving is considered high.

Many older adults do not get the recommended amount of nutrients each day and can use food labels to create a more nutrient-rich diet. It's essential for seniors to look for foods that contain adequate dietary fiber, calcium, vitamin D, and potassium. Individuals also should consume less saturated fat, sodium and added sugars.

Seniors can use nutrition labels as a source of information that helps them make healthy food choices.

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# Can cataracts be prevented?

Vision should be cherished at every stage in life. However, as one ages and vision changes become more profound, it is even more important to stay abreast of what can be done to care for the eyes in the hopes of preventing certain conditions, including cataracts.

Cataracts are the clouding of the eye's natural lenses. The World Health Organization estimates that cataracts affect more than 94 million people globally. Cataracts also account for nearly 45 percent of all blindness cases.

Even though cataracts are considered an unavoidable part of the aging process, some people wonder if they can be prevented. Reedsburg Area Medical Center says that, while one cannot entirely stop the biological aging of the lens, delayed onset and reduced severity of cataracts is possible through targeted lifestyle

choices.

According to EyeHealth Northwest, by age 80, more than 90 percent of adults will either have a cataract or have already undergone surgery for them. Technically cataracts cannot be prevented, but these steps can help push cataract development further into later life.

• **Wear sunglasses with UV protection.** The consensus among experts is that prolonged exposure to ultraviolet B rays accelerates the breakdown of lens proteins. Consistent use of sunglasses that offer 100 percent UV protection can greatly slow this protein degradation. Wraparound frames will block light from the periphery as well as the front.

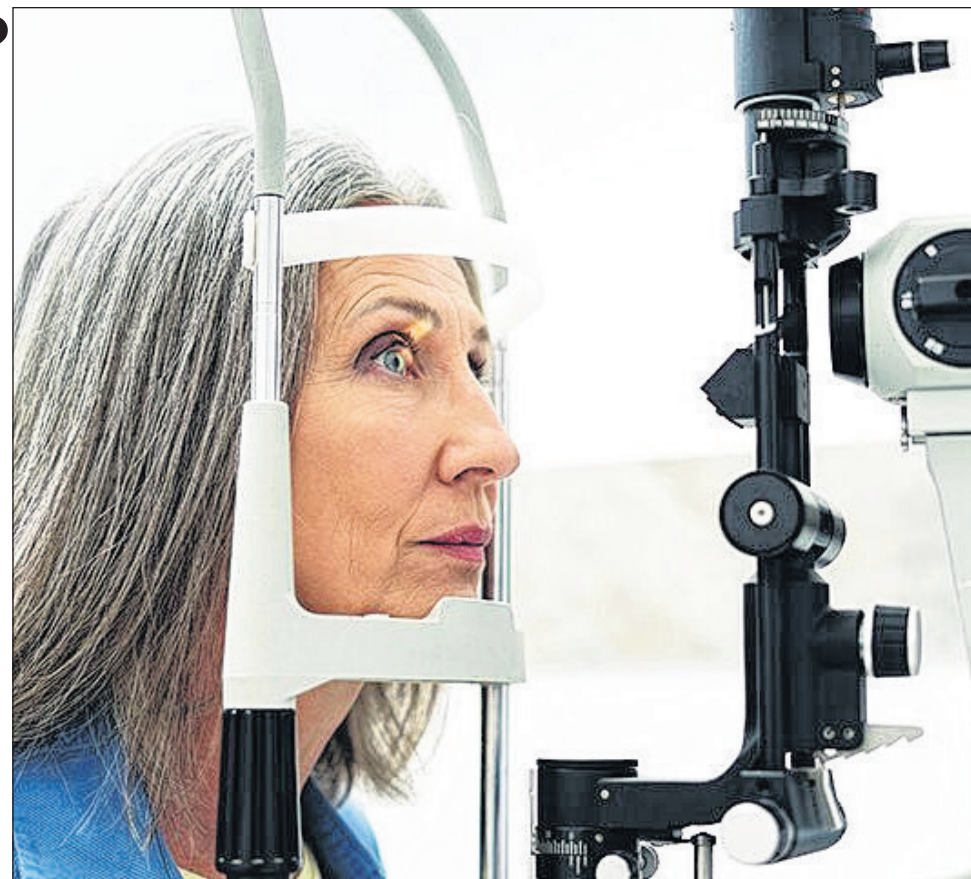
• **Lower oxidative stress.** Preventing oxidative stress, a primary driver of lens opacification, can be achieved through diets rich in antioxidants, says Premier Eye Care of Eastern Idaho.

