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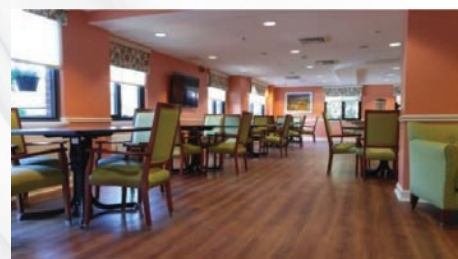
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Thursday, June 23, 2022



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# Soaking in **fun** that's fit for summer

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Seniors may have more time for leisure and recreation than working adults, and the summer months provide ample opportunities to get active. After months of chilly temperatures, many are eager to get outdoors and enjoy some fun in the sun.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that adults age 65 and older get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. There are plenty of ways for active seniors to meet this exercise goal and have some fun along the way.

The following are some good starting points:

■ **Join or start a walking club.** Walking is a great way to stay in shape and work the mind, as well. View new sights along the way by changing the route each time you go. Walking with friends can pass the time and provide the motivation to keep going.

■ **Catch a sporting event.** Attending a sporting event can be an

entertaining way to spend several hours, and that includes amateur and recreational sports. Catch a grandchild's swim meet or a baseball game for an action-packed way to connect with loved ones and get out.

■ **Take a fishing charter.** Casting a rod from a dock or pier is perfectly acceptable, but securing a spot on a fishing charter is a great way to spend hours out on the water enjoying the scenery and the sport of fishing. Plus, there's the added benefit of enjoying the fruits of your labors by cooking the day's catch for dinner once you arrive home.

■ **Be a tourist.** Many cities and towns have their own tourism boards and showcase interesting spots that have historical significance or appeal to other interests. Be a tourist for the day — even in an area with which you are familiar. Hop on a trolley or sightseeing bus to view the town as an outsider.

■ **Spend time swimming.** Swimming

is a low-impact activity that can work the body in many different ways. Devote time to doing a few laps in the pool. Or make a day of going to a lake or another body of water to wade out and enjoy some strokes in nature. Stick to swimming areas that are monitored by lifeguards for optimal safety.

■ **Tend to a garden.** Gardening is a great form of light exercise that can produce rewarding results. If you don't have a garden or enough space for one at home, many neighborhoods have community gardens in which you can secure a plot.

■ **Visit a fair or farmers market.** The warm-weather months are a peak time for outdoor activities, including various community fairs and farmers markets. Chances are you can find a farmers market nearby most days of the week, but especially on the weekend. A town market or state fair is a great way to get out and walk, play games of chance or enjoy some live entertainment. Check your community calendar for local events.



Courtesy photo

It's a great time of year for gardening, an enjoyable and rewarding physical activity.



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# Social media: It's not just for kids anymore

Perhaps due to the popularity of social media among a generation of young people who grew up with it, platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are often associated with people born in the 21st century. However, a 2018 study from the Pew Institute found that 65% of adults between the ages of 50 and 64 used Facebook and 68% used YouTube.

Social media is often on the receiving end of negative attention, but it's also a potentially valuable tool that can help older adults stay connected with their communities. That's not always so easy for parents who no longer have children at home.

And as its name suggests, social media can help users connect with others who share their interests. Such connections also can be hard to make for adults over 50.

Older adults may be more comfortable with social media now than they were a decade

ago, but it's still a good idea to brush up on basic security measures that can help men and women protect their privacy as they use platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

■ **Protect your personal information.** No social media user has the right to access your personal information, including your address, date of birth or other data unique to you. Avoid interacting with anyone who requests personal information, employing the function to block such users from connecting with you when possible. It's also important to keep information about travel plans private. For example, sharing details of an upcoming vacation can serve notice to potential criminals that no one will be in your house, making it a potential target for burglars.

■ **Aim for quality, not quantity, when building social media networks.** Avoid accepting friend requests from individuals you

don't know. Cybercriminals often gain access to victims via social media, so limit your social media network to people you know and trust.

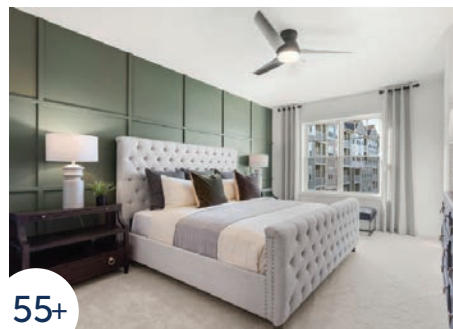
■ **Turn off location information.** The technology behind social media is impressive and even makes it possible to determine where users are when they tweet or post to other platforms. But many users, especially those concerned about their privacy, don't want to share location information with anyone, much less strangers. Turn off location information, and routinely double-check to make sure it's still turned off.

■ **Discuss others' privacy concerns before posting.** Social media isn't for everyone, and some people may not want photos of themselves or their children posted to platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Prior to posting pictures or information about other people, confirm that they're OK with it.



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When engaging with social media, it's best to keep various safety protocols in mind.



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# Get *away* just for the day

Vacations to faraway destinations can make lasting memories that families cherish forever.

Though day trips might not require the planning of more traditional vacations, these brief getaways can still be a great way to spend a day, especially for seniors.

Day trips typically are based around visits to historic attractions, shopping districts, restaurants or museums. Since they don't require much in the way of advanced planning and tend to be easy on the wallet, day trips are ideal for those looking for short getaways.

When considering day trips, seniors should look for locales no more than two to three hours away. Such proximity ensures that travelers will have plenty of time to see the sights and still get home at a reasonable hour.

Need day trip inspiration? Here are some ideas to get started.

## Botanical gardens

Botanical gardens and arbore-tums are beautiful and relaxing

places to spend a day. People can tour topiaries, exotic plants, butterfly retreats, rolling landscape and even bonsai collections.

## Seaside towns

Visits to the coast make for memorable, scenic excursions. Many boast quaint shops to purchase coastal trinkets or decor. Seaside spots also may boast their share of fishing charters or sight-seeing cruises, and seafood fans will appreciate what these regions have to offer in the way of dining.

## Historic cities and villages

Touring historic places of register can be a hands-on way to learn about the country's history. They can provide more personal experiences than books and movies alone.

## Zoos and aquariums

Interacting with wildlife is on the itinerary when visiting zoos and aquariums, and such establishments typically offer discounted admissions to seniors.

## Wine tasting

A recent study from Wine & Vines magazine said there are 8,391 wineries in North America, and that number is on the rise. One is likely to find a winery to visit and sample the wares close to home. Make a day of it by bringing a picnic lunch.

## Museums

Museums are ideal day trip destinations because many are indoors. That means weather never needs to be an issue while visiting. With historic artifacts, paintings, sculptures, or niche items like pop art or collectibles, there are museums for just about every interest.

## Restaurant crawl

Certain town centers and tourist destinations organize events where day-trippers can enjoy tasting menus from various establishments for a single price. Day trips also can culminate at one specific restaurant. A new restaurant can be visited each month.



Visiting a museum is one venture that seniors can enjoy when they want to get out but not necessarily travel far away.

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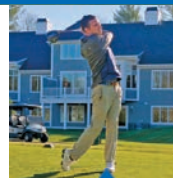
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# How to make new friends later in life



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Making friends can be challenging for older adults. However, various strategies can help you connect with new people.

The early years of midlife are a hectic time for many people. Around the time many people reach their late 30s and early 40s, they're balancing the responsibilities of a career and a family. But as people enter their 50s and 60s, some of those responsibilities tend to be less significant, leaving more time for recreational pursuits.

Hobbies and other pursuits outside of work are often more fun when enjoyed with friends. Older adults undoubtedly recognize that it's not always so easy to make new friends, even though it's undeniably beneficial to have supportive relationships into your golden years.