Lutein, zeaxanthin and vitamin C act as shields for the eye. Eye Physicians of Long Beach says the risk of age-related cataracts reduces by around 26 percent for every additional 10 mg of carotenoids added to a person's diet.

• **Manage diabetes.** The National Institutes of Health says individuals with diabetes face a 63 percent higher likelihood of requiring cataract surgery compared to those without the condition. Managing high blood sugar will prevent sorbitol from depositing in the lenses and causing cloudiness earlier in life.

• **Quit smoking:** Smoking is a key factor in cataract development, says Optometrists.org. Smokers have a 1.66 times greater risk of developing cataracts than non-smokers because the toxins in tobacco smoke can deplete the body's natural antioxidant stores.

Although it may not



be possible to turn off aging and prevent cataracts entirely, cataracts can

be delayed and made less impactful through lifestyle changes.



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# What is polypharmacy?

Polypharmacy may contribute to complications that could jeopardize seniors' health. Johns Hopkins Medicine defines polypharmacy as the regular use of multiple prescriptions. According to data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and the Canadian Health Measures Survey, 22 percent of adults between the ages of 40 and 79 in the United States and 19 percent of adults in that same age bracket in Canada took at least five medications in the 30 days prior to participating in each survey.

Prescription medications are designed and prescribed to help people overcome various medical conditions, but polypharmacy can contribute to other issues that

are worth noting, and some of those conditions can have an adverse effect on seniors' daily lives and overall well-being. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, symptoms of polypharmacy include:

- Reduced alertness
- Confusion or cognitive problems
- Falls and accidents
- Weakness and dizziness
- Loss of appetite
- GI problems such as diarrhea, constipation or incontinence
- Skin rashes
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Excitability

It's equally important that seniors recognize that polypharmacy affects aging adults differently than it

affects younger people, as changes in body composition that are a natural part of aging can affect how the body reacts to medications and might affect how different medications interact with one another. The effects of new drugs on seniors also may be unknown, as Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that test subjects for medications may not include older adults.

Polypharmacy is a delicate situation and each individual's reaction to taking multiple medications at once is unique. Seniors are urged to be open and honest with all health care professionals they interact with regarding the medications they're taking. Report any difficult or unusual side effects



immediately. Seniors who feel they might be taking too many medications should address those concerns with

their health care professionals, who may deprescribe a given medication and work with patients to find

alternatives that can treat existing conditions without adversely affecting quality of life.

## How to manage multiple medications

Polypharmacy, or the practice of managing multiple medications, is a part of life for a significant percentage of seniors. Many prescription and over-the-counter drugs are essential for maintaining health and managing chronic conditions. However, the chemical complexity of mixing so many drugs can lead to dangerous outcomes if one isn't careful.

Older adults take more medications than any other age group. A report conducted by Age Wave and The John A. Hartford Foundation found that the average senior takes four medications, but more than 15 percent take eight or more. Some medications can create further conditions or worsen existing conditions. Data from the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality show that 15.9 percent of older adults use inappropriate medication.

Structured medication management is essential for seniors' safety. Here's how to safely navigate taking



multiple medications at once.

- **Conduct a medication audit.**

Take all of the medications and supplements you use to a primary care physician

or pharmacist to discuss potential interactions and if any prescriptions can be

canceled. Research from Clarest Health indicates that patients taking five to nine medications have a 50 percent chance of experiencing a significant adverse drug event.

• **Talk about deprescribing.** Speak with a doctor about the process of tapering off medications that may no longer be necessary or are resulting in more harm than benefit.

• **Use one pharmacy.** Always fill prescriptions from the same pharmacy. Modern systems are equipped with safeguards to flag certain drug-to-drug interactions automatically. Also, the pharmacist is often an underutilized resource. Ask questions and figure out if he or she can conduct a medication review to ensure a regimen for taking medications is as complication-free as possible.

• **Utilize smart systems.** Rely on smart pill dispensers that unlock only at the correct time to manage high-risk medications. Other pill

organizers and digital apps can set reminders to take medications at the appropriate times. An app like Medisafe will notify family members if a dose is missed.

• **Link doses to actions.** Make medications an automatic part of your day by linking them to activities, like morning pills taken with a cup of coffee or evening pills when you eat dinner.

• **Use visual cues.** Keep pill organizers in a visible spot so you remember to take the medication.

• **Ask for help.** If managing medications has become a tall order, ask a friend, family member or a visiting nurse or aide to assist with medication management.

• **Update your list.** Always maintain a current list of the medications and supplements you are taking, and bring it along to every new medical appointment for further review.

Managing medications becomes more complex as seniors typically take multiple drugs and supplements to maintain health.



# Safe ways seniors can lose weight

The prevalence of obesity among adults 60 and older is significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 39 percent of adults 60 and over met the criteria for obesity over a two-year period between August 2021 and August 2023.

The National Council on Aging notes the importance of maintaining a healthy weight as you age. Seniors who qualify as obese, which occurs when a person's body accumulates and stores excessive amounts of body fat, carry a higher risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer. The NCOA also notes that excess body weight puts a strain on the joints, increasing the risk for osteoarthritis and making daily movements more difficult. People with obesity also

are more likely to develop asthma and sleep apnea.

Seniors diagnosed with obesity are urged to seek safe and healthy ways to lose weight. Fad diets and other means to quick weight loss can be dangerous, but the NCOA notes simple lifestyle changes and healthy habits can help seniors safely lose weight.

• **Consume nutrient-dense foods.** Lean proteins, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables offer plenty of vitamins, minerals and fiber but tend to be low in calories. That makes them ideal options for people looking to lose weight, as they contribute to feelings of fullness without consuming a lot of calories.

• **Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine.** Exercise can pose problems for older adults who qualify as obese. The joint issues

that can affect older adults with obesity can make traditional exercise regimens that incorporate strength training and moderate to vigorous aerobic activity very difficult, and maybe even dangerous. But the NCOA notes that exercise need not

be intense to be effective. Walking is a great physical activity for older adults. Swimming also is excellent, as it provides a full-body workout that's easy on the joints. Seniors are urged to speak with their physicians about physical activities

they can handle.

• **Don't sleep on sleep.** Sleep can be an effective ally for seniors looking to lose weight. The NCOA notes that seven to nine hours of sleep per night helps support a healthy metabolism and regulate hunger.

Seniors who have trouble falling asleep at night can try various strategies, from avoiding caffeine from the afternoon on to avoiding screens after dinner, to prepare their bodies to get better rest at night.

• **Work to combat stress.** The NCOA reports that stress is a contributor to weight gain. And stress and disorders linked to it are perhaps more common among adults 60 and over than people realize. In fact, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders, which are a notable source of ongoing stress, are the most widespread mental health condition among older adults. Sufficient sleep, meditation and deep breathing exercises can help seniors combat stress, and that in turn may help older adults avoid excess weight gain.

Obesity is a problem among older adults. Finding safe ways to lose weight can have a profound effect on seniors' short- and long-term health.



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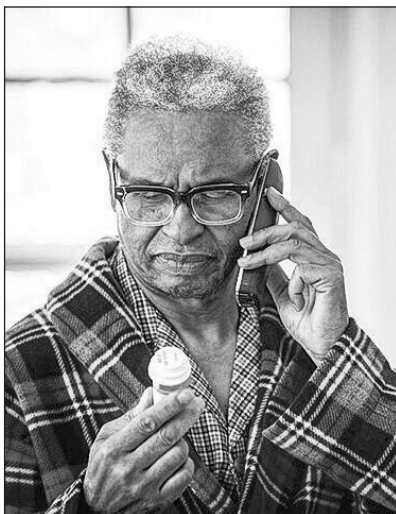
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# Did you know?