A 2017 study from researchers at Michigan State University found that valuing friendships was a stronger predictor of health and happiness among older adults than valuing family. Those results align with an earlier Australian study that found Australians age 70 or older tended to live significantly longer if they had more strong friendships.

Making friends after 50 might not be as simple as it was during your school days, but these strategies can help men and women in midlife build new friendships.

■ **Identify your interests.** Those who have spent the last couple of decades building a career and raising a family can give some serious thought to their interests outside of work or passions they hope to pursue now that they have more time to commit to such pursuits. The more interested you are in a given activity, the more likely you are to stick with it. And the longer you stick with something, the more likely you are to meet like-minded individuals (i.e., future friends) willing to make similar commitments.

■ **Use social media.** In years past, older men and women may not have had any readily available tools to reach out and connect with new people. Social media has made it much easier to build such connections. Even the most obscure passions likely have a social media group of locals

devoted to them, and these groups can be great ways to meet new people. A local runners club may have its own social media accounts, and local governments and community groups often share information about sports leagues and other groups via social media.

■ **Sign up for group outings.** Communities often sponsor group outings to museums, the theater, sporting events and other day trips. Signing up for a bus trip to a local museum presents a great opportunity to meet people who share your interests, providing the potential to build lasting friendships built on a foundation of shared interests.

■ **Broaden your horizons.** Don't hesitate to invite younger or older acquaintances and colleagues over for dinner or on weekend excursions. Friends come in all shapes, sizes and ages, so you could be missing out if you're not willing to extend a hand in friendship to people of different ages and backgrounds.

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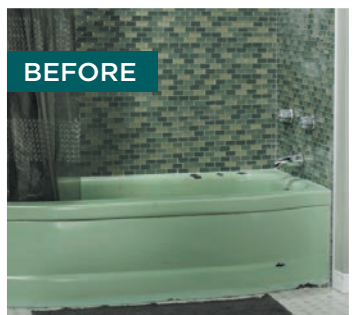


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# Outdoor activities that are perfect for seniors



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Taking advantage of the endless opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors can benefit seniors in myriad ways.

The great outdoors beckons people of all ages. Fresh air can be hard to resist, and the benefits of spending time outside are so numerous that it behooves anyone, including seniors, to answer the call.

According to researchers with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, human beings benefit both physically and psychologically from spending time in nature. Such experiences can reduce stress and help lower heart rates, potentially decreasing individuals' risk for cardiovascular disease. In addition, the Forest Service notes that spending time outside in green spaces has been linked to a lower risk of depression.

Seniors who are retired or even aging empty nesters who are still in the workforce can make great use of their free time by venturing into the great outdoors.

The following are a handful of senior-friendly outdoor activities that provide a great reason to get off the couch and take in all that Mother Nature has to offer.

## Hiking

Hiking provides a great workout and an ideal opportunity to spend time in an idyllic setting. The U.S. National Park Service notes that hiking helps

individuals build stronger muscles and bones, improves their sense of balance, has a positive effect on heart health, and can decrease the risk of certain respiratory problems.

Hiking is an especially attractive outdoor activity for seniors, as many parks feature trails with varying degrees of difficulty, ensuring that there's a trail for everyone, whether they're seasoned or novice hikers.

## Water aerobics

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that water-based exercises can be especially helpful for individuals with chronic diseases, a category many seniors fall into.

The CDC notes that one study published in the journal *Arthritis & Rheumatology* found that these exercises improve the use of joints affected by arthritis without worsening symptoms. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also notes that swimming can lead to improved health for people with diabetes and heart disease.

Seniors can reap these benefits by going for a dip in their own backyard pools or a local body of water, such as a lake or ocean. Many swim clubs also offer discounted memberships to seniors, making these another great and

affordable way to reap the benefits of swimming.

## Fishing

Of course, not all outdoor activities need to make seniors huff and puff. Fishing provides a great reason to get outdoors, and many individuals devoted to fishing report feeling less stressed after a day spent casting for their favorite fish.

Individuals who eat what they catch also can benefit by improving their diets, as the American Heart Association notes that consuming certain types of fish has been linked to a lower risk for heart disease and obesity.

## Volunteering

Local environmental groups often sponsor cleanups at parks and waterfront attractions like beaches and lakes. Volunteering with such organizations is a great way to get outside and give back, and working with like-minded individuals can be a great way for seniors to meet new people.

In addition, a national study sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2019 found that 88% of AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers who initially reported a lack of companionship reported a decrease in feelings of isolation after volunteering.




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# The functions of different parts of the brain

The human brain is a marvel. Everything from thought to memory to emotion is controlled by the brain, which only underscores how impressive this incredible organ is.

The word “brain” is something of an umbrella term to refer to an organ where various complex tasks are performed. Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that, at a high level, the brain can be divided into three main parts: the cerebrum, brainstem and cerebellum. Each of these parts serves different functions.

## Cerebrum

The cerebrum is the largest part of the brain. The cerebrum is located in the front area of the skull and consists of two cerebral hemispheres, left and right. The National Cancer Institute notes that areas within the cerebrum control muscle function, speech, thought, emotions, reading, writing and learning. The cerebrum also enables actions associated with the senses, including vision, hearing and touch.

Each hemisphere within the cerebrum controls half

of the body. Johns Hopkins notes that the right half of the cerebrum controls the left side of the body, while the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body. These hemispheres communicate with one another through the corpus callosum, a centrally located C-shaped structure of white matter and nerve pathways.

## Brainstem

The brainstem is the part of the brain that is connected to the spinal cord. The brainstem is made up of the midbrain, pons and medulla.

The midbrain is a complex structure that facilitates various functions, including hearing and movement and

calculating responses.

The pons is part of the central nervous system and is located at the base of the brain, where it serves as a bridge between the midbrain and the medulla oblongata. Nerves within the pons enable a host of activities, including chewing, blinking, focusing vision and facial expression, among others.

The medulla is at the bottom of the brainstem where the brain meets the spinal cord. The medulla regulates many activities that are vital to survival, including heart rhythm, breathing and blood flow.

## Cerebellum

Johns Hopkins notes that



Courtesy image

Each area within the brain has its own unique role to play.

the cerebellum is often referred to as the “little brain.” That’s because it’s roughly the size of a fist. Located at the back of the brain between the cerebrum and the brain stem, the

cerebellum controls balance for walking, standing and other voluntary muscle movements.

Johns Hopkins notes that studies are exploring the role of the cerebellum

in thought, emotions and social behavior. In addition, studies examining a potential link between the cerebellum and addiction, autism and schizophrenia are ongoing.

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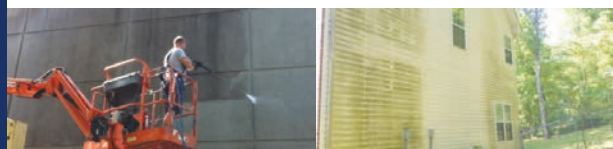
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# Qualities to look for in a post-retirement job



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Various qualities can combine to make for a post-retirement gig that benefits seniors in multiple ways.

The notion of relaxing on a beach all day in one's golden years is still a retirement dream for millions of adults across the globe. But many individuals also harbor a desire to keep working after retiring.

Whether it's a volunteering gig or a part-time job retirees are looking for, certain qualities can make an opportunity uniquely suited to a post-retirement job.

## Flexibility

Retirees may be looking to contribute to their communities or simply earn a little spending money, but they will likely still want the freedom to travel or spend time with their families whenever they choose. So flexibility is something to look for in a post-retirement job.

This is what makes consultant work so attractive to retirees. In-person hours may not be required of consultants, who can then offer their input while visiting their grandchildren or traveling the world.

## Socialization

Though the ability to work from

home can make it easier for retirees to earn some extra money, some seniors aren't concerned about their finances but want to work so they can get out of the house.

In that case, look for a job that offers the opportunity to socialize and meet new people. Socializing as an older adult is a great way to fend off loneliness.

In addition, one study published in 2007 in the journal of the American Public Health Association found that social support networks have a positive effect on cognition among older adults. So a post-retirement job that enables retirees to socialize could delay or reduce the severity of age-related cognitive decline.

## Engagement

A job that seniors find engaging also is more likely to provide the types of benefits seniors are looking for in post-retirement work. For example, researchers at Boston College's Sloan Center on Aging and Work found that seniors who find a job or volunteering opportunity truly engaging are more

likely to benefit psychologically from those experiences than those whose post-retirement work is not engaging.

If seniors find themselves simply going through the motions with their post-retirement work, they can look for opportunities that they can be more enthusiastic about.

## Pressure-free

Regardless of what retirees did for a living prior to calling it a career, chances are they dealt with work-related stress. In fact, the American Stress Institute reports that 83% of workers in the United States suffer from work-related stress, while Statistics Canada reports that 62% of Canadian workers say work is their main source of stress.

After a lifetime of confronting work-related stress, individuals who want to work in retirement should look for pressure-free opportunities. This is an important quality, as the ASI indicates that stress has been linked to increased rates of heart attack, hypertension and other disorders.

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# Avoid empty nest syndrome with these tips

Raising children is a significant responsibility. Parents know there's no such thing as a day off, which is why the first day they come home to an empty nest can be so confounding.

After roughly two busy and likely hectic decades or more of looking after their children, parents whose sons or daughters have left home for the first time may experience feelings of sadness and loss. That's not unusual, as the Mayo Clinic notes it's a phenomenon known as "empty nest syndrome."

Though it's not a clinical diagnosis, empty nest syndrome can be a difficult hurdle to overcome, especially for parents who find themselves suddenly bored after years of being so busy.

Empty nesters looking to banish boredom can consider these strategies.

■ **Give your home a new look.** Parents go to great lengths to make their homes welcoming safe havens for their children. Moms and dads often joke that, between play rooms and study areas, kids get the bulk of the real estate under their roofs. Now that the children have moved out, parents can take back that space and refresh their homes.

Turn children's rooms into spaces you can use for your own interests. One can be a crafting room or a home office. Another may be a home theater. No

longer labeling those rooms as the kids' spaces can help the transition.

A home that's adapted for empty nesters will look quite different from one designed for families with young children. So a renovation or redesign can provide plenty of work that can fill idle time and instill a sense of excitement about the future.

■ **Become a weekend road warrior.** Newly minted empty nesters are likely still working full time. But now that there's no soccer practices or band recitals taking up valuable real estate on your weekend schedule, Saturdays and Sundays can provide perfect opportunities to travel.

Plan routine weekend getaways, choosing different locales for each trip. Visit a city one weekend, and devote a subsequent trip to the great outdoors.

Travel as a couple or with a group of friends. Put the focus on fun and then share the experiences later on with your adult children.

■ **Reconnect with old friends.** Some individuals experiencing empty nest syndrome may be hesitant to admit they're experiencing feelings of sadness and loneliness.

But a recent Sky Mobile study of parents of teenagers in England found that 47% were fretting about having an empty nest. So it's likely that old

friends and fellow parents are experiencing feelings associated with empty nest syndrome.

Reaching out to old friends is a great way to reconnect and can provide an outlet to discuss feelings parents might be hesitant to share with others.

But empty nesters who experience significant feelings of sadness and loneliness are urged to speak with a health care professional, as well.

■ **Redefine yourself.** After years of toting kids from one extracurricular activity to another, empty nesters can now do the same for themselves. The experts at Psychology Today suggest finding new roles and interests to explore, or spending more time exploring existing hobbies.

For example, if you've thought about doing community theater, do so now that you have some free time. Or maybe you've always had a goal of going back to school? Now may be the time to make that happen.

Visit local community centers and libraries, and ask about classes for adults. Many offer classes on everything from crafts to sports.

Adults also can research continuing education programs at local colleges and universities if they're interested in a career change or pursuing an



Courtesy photo

Reconnecting with your spouse is one way to combat feelings of loss that can stem from an empty nest.

advanced degree for personal enrichment.

■ **Reconnect with your partner.** Recall the years before

you had children when it was only the two of you, and devote time to making more memories as a couple.

Plan date nights, go to sporting events, attend a summer concert or pursue other shared interests.

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# Make the house safer with these upgrades

Many seniors want to spend as long as possible residing in the comforts of their own homes. According to AARP's 2021 "Home and Community Preferences Survey," more than three-quarters of U.S. adults age 50 and older prefer living at home.

But getting older often comes with certain deficits that may not make current living situations the safest for seniors.

Retirement Living reports that an older person is treated in an emergency room for a fall-related injury nearly once every 10 seconds. Falls cause millions of injuries and 32,000 deaths a year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Seniors may be affected by low vision, mobility limitations, cognitive decline, balance issues and loss of muscle strength. Certain adaptations may be necessary if seniors want to stay in their homes, particularly in older homes

that have not recently been renovated.

■ **Change knobs to levers:** This is an easy modification. Levers are much easier for individuals with arthritis or persons who lack dexterity in their hands. Everything from doorknobs to faucet knobs can be replaced with levers.

■ **Create zero-threshold entryways:** Also known as flush entries, these do not require crossing a lip or any raised barrier. They can appear on doorways and showers and make it easy for people who have mobility issues, as well as those using scooters, walkers and wheelchairs, to move about unencumbered.

■ **Clear clutter/move obstructions:** One inexpensive modification is to remove extraneous furniture and accessories. Such a change widens walking spaces in a room and accommodates walkers and wheelchairs. In addition, furniture can be pushed to the room's

perimeter to make moving around easier. It's also important to remove area rugs, as they're often tripping hazards.

■ **Install grab rails and supports:** Minimizing falls could come down to providing support in key rooms of a home. Adding grab rails in the bathroom near the toilet and in the shower can help a person use those facilities without assistance. Install a grab rail close to seating in the kitchen to add support.

■ **Consider smart lighting:** Motion-activated or darkness-activated lighting switches and fixtures can automatically turn on lights, thereby improving visibility. Also, rocker light switches are easier to maneuver than standard toggles.

■ **Invest in a stair lift:** Single-story homes are preferable for growing older gracefully, but many seniors live in multistory homes. Stair lifts make it easier to traverse staircases and reduce the risk for falls.



Courtesy photo

There are many home modifications that can help seniors safely age in place.

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# The power of a positive attitude

## Changing your views of aging may improve your life

BY JUDITH GRAHAM  
Kaiser Health News

People's beliefs about aging have a profound impact on their health, influencing everything from their memory and sensory perceptions to how well they walk, how fully they recover from disabling illness and how long they live.

When aging is seen as a negative experience — characterized by terms such as decrepit, incompetent, dependent and senile — individuals tend to experience more stress in later life and engage less often in healthy behaviors such as exercise. When views are positive — signaled by words such as wise, alert, accomplished and creative — people are more likely to be active and resilient and to have a stronger will to live.

These internalized beliefs about aging are mostly unconscious, formed from early childhood on as we absorb messages about growing old from TV, movies, books, advertisements and other forms of popular culture. They vary by individual, and they're distinct from prejudice and discrimination against older adults in the social sphere.

More than 400 scientific studies have demonstrated the impact of individuals' beliefs about aging. Now, the question is whether people can alter these largely unrecognized assumptions about growing older and assume more control over them.

In her new book, "Breaking



JULIA GERACE/Tribune News Service

**Becca Levy, a professor at Yale University, studies how beliefs about aging can affect physical and mental health.**

the Age Code: How Your Beliefs About Aging Determine How Long and Well You Live," Becca Levy, a leading expert on this topic, argues we can.

"With the right mindset and tools, we can change our age beliefs," she asserts in the book's introduction.