According to the National Institutes of Health, the average older adult takes approximately four prescription medications every day, with 40 percent of adults age 65 and older taking five daily medications. Managing medications can be complicated, particularly when they are prescribed by different medical professionals. Many doctors utilize electronic medical records and may have access to all of the prescription medications prescribed to each patient. This can be helpful as it removes the guessing game and self-reporting necessary to manage prescriptions. It also may help providers avoid giving a medication that can interact negatively with another prescription a patient is already taking. Doctors may initiate conversations with patients about their prescriptions and review which are current and which are not. At this point, patients can go over any questions they may have about their medications. Medical offices also may utilize patient portal apps to facilitate communication and scheduling between patients and providers. Through these patient portals, people can message their health care teams and ask for more information about medical care and prescription medications, especially if questions come up after an office visit. Such portals are another tool patients can use to take a more active role in their own health care.



## How to simplify medication discussions with your physician

Effective communication is vital in a good relationship, and that includes the dynamic between seniors and their physicians. According to Caring Senior Service, adults age 65 and older see seven different health care providers each year, and that figure is potentially even higher for the millions of seniors dealing with chronic health issues like diabetes and heart disease.

In addition to seeing multiple physicians in a typical year, seniors are taking a number of medications. According to a February 2026 report on World-Health.net, 42 percent of adults 65 and over are taking five or more medications. With so many different doctor relationships to manage and pills to take, it can be easy for seniors to feel a little overwhelmed when the time

comes to speak with their physicians. These strategies can help such discussions go smoothly.

- **Prepare a list of your medications and take it with you to each appointment.** It's not uncommon for patients to feel rushed when visiting their doctors, even if they have a years-long and cordial relationship with those physicians. When patients feel rushed, it's easy to overlook certain things about their health, including which medications they're taking. While some physicians have digital access to a patient's medical history, including which medications a patient is taking, that's not always the case. So seniors are urged to maintain an up-to-date list of their medications, which they can share with their physicians when an appointment begins. This can eliminate any

roadblocks to effective communication, including a language barrier or nervousness on the part of patients who feel rushed.

- **Keep a medication diary between doctor visits.** A medication diary can be a helpful asset for any senior who is concerned about overlooking a detail regarding their prescriptions and any side effects that appear while taking them. Use the diary to document any adverse reactions; suspicions about a given medication, including any thoughts about interactions with other medicines; questions about dosage; and additional thoughts or questions about your prescriptions. Take the diary with you to each appointment, perusing it before every visit to remind yourself of any issues you think merit discussion with your doctor.

- **Take a spouse or family member**

**along with you.** Having someone there with you to act on your behalf or to help bridge any communication barriers can be a helpful step. Many adults experience hearing loss as they age, and a family member can ensure a doctor's responses are heard loud and clear. This can be particularly important in relation to discussions regarding medication, as one unheard or misunderstood statement could jeopardize a patient's overall health.

It's not always easy to discuss medication with a physician, particularly for seniors taking multiple prescriptions at once. But various strategies can simplify such discussions and ensure seniors' voices and medication-related concerns are heard and communicated clearly.





## What are the warning signs of social isolation?

Human beings are wired for social connection, but millions of people confront isolation every day. Many of those people are seniors who lose contact with loved ones as time goes by. While temporary loneliness can be tolerated, prolonged isolation can be very harmful.

Research by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found roughly one-quarter of American adults age 65 and older live in isolation. Identifying the early warning signs of isolation may help to prevent the physiological and psychological toll isolation can take.

Here are some signs of social isolation to watch for.

- **Withdrawal from events:** An early indicator of social isolation, according to Healthline, is a pattern of canceling plans, not answering phone calls, and withdrawing from established social circles or hobbies.

- **Self-care is not prioritized:** Another sign of social isolation is personal hygiene and other self-care habits like eating nutritious meals becomes neglected. It can signal that a person's routine has changed due to a lack of social accountability.