Levy, a professor of psychology and epidemiology at Yale University, has demonstrated in multiple studies that exposing people to positive descriptions of aging can improve their memory, gait, balance and will to live. All of us have an "extraordinary opportunity to rethink what it means to grow old," she writes.

Recently, I asked Levy to describe what people can do to modify beliefs about aging. Our conversation, below, has been edited for length and clarity.

**Q: How important are age beliefs, compared with other factors that affect aging?**

**A:** In an early study, we found that people with positive age beliefs lived longer — a median of 7.5 additional years — compared with those with negative beliefs. Compared with other factors that contribute to

longevity, age beliefs had a greater impact than high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity and smoking.

**Q: You suggest that age beliefs can be changed. How?**

**A:** That's one of the hopeful messages of my research. Even in a culture like ours, where age beliefs tend to be predominantly negative, there is a whole range of responses to aging. What we've shown is it's possible to activate and strengthen positive age beliefs that people have assimilated in different types of ways.

**Q: What strategies do you suggest?**

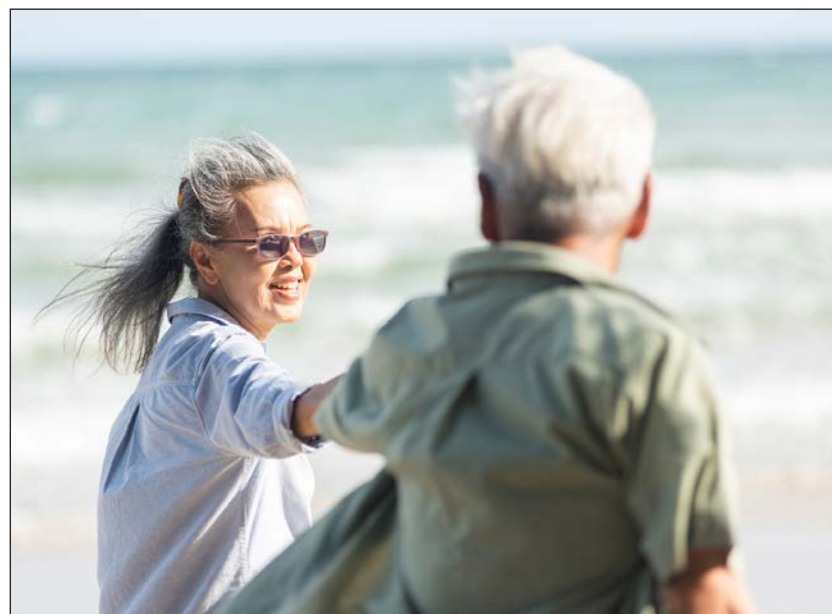
**A:** The first thing we can do is promote awareness of what our own age beliefs are.

A simple way is to ask yourself, "When you think of an older person, what are the first five words or phrases that come to mind?" Noticing which beliefs are generated quickly can be an important first step in awareness.

**Q: What else can people do to increase awareness?**

**A:** Another powerful technique is something I call "age belief journaling." That involves writing down any portrayal of aging that comes up over a week. It could be a conversation you overhear in a coffee shop or something on social media or on your favorite show on Netflix. If there is an absence of older people, write that down, too.

At the end of the week, tally up the number of positive and negative portrayals and the number of times that old people are absent from conversations. With the negative descriptions, take a moment and think, "Could there be a different way of portraying that person?"



**Studies have shown that people with positive age beliefs live longer than those with negative beliefs.**

SORAPOP UDOMSRI/  
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Service

**Q: What comes next?**

**A:** Becoming aware of how ageism and age beliefs are operating in society. Shift the blame to where it is due.

In the book, I suggest thinking about something that's happened to an older person that's blamed on aging — and then taking a step back and asking whether something else could be going on.

For example, when an older adult is forgetful, it's often blamed on aging. But there are many reasons people might not remember something. They might have been stressed when they heard the information. Or they might have been distracted. Not remembering something can happen at any age.

Unfortunately, there's a tendency to blame older people rather than looking at other potential causes for their behaviors or circumstances.

**Q: You encourage people to challenge negative age beliefs in public.**

**A:** Yes. In the book, I present 14 negative age beliefs and the science that dispels them and I recommend becoming knowledgeable about that research.

For example, a common belief is that older people don't contribute to society. But we know from research that older adults are most likely to recycle and make philanthropic gifts. Altruistic motivations become stronger with age. Older adults often work or volunteer in positions that make meaningful contributions and they tend to engage in what's called legacy thinking, wanting to create a better world for future generations.

In my own case, if I hear something concerning, I often need to take time to think about a good response and that's fine. You can go back to somebody and say, "I was thinking about what you said the other day and I don't know if you know this, but research shows that's not actually the case."

**Q: Another thing you talk about is creating a portfolio of positive role models. What do you mean by that?**

**A:** Focus on positive images of aging. These can be people you know, a character in a book, someone you've learned about in a documentary, a historical figure — they can come from

many different sources.

I recommend starting out with, say, five positive images. With each one, think about qualities you admire and you might want to strengthen in yourself. One person might have a great sense of humor. Another might have a great perspective on how to solve conflicts and bring people together. Another might have a great work ethic or a great approach to social justice. There can be different strengths in different people that can inspire us.

**Q: You also recommend cultivating intergenerational contacts.**

**A:** We know from research that meaningful intergenerational contact can be a way to improve age beliefs. A starting point is to think about your five closest friends and what age they are. In my case, I realized that most of my friends were within a couple of years of my age. If that's the case with you, think about ways to get to know people of other ages through a dance class, a book club or a political group. Seeing older people in action often allows us to dispel negative age beliefs.



# Put focus on staying mentally sharp

If asked to describe how they envision their retirement, many professionals might reference travel, time spent with grandchildren and various recreational pursuits.

Few, if any, would mention cognitive decline. However, cognitive decline poses a significant threat to aging men and women, especially during retirement.

Researchers have long since recognized that certain cognitive abilities begin to decline with advanced age, even among elderly individuals who are healthy.

However, despite that decline, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that dementias like Alzheimer's disease are not an inevitable part of aging. In fact, the CDC estimates that as many as 40% of dementia cases may be prevented or delayed.

In addition, the CDC reports that it's not uncommon for routine memory,



Courtesy photo

**Learning something new is one way to maintain cognitive abilities.**

skills and knowledge to stabilize or even improve as the brain ages.

That's good news for retirees who want to spend their

post-work life pursuing their passions and hobbies. Individuals also can embrace some strategies to stay mentally sharp in retirement.

■ **Consider delaying retirement.** Even if early retirement is a dream, it might be better to work a little longer than you had planned. A

2021 study published in the journal SSM — Population Health found that postponed retirement is beneficial to cognitive function for all genders, races/ethnicities, educational levels and professional status. The study reported that individuals who waited until age 67 to retire experienced less cognitive decline than those who retired prior to turning 67.

■ **Make exercise part of your retirement routine.** A lack of structure may seem enticing to individuals who have spent decades working. However, many retirees find that little structure loses its appeal quickly after calling it quits. When creating a new routine in retirement, include regular exercise. According to the Mayo Clinic, studies indicate that people who are physically active are less likely to experience a decline in their mental function. So daily exercise

not only gives retirees something to do, it also benefits their brains.

■ **Enroll in an adult education course.** A 2014 study published in the journal JAMA Neurology examined the association between lifetime intellectual enrichment and cognitive decline in the older population. The study's authors found that higher levels of late-life cognitive activity were associated with higher levels of cognition. The study's authors concluded that lifetime intellectual enrichment might delay the onset of cognitive impairment. Retirees can look into adult learning programs at local colleges and universities to see if anything piques their interest.

Retirement can be everything professionals hope it will be, especially for those who make a concerted effort to maintain optimal cognitive function after they call it a career.