- **Home upkeep falters:** A person who is withdrawing from social connections may feel it's no longer necessary to keep a home clean and tidy since they don't anticipate visitors.

- **Irritability and low mood:** Persistent isolation can trigger a sense of hopelessness. Individuals may become defensive or experience dramatic shifts in mood and sleep patterns, according to Healthline.

- **Reliance on social media or television:** Socially isolated individuals may turn to television or non-interactive social media scrolling as a proxy for human interaction, offers HealthDirect.

Social isolation can take its toll on anyone, particularly seniors. Individuals are urged to check in with friends, family or neighbors they suspect may be isolating to provide the companionship and help they may need.

# How volunteering benefits seniors' mental health

Seniors are vulnerable to mental health issues. The World Health Organization says around one in five older adults experience psychiatric disorders like depression, anxiety, and dementia-related mood changes. While various therapies can help, seniors may discover volunteering can be a surprising antidote to mental health concerns.

Volunteering offers seniors many benefits, including a renewed sense of purpose. Volunteering also helps combat social isolation, which can lower rates of depression and anxiety. According to Voices for National Service, older adults who volunteer

have reduced risk of mortality, more optimism and feel less depressed and lonely. People who were once working full time and are now in retirement may find they have hours to spare. Those hours can be directed toward volunteer efforts, which can boost seniors' mental health in myriad ways.

- **Lowers depression and anxiety:** The National Institutes of Health says research indicates consistent volunteering can help to reduce risk of depressive symptoms. Staying engaged and active combats feelings of hopelessness.

- **Decreased social isolation:** Points of Light says regular

time spent with peers and the people being helped can mitigate loneliness. Having a strong support network can make stress more tolerable and increase feelings of belonging.

- **Restores sense of purpose:** When work ends, many seniors lose the structure that governed their working life. Volunteering gives the opportunity to wake up, follow a schedule and achieve goals. It can be rewarding to play a valuable role in the community again, according to Voices for National Service.

- **Mental stimulation:** Volunteering may lead to learning new skills and interacting

with others, and that can keep the mind sharp.

- **Physical activity:** Older adults may lead sedentary lifestyles if they have nothing to keep them busy. Volunteering helps a person engage in some sort of physical activity. A 2025 study published in the journal *Social Science & Medicine* found volunteering is associated with lower levels of hypertension and chronic inflammation. Staying active can lower blood pressure, risk of heart disease and eight types of cancer.

Volunteering is a tool older adults can use to stay healthy both physically and mentally.







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# Practices that can benefit seniors' mental health

Making an effort to maintain and safeguard mental health is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, and that's as true for seniors as it is for children, young adults and men and women in middle age. Seniors can embrace a number of practices and habits to safeguard their mental health well into their golden years.

• **Spend more time with family.** Spending time with family members can be especially beneficial for adults 70 and older. According to a 2023 study published in the *Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, adults without family ties had worse mental health and were less likely to engage socially than older adults who were close to their family. The researchers behind the study noted those benefits are not affected by distance, as even the older adults who lived far away from their family

members but maintained strong social ties to their families enjoyed higher levels of mental health and social participation than seniors with no such connections.

• **Exercise regularly.** Routine exercise also can have a profound impact on seniors' mental health. The Anxiety & Depression Association of America reports that evidence supports the notion that exercise can shift attitude, mindset and mood in a positive way. Another study found that adults who participated in a regular physical activity program experienced reduced rates of long-term and acute depression.

• **Incorporate travel into your golden years.** Working professionals have long expressed an intention to travel more during retirement, and doing so may have an even bigger impact than seniors realize. According to a joint report



from the Global Coalition on Aging and the Transamerica Institute® released in 2025, regular travel has been shown to lower Alzheimer's risk by up to 47 percent, a benefit researchers link to culturally enriching activities like visiting museums and exploring historical

landmarks. The same report also notes that travel helps to address loneliness and social isolation, which are mental health issues that the senior population is especially vulnerable to, particularly during retirement.

• **Volunteer.** The Mayo Clinic Health System notes

that volunteering can boost mental health in a number of ways. Volunteering has been found to reduce stress and increase positive, relaxed feelings. The Mayo Clinic also notes that volunteering leads to lower rates of anxiety and depression, particularly among adults

65 and older.