## The brain-boosting benefits of word games

Word games continue to be popular pastimes and provide a great opportunity to engage in lighthearted competition among family and friends.

Wordle is perhaps the most popular word game to become popular in recent years. Created by software engineer and former Reddit employee Josh Wardle and launched in October 2021, Wordle was devised as a way to pass the time during the pandemic lockdown.

Today, it is played by millions of people and was even purchased by The New York Times Company in 2022.

For those who are looking for something even newer, Knot-words, a word game created by Zach Gage and Jack Schlesinger, is available on iOS, Android and Steam. It's a mix between a word scramble, crossword puzzle and sudoku.

There are scores of other word games for people to try. In addition to their entertainment value, these games may provide some benefits that surprise even the most devoted wordsmiths.

■ **Build your vocabulary:** Word games enrich vocabulary and may introduce people to new words. They also may help reinforce spelling skills.

■ **Improve focus:** Nowadays, people are pulled in many directions and are expected to multitask more than ever. Word games in large part require focusing exclusively on the task at hand and employing strategy.

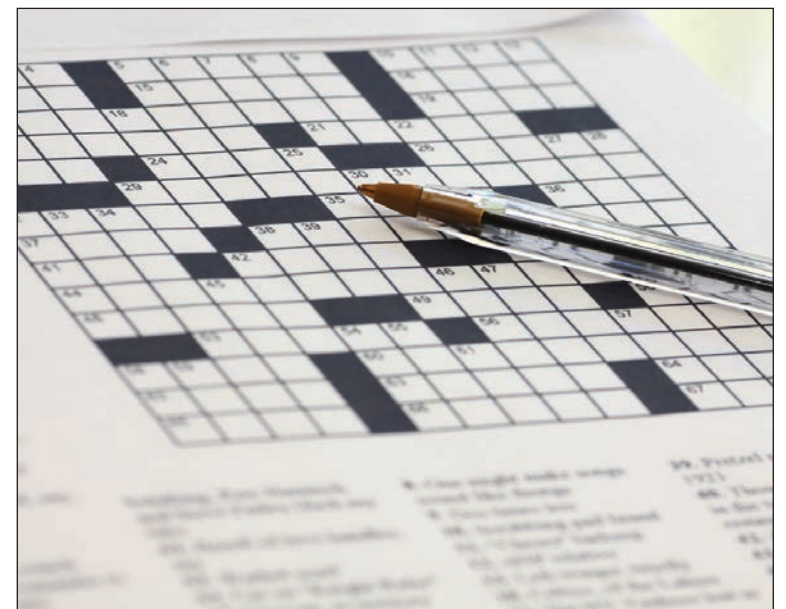
■ **Stimulate the brain:** Word games require critical thinking skills that could stimulate the brain. Word games train the brain in a way that's similar to how physical activity trains the body.

■ **Improve memory:** According

to WebMD, word games may help seniors avoid memory loss and possibly delay the onset of dementia. But seniors are not the only ones to benefit. Word games may improve short-term memory and the cognitive abilities of people of all ages.

■ **Boosts feel-good substances:** When a person is happy, the body releases endorphins, which are feel-good hormones and neurotransmitters. Healthline indicates that an "endorphin rush" often occurs after engaging in a fun activity. Endorphins are released by the hypothalamus and pituitary gland. Playing word games may release endorphins, which can improve mood, boost self-esteem, and reduce pain and discomfort.

These are just a handful of the many positive ways that word games can affect the mind and body.



Courtesy photo

**Various studies have shown the positive effects crossword puzzles can have on a person's brain and capacity to learn.**



# Not ‘just part of aging’

## Long COVID symptoms are often overlooked in seniors

By JUDITH GRAHAM  
Kaiser Health News

Nearly 18 months after getting COVID-19 and spending weeks in the hospital, Terry Bell struggles with hanging up his shirts and pants after doing the laundry.

Lifting his clothes, raising his arms and arranging items in his closet leave Bell short of breath and often trigger severe fatigue. He walks with a cane, only short distances. He’s 50 pounds lighter than when the virus struck.

Bell, 70, is among millions of older adults who have grappled with long COVID — a population that has received little attention even though research suggests seniors are more likely to develop the poorly understood condition than younger or middle-aged adults.

Long COVID refers to ongoing or new health problems that occur at least four weeks after a COVID-19 infection, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Much about the condition is baffling: There is no diagnostic test to confirm it, no standard definition of the ailment and no way to predict who will be affected. Common symptoms, which can last months or years, include fatigue; shortness of breath; an elevated heart rate; muscle and joint pain; sleep disruptions; and problems with attention, concentration, language and memory — a set of difficulties known as brain fog.

Ongoing inflammation or a dysfunctional immune response may be responsible, along with reservoirs of the virus that remain in the body; small blood clots; or residual damage to the heart, lungs, vascular system, brain, kidneys or other organs.

Only now is the impact on

older adults beginning to be documented. In the largest study of its kind, published recently in the journal *BMJ*, researchers estimated that 32% of older adults in the U.S. who survived COVID-19 infections had symptoms of long COVID up to four months after infection — more than double the 14% rate an earlier study found in adults ages 18 to 64. (Other studies suggest symptoms can last much longer, for a year or more.)

The *BMJ* study examined more than 87,000 adults 65 and older who had COVID-19 infections in 2020, drawing on claims data from UnitedHealth Group’s Medicare Advantage plans. It included symptoms that lasted 21 days or more after an infection, a shorter period than the CDC uses in its long COVID definition. The data encompasses both older adults who were hospitalized because of COVID-19 (27%) and those who were not (73%).

The higher rate of post-COVID symptoms in older adults is likely due to a higher incidence of chronic disease and physical vulnerability in this population — traits that have led to a greater burden of serious illness, hospitalization and death among seniors throughout the pandemic.

“On average, older adults are less resilient. They don’t have the same ability to bounce back from serious illness,” said Dr. Ken Cohen, a co-author of the study and executive director of translational research for Optum Care, a network of physician practices owned by UnitedHealth Group.

Applying the study’s findings to the latest data from the CDC suggests that up to 2.5 million older adults may have been affected by long COVID. For those individuals, the consequences can be devastating: the onset of disability, the



Courtesy of Richard Gard/Kaiser Health News

**Richard Gard described himself as “very healthy and fit” before he was hospitalized in intensive care after contracting COVID in March 2020. He has since spent more than two months in the hospital, often for symptoms that resemble a heart attack.**

inability to work, reduced ability to carry out activities of daily life and a lower quality of life.

But in many seniors, long COVID is difficult to recognize.

“The challenge is that nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, pain, confusion and increased frailty are things we often see in seriously ill older adults. Or people may think, ‘That’s just part of aging,’” said Dr. Charles Thomas Alexander Semelka, a postdoctoral fellow in geriatric medicine at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.

Ann Morse, 72, of Nashville, Tennessee, was diagnosed with COVID-19 in November 2020 and recovered at home after a trip to the emergency room and follow-up home visits from nurses every few days. She soon began having trouble with her memory, attention and speech, as well as sleep problems and severe fatigue. Though she’s improved somewhat, several cognitive issues and fatigue persist to this day.

“What was frustrating was I would tell people my symptoms and they’d say, ‘Oh, we’re like that, too,’ as if this was about getting older,” she said. “And I’m like, but this happened to me suddenly, almost overnight.”

Bell, a singer-songwriter in Nashville, had a hard time getting adequate follow-up attention after spending two weeks in intensive care and an additional five weeks in a nursing home receiving rehabilitation therapy.

“I wasn’t getting answers from my regular doctors about my breathing and other issues,” he said. “They said take some over-the-counter medications for your sinus and things like that.”

Bell said his real recovery began after he was recommended to specialists at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

James Jackson, director of long-term outcomes at Vanderbilt’s Critical Illness, Brain Dysfunction, and Survivorship Center, runs several long COVID support groups that Morse and Bell attend and has worked with hundreds of similar patients. He estimates that about a third of those who are older have some degree of cognitive impairment.

“We know there are significant differences between younger and older brains,” he said. “Younger brains are more plastic and effective at reconstituting, and our younger patients seem able to regain their cognitive functioning more quickly.”

In extreme cases, COVID-19 infections can lead to dementia. That may be because older adults who are severely ill with COVID-19 are at high risk of developing delirium — an acute and sudden change in mental status — which is associated with the subsequent development of dementia, said Dr. Liron Sinvani, a geriatrician and an assistant professor at Northwell Health’s Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research in Manhasset, New York.

Older patients’ brains also may have been injured from oxygen deprivation or inflammation. Or disease processes that underlie dementia may already have been underway, and a COVID infection may serve as a tipping point, hastening the emergence of symptoms.

Research conducted by Sinvani and colleagues, published in March, found that 13% of COVID patients who were 65 and older and hospitalized at Northwell Health in March 2020 or April 2020 had evidence of dementia a year later.

Dr. Thomas Gut, associate chair of medicine at Staten Island University Hospital, which opened one of the first long COVID clinics

See **SYMPTOMS**, Page S17



# Got long COVID? Medical care is vital, as is taking it slow

By JUDITH GRAHAM  
Kaiser Health News

What should older adults do if they don't feel well weeks after becoming ill with COVID-19?

■ **Seek medical attention.** “If an older person or their caregiver is noticing that it's been a month or two since COVID and something isn't right — they've lost a lot of weight or they're extremely weak or forgetful — it's worth going in for an evaluation,” said Dr. Liron Sinvani, director of the geriatric hospitalist service at Northwell Health, a large health system in New York.

But be forewarned: Many primary care physicians are at a loss as to how to identify and manage long COVID. If you're not getting much help from your doctor, consider getting a referral to a specialist who sees long COVID patients or a long COVID clinic. Also, be prepared to be patient: Waits for appointments are lengthy.

At least 66 hospitals or health systems have created interdisciplinary clinics, according to Becker's Hospital Review, an industry publication. For people who don't live near one of those, virtual consultations are often available. For specialist referrals, ask whether the physician has experience with long COVID patients.

Also, more than 80 medical centers in more than 30 states, including Massachusetts, are enrolling patients in a four-year, \$1.15

billion study of long COVID that is being funded by the National Institutes of Health and is known as RECOVER (Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery). Older adults who choose to participate will receive ongoing medical attention.

■ **Pursue comprehensive care.** At the University of Southern California's COVID recovery clinic, physicians start by making sure that any underlying medical conditions that older patients have are well controlled. Also, they check for new conditions that may have surfaced after a COVID infection.

If preexisting and new conditions are properly managed and further tests come back negative, “there is probably an element of long COVID,” said Dr. Caitlin McAuley, one of two physicians at the Keck School of Medicine clinic.

At that point, the focus becomes helping older adults regain the ability to manage daily tasks such as showering, dressing, moving around the house and shopping. Typically, several months of physical therapy, occupational therapy or cognitive rehabilitation are prescribed.

Dr. Erica Spatz, an associate professor of cardiology at the Yale School of Medicine, looks for evidence of organ damage, such as changes in the heart muscle, in older patients. If that's detected, there are well-established treatments that can be tried.

“The older a person is, the



KIRSTY WIGGLESWORTH/Associated Press

**Long COVID patient Gary Miller receives treatment from physiotherapist Joan Del Arco at the Long COVID Clinic at King George Hospital in Ilford, London.**

more likely we are to find organ injury,” Spatz said.

At the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, a rehabilitation hospital in Chicago, Illinois, experts have discovered that a significant number of patients with breathing problems have atrophy in the diaphragm, a muscle that's essential to breathing, said Dr. Colin Franz, a physician-scientist. Once inflammation is under control, breathing exercises help patients build back the muscle, he said.

For older adults concerned about their cognition after COVID-19, McAuley recommends a neuropsychological exam.

“Plenty of older patients who've had COVID feel like they now have dementia. But when they do the testing, all their higher-level cognitive functioning is intact, and it's things like attention or cognitive

fluency that are impaired,” she said. “It's important to understand where deficits are so we can target therapy appropriately.”

■ **Become active gradually.** Older patients tend to lose strength and fitness after severe illness — a phenomenon known as “deconditioning” — and their blood volume and heart muscles will start shrinking in a few weeks if they lie in bed or get little activity, Spatz said. That can cause dizziness or a racing heart upon standing up.

In line with recent recommendations from the American College of Cardiology, Spatz advises patients who have developed these symptoms to drink more fluids, consume more salt, and wear compression socks and abdominal binders.

When returning to exercise, “start with five to 10 minutes on a recumbent

bicycle or a rower, and add a couple of minutes every week,” Spatz said. After a month, move to a semi-recumbent position on a standard bike. Then, after another month, try walking, a short distance at first and then longer distances over time.

This “go slow” advice also applies to older adults with cognitive concerns after COVID-19. Franz said he often recommends restricting time spent on cognitively demanding tasks, along with exercises, for brain health and memory.

■ **Reset expectations.** Older adults typically have a harder time bouncing back from serious illness, including COVID-19. But even seniors who had mild or moderate reactions to the virus can find themselves struggling weeks or months later.

The most important message older patients need to hear is “give yourself time to recover,” said Dr. Greg Vanichkachorn, director of the Mayo Clinic's COVID Activity Rehabilitation Program in Rochester, Minnesota.

Learning how to set priorities and not do too much too quickly is essential.

“In this patient population, we've found that having patients grit their teeth and push themselves will actually make them worse” — a phenomenon known as “post-exertional malaise,” Vanichkachorn said.

Instead, people need to learn how to pace themselves.

“Any significant health

event forces people to reexamine their expectations and their priorities, and long COVID has really accelerated that,” said Jamie Wilcox, an associate professor of clinical occupational therapy at the Keck School of Medicine. “Everyone I see feels that it's accelerated their aging process.”

■ **Consider vulnerabilities.** Older adults who have had COVID and who are poor, frail, physically or cognitively disabled, and socially isolated are of considerable concern. This group has been more likely to experience severe effects from COVID-19, and those who survived may not readily access health care services.

“A lot of older (long COVID) patients we deal with aren't accustomed to asking for help, and they think, perhaps, it's a little shameful to be needy,” said James Jackson, director of long-term outcomes at the Critical Illness, Brain Dysfunction, and Survivorship Center at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

The implications are significant, not only for the patients but also for health care providers, friends and family.

“You really have to check in with people who are older and vulnerable and who have had COVID and not just make assumptions that they're fine just because they tell you they are,” Jackson said. “We need to be more proactive in engaging them and finding out, really, how they are.”

## SYMPTOMS

■ *Continued from Page S16*

in the U.S., observed that becoming ill with COVID-19 can push older adults with preexisting conditions such as heart failure or lung disease “over the edge” to a more severe impairment.

In older adults especially, he said, “it's hard to attribute what's directly related to COVID and

what's a progression of conditions they already have.”

That wasn't true for Richard Gard, 67, who lives just outside New Haven, Connecticut, a self-described “very healthy and fit” sailor, scuba diver and music teacher at Yale University who contracted COVID-19 in March 2020. He was the first COVID-19 patient treated at Yale New Haven Hospital, where he was critically ill for 2 1/2 weeks, including five

days in intensive care and three days on a ventilator.

In the two years since, Gard has spent more than two months in the hospital, usually for symptoms that resemble a heart attack.

“If I tried to walk up the stairs or 10 feet, I would almost pass out with exhaustion, and the symptoms would start — extreme chest pain radiating up my arm into my neck, trouble breathing, sweating,” he said.

Dr. Erica Spatz, director of the preventive cardiovascular health program at Yale, is one of Gard's physicians.