Mental health is part of a healthy lifestyle. Seniors can look to various practices to protect their mental health and reduce their risk for conditions such as social isolation, loneliness and depression that affect a great number of older adults.

# Travel can facilitate healthy aging

The adage, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," may be true, but for seniors, enjoying that apple at a hotel or on a cruise may be even more healthy than having it at home.

Travel can be an important component of healthy aging. Travel provides many benefits across multiple areas of life. According to The Senior List, around 70 percent of seniors (adults age 50 and up) travel regularly. Seniors are a target demographic for the travel industry, accounting for roughly one-third of all travelers. Seniors spend almost one month each year traveling.

Here are a few of the many health-related rewards seniors

can reap from travel.

• **Morale boost:** Booking a trip, making it to a destination and checking out new sights creates a strong sense of purpose that can elevate self-confidence.

• **Meet new people:** Travel offers lots of opportunities to meet fellow travelers and engage with locals at various destinations.

• **Get physical activity:** Exploring sights and landmarks engages the body. According to Clarendale Clayton Senior Residences, studies show that older adults who regularly vacation experience lower rates of high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease.

• **Reduces stress:** Getting away from the daily grind and

household routines or responsibilities can lower feelings of stress.

• **Improves cognitive health:** According to research by the Global Coalition on Aging, regular cultural travel can reduce Alzheimer's risk by up to 47 percent.

• **Foster cultural understanding:** Travel takes people outside of their typical circles and can expose individuals to new cultures. Learning about these cultures and interacting with local populations can foster a greater sense of cultural understanding.

Travel can be a key component of healthy living for seniors that boosts their physical and mental well-being.







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## Tips to manage life after an Alzheimer's diagnosis

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia affect millions of people across the globe. The organization Alzheimer's Disease International reports that more than 55 million people worldwide were living with dementia in 2020. ADI also estimates that dementia cases are expected to reach 78 million by 2030 and 139 million by 2050.

Alzheimer's disease affects those diagnosed with the disease and also their families. Family members often assume a caregiving role when a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Such a diagnosis is life-changing for both patients and their families, and it can be helpful for all affected to learn what to expect after an Alzheimer's diagnosis.

• **Alzheimer's disease has stages, so a diagnosis does not mean immediate loss of independence.** The Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation notes a guideline exists to determine the stages of Alzheimer's at any given point. That guideline is known as the Global Deterioration Scale (GDS),

which identifies seven distinct stages, the first three of which are pre-dementia. The Fisher Center notes that a diagnosis of Alzheimer's can be made with considerable accuracy in stage 4, which is characterized by moderate cognitive decline. When a person is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he or she or their family can ask the diagnosing physician about the stage of the disease. Such information can give families an idea of what to expect. If the diagnosing physician indicates the disease is stage 4 or earlier, then patients can maintain some level of independence.

• **Stage 5 is marked by an inability to live independently.** The Fisher Center notes that the changes that occur in stage 5 prevent patients from managing life on their own. Patients may wear the same clothing day after day unless they are reminded to change, and they may not be able to pick appropriate clothing for weather or other circumstances. Potential caregivers should know that by stage 5 a patient will need assistance with their finances, including paying bills and rent.

Patients in stage 5 also may not recall details of their own lives, including their address. But the Fisher Center notes that such knowledge is loosely held in stage 5, meaning a person may recall their address at certain times, but not others.

• **Caregiving is often a team effort.** Individuals with stage 5 or late-stage Alzheimer's will require caregiving. The Alzheimer's Association notes that caring for a person with Alzheimer's often involves a team of people as opposed to a single person. A greater level of care will be required as the disease progresses, and providing that care can be taxing and present its own unique set of challenges that can affect caregivers' physical and mental well-being. Families that approach caregiving as a team may manage the side effects of providing that care more effectively.

Patients and their families confronting an Alzheimer's diagnosis are encouraged to learn as much about the disease as possible and the best and healthiest way to approach caregiving as the disease progresses.





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