“The more severe the COVID infection and the older you are, the more likely it is you'll have a cardiovascular complication after,” she said.

Complications include weakening of the heart muscle, blood clots, abnormal heart rhythms, vascular system damage and high

blood pressure. Gard's life has changed in ways he never imagined. Unable to work, he takes 22 medications and can still walk only 10 minutes on level ground. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a frequent, unwanted companion.

“A lot of times, it's been difficult to go on, but I tell myself I just have to get up and try one more time,” he said. “Every day that I get a little bit better, I tell myself I'm adding another day or week to my life.”



# Recognize the risk factors for stroke

Adults from all walks of life likely know at least one individual who has suffered a stroke. That person could be a family member, friend, colleague or other acquaintance. The likelihood of knowing someone who has had a stroke underscores just how prevalent stroke is and how necessary it is that people understand its risk factors.

According to the World Stroke Organization, there are more than 101 million people currently living who have experienced stroke. That group includes men, women and even children.

No one is immune to stroke, but many instances of stroke can be prevented. Prevention involves recognition of risk factors individuals can control and subsequent action to reduce exposure to those factors. But the risk for stroke also is heightened by factors beyond individuals' control, and it's vital that individuals recognize they might be at elevated risk for stroke even if they're otherwise healthy.

## Risk factors beyond your control

The American Heart Association notes the importance of knowing the following risk factors for stroke, even if there's nothing people can do to change them.

■ **Age:** Stroke is more common among individuals age 65 and older. That includes both men and women.

■ **Family history:** Individuals could be at greater risk of stroke if they have a parent, grandparent, sister or brother who has had a stroke. Various factors could be behind that link, including a genetic disorder known as CADASIL (cerebral autosomal dominant arteriopathy with subcortical infarcts and leukoencephalopathy) that affects blood flow in the brain.

■ **Race:** The AHA reports that African Americans are more likely to die from stroke than Caucasians. Part of that is undoubtedly due to socioeconomic factors such as inadequate access to health care, but the AHA



Recognition of risk factors is often the first step toward adopting a healthy lifestyle that can greatly reduce the chances a person will suffer a stroke.

also links this elevated risk to higher rates of high blood pressure, diabetes

and obesity within the Black community.

■ **Gender:** Stroke kills more

women than men, and women have more strokes.

■ **Medical history:** Individuals who have a personal history of stroke and/or transient ischemic attacks, often referred to as "mini strokes," are at elevated risk for stroke.

## Risk factors you can control

The good news is that individuals, even those with risk factors beyond their control, can lower their risk for stroke. That's because many of the risk factors for stroke can be monitored and treated before a stroke occurs.

■ **High blood pressure:** The AHA defines high blood pressure as the most significant controllable risk factor for stroke. Annual well visits are vital to preventive health care, which includes monitoring blood pressure. When doctors diagnose high blood pressure, individuals should follow their advice in regard to getting blood pressure back to a healthy level.

■ **Smoking:** The dangers

of smoking are well-documented. The AHA characterizes smoking as paving "the way for stroke." Never smoking or quitting smoking immediately can lower risk for stroke. Women should know that the AHA reports the use of birth control combined with cigarette smoking can greatly increase the risk of stroke.

■ **Diabetes:** It's important that individuals with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes control their blood sugar, as diabetes mellitus is an independent risk factor for stroke.

■ **Diet:** A poor diet that's high in saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and cholesterol elevates the risk for various conditions, including high blood pressure and obesity, that increase the likelihood of suffering stroke.

■ **Physical inactivity:** The AHA reports that physical inactivity increases risk for stroke. Individuals who live a predominantly sedentary lifestyle, including office workers, are urged to discuss exercise with their physicians.

## How is stroke diagnosed?

A stroke is a medical event that occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is interrupted or reduced. When this occurs, brain tissue is deprived of oxygen and nutrients. Since brain cells can begin to die in minutes, damage from stroke can occur almost immediately.

Some strokes are minor, leaving the individual with minimal lasting effects. However, a complicated stroke can cause lasting brain damage, long-term disability or even death, indicates the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That is why it is crucial to recognize stroke risk factors and figure out

how to head off an event, if possible.

Certain tests are used to determine the likelihood that a stroke may occur. It is important to note that not all people who will experience a stroke have noticeable symptoms. Imaging tests often are ordered after a stroke occurs to determine which type of stroke an individual suffered.

Here's a deeper look at some diagnostic tests for stroke.

■ **Carotid ultrasound:** This ultrasound is painless and uses sound waves to create pictures of the carotid arteries, which are responsible for supplying oxygen-rich blood to the brain. The

images will indicate if plaque has narrowed or blocked the carotid arteries, a risk factor for stroke.

■ **Doppler ultrasound:** This is a special test that shows the speed and direction of blood moving through carotid arteries and other blood vessels.

■ **Carotid angiography:** The Center for Neuro Skills says a carotid angiography employs a dye and special X-rays to show the insides of the carotid arteries, again helping diagnose potential blockages.

■ **Electrocardiogram:** An electrocardiogram, also called an ECG or EKG, measures the heart's electrical activity. The test determines

if the heart is beating regularly and the strength and timing of electrical signals that pass through the heart. An EKG can detect atrial fibrillation, which is a risk factor for stroke.

■ **Magnetic resonance imaging:** An MRI uses radio waves and a magnetic field to create a detailed view of the brain. An MRI may be used to detect brain tissue damage by an ischemic stroke (result of a blockage) and brain hemorrhages. A doctor may use a dye injected into blood vessels to highlight blood flow.

■ **Computed tomography:** A CT or CAT scan creates cross-sectional pictures of the brain, according to



Courtesy photo

Testing can identify risk factors and determine if a stroke already occurred.

the Mayo Clinic. A CT scan can show if a stroke has occurred and also identify if the stroke was ischemic or hemorrhagic (the result of bleeding).

■ **Blood tests:** Doctors say

that blood tests can measure various things, including platelets in the blood. Abnormal platelet levels could be a sign of a bleeding disorder (not enough clotting or too much clotting).



# Forge connections by starting a social club



Courtesy photo

Fitness is one possible focus of a social club, which can be a great way to meet new people and explore new or existing passions.

The early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic taught the world many lessons, not the least of which was how easy it can be to take socializing for granted. Lockdown was a big part of life during the early days of the pandemic, as people were forced to stay home from work and school and remain largely isolated, even from their own friends and family members.

The sense of isolation that many people developed during those early days of the pandemic likely didn't come as a surprise to medical researchers, particularly those who have studied the effects of isolation on aging populations.

The National Institute on Aging indicates that social isolation and loneliness are linked to depression, as well as a host of other negative health outcomes, including high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and cognitive decline.

Social clubs can be a great way for older adults to avoid

isolation and loneliness. Such clubs can provide opportunities to connect with individuals who share similar interests, laying the foundation for new friendships that can be hard to develop later in life.

Perhaps the best thing about social clubs is that anyone can start one. These tips can help:

■ **Think of a hobby unique to your location.** One of the best ways to attract other locals is to find a hobby that caters to residents in your area. For example, coastal residents may want to start a local fishing club, while city dwellers may draw more interest starting a club focused on local museums or restaurants.

■ **Take all comers.** Individuals may aspire to meet people in situations similar to their own, but they should still allow anyone interested in their club to join. Adults in the early stages of midlife are often too busy with their personal and professional lives to make much time for social clubs, so it's likely

that those interested will be 50 or older. But accepting all who are interested can increase the chances of starting a diverse and engaging group.

■ **Spread the word.** Meetup (meetup.com) has been facilitating connections for two decades, making it a great place to start a group for people with shared interests. In addition to using a service like Meetup, founders can spread the word through their social media apps and create flyers to post on public boards at local community centers and libraries.

■ **Find a public place to get together.** It's best to avoid hosting club events and meetings at a private residence, including your own. Instead, prior to starting the club, look around for meeting places, which can include local churches, libraries or community centers. Ask about reserving spaces for meetings and look for places that are accessible for all people, including those with mobility issues.

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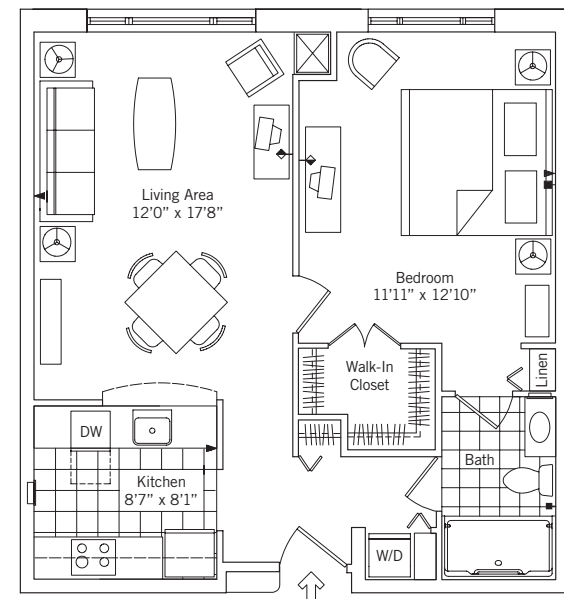
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# Adult Foster Care of the North Shore provides financial and emotional solutions to families

Adult Foster Care of the North Shore (AFCNS) is a one-of-a-kind organization. For the last 21 years it has been providing financial and emotional solutions to families in need of care for a disabled or chronically ill loved one (client). Many AFCNS clients are already living with a parent, child or other family member who qualifies as a caregiver. Others are placed in homes with compassionate and diligent caregivers.

350 clients. The difference between AFCNS and other similar companies is that, even though they share the same mission, the staff at Adult Foster Care of the North Shore actually lives the mission. AFCNS provides compassionate and flexible support for clients and their caregiver families.

**If you are interested in becoming a paid caregiver for a disabled family member or qualified disabled adult, visit [AdultFosterCareNS.com](http://AdultFosterCareNS.com) or call today at 978-281-2612.**

Founded in 2001 by Cynthia Bjorlie, MD, AFCNS has grown to a staff of 30 and now serves over

## About the Program:

This innovative program provides caregivers with a monthly payment for taking care of a disabled adult. Caregivers are special, dedicated people who may take care of a family member or welcome a new friend into their own home.

Caregivers are reimbursed up to \$1,500 monthly, tax-free, for personal care services. Each and every caregiver is supported by AFCNS' professional staff who helps train the individual regarding the personal care needs of their clients. AFCNS carefully and selectively matches clients with caregivers to ensure compatibility.

**Adult Foster Care of the North Shore provides the following financial and emotional support:**

**Financial Support:** Through MassHealth, a monthly, tax-free stipend is given to the caregiver.

**Health & Social Support:** Clients and caregivers are assigned a nurse and care manager who visit the homes regularly. Staff members can answer questions about health issues and serve as a resource for medical training, education and needed interventions. On call support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**General Resource Support:** Seasoned nurses and care managers can identify vital resources including:

- Adult day health programs
- Specialized work and community support programs
- Mental health counseling
- Guardianship and health care proxy information
- Transportation services

**AFCNS is a CARF International approved service provider**, having demonstrated that it meets international standards for quality and is committed to pursuing excellence.

**"I love Adult Foster Care because of the staff and the benefits that are made available to us. The monetary benefits are great and assist with monthly expenses."**

**Kathy, Caregiver to Jackie**

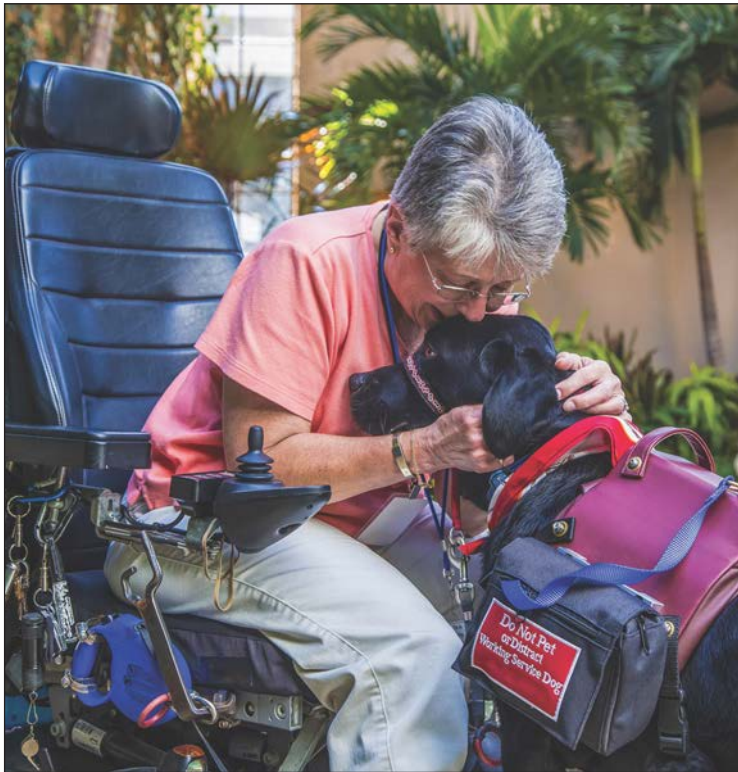


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# Assistance **dogs** provide a variety of services



Courtesy photo

Assistance animals play vital roles in their handlers' lives.

It seems more common than ever to see dogs strolling through stores with their human companions. Many of these pups are family pets that owners seemingly want to have close by at all times, but quite often, the dogs people encounter in businesses and around neighborhoods are assistance dogs.

Service dogs help their owners in various ways. Highly trained, these animals work with people who have psychiatric or physical disabilities and ensure people can get through each day safely and comfortably.

According to the organization Paws With a Cause, assistance dogs can help open doors, pull a wheelchair, alert individuals to sounds, pick up objects, or even detect the onset of seizures or other health effects.

Service Dog Central estimates that there are anywhere from 100,000 to 200,000 registered service dogs in the United States.

The Americans With Disabilities Act dictates that service dogs have a legal right to enter all public

spaces. This differs from emotional support animals, which may not have the same level of free access as service animals because ESAs are not as specially trained as service animals. Here's a look at some different types of assistance dogs and the tasks they can perform.

■ **Guide dog:** A guide dog was one of the first service animals on record. Standardized guide dog training can be traced to the 1700s. Guide dogs assist people who are visually impaired. They help their handlers get around in public. Guide dogs have the unique skills to accept commands but also make choices based on situational assessments.

■ **Seizure alert dog:** Dogs have an amazing ability to tune into changes in human behavior. Seizure alert dogs can recognize often elusive signs that a seizure is imminent, helping their handlers with epilepsy get into safe positions. These dogs also are capable of alerting others that their owners need help.

■ **Diabetic alert dog:** The olfactory

receptors in dogs are more abundant — roughly 300 million compared to the 6 million human beings have. Some dogs can smell things like chemical changes in the body, including changes in blood sugar, which helps people with diabetes avoid critical drops.

■ **Hearing dog:** Hearing dogs serve as ears for people who cannot hear. They are trained to alert their handlers to doorbells, knocks, fire alarms, crying babies and much more.

■ **Mobility assistance dog:** Service dogs can fill the void for individuals who do not walk or have other impairments. They may bring objects to their owner, like phones or utensils. They also may help move wheelchairs or provide support while getting around.

■ **Psychiatric support dog:** Individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety or other psychiatric conditions can benefit from psychiatric support dogs that provide comfort and perform tasks that make handlers feel safe and secure.

  
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