

SENIOR *Living*

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7 benefits of socialization for seniors

One of the primary lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic was how challenging social isolation can be. Social isolation often goes overlooked, but it's a key contributor to poor mental health.

Experts state that it is increasingly important for adults to maintain an active social life as they age. There are many benefits that come from staying engaged and socializing with others. The following is a look at seven ways socialization benefits seniors.

1. Regular social interactions can help older adults avoid depression, anxiety and feelings of isolation, according to Integracare, a senior living company.

2. Social engagement can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia because socializing helps to keep the mind sharp through new experiences.

3. Socialization often revolves around an activity that gets seniors up and moving. While being sedentary is alright on occasion, consistently sitting

or laying around can lead to high cholesterol, weight gain and high blood pressure. A 2019 study published in The Journals of Gerontology, Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences determined that older adults who interacted with people beyond their usual social circle of family and close friends were more likely to have higher levels of physical activity, greater positive moods and fewer negative feelings.

4. Regular social interaction may compel seniors to embrace healthier eating habits. Social events expose seniors to different types of food, which can help them get the nutrients they need to live healthy.

5. Regular socialization can help seniors feel they are needed and have a sense of purpose, which can boost self-esteem. Engaging with others often means contributing to a community, and that can be satisfying.

6. Getting out and interacting with others can serve as an informal wellness check, potentially alerting family and friends to issues that may need attention.

7. Getting outside and interacting with others can open seniors up to new hobbies. Whether that is participating in a new sport or joining a club, there are mental and physical advantages to engaging socially.

Socialization is an important factor in seniors' overall wellness, and one that should be discussed along with diet, exercise and illness management.



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Common financial scams that target seniors

Financial scams are as old as the concept of currency. But consumers' vulnerability to scams has seemingly increased in the twenty-first century, when the Internet and devices like smartphones have enabled scammers to gain access to potential victims' financial information and even gain virtual entry into their homes.

Seniors are targeted by financial scammers with such frequency that the term "elder fraud" has entered the English lexicon and is now widely recognized as a notable threat to individuals age 60 and older. In recognition of that threat, the Elder Justice Initiative aims to support and coordinate U.S. Department of Justice efforts to combat financial fraud that targets older adults. Those efforts are ongoing and include a number of initiatives to educate older adults about elder fraud, including warning seniors about some notable scams that criminals use to target older adults.



• **Social Security Administration Impostor Scam:** When perpetrating this scam, criminals typically contact prospective victims via telephone and falsely claim that suspicious activity has prompted the suspension of their Social Security number. Scammers may also indicate money must be withdrawn from a potential victim's bank and stored on

gift cards for security's sake. It's important to note caller ID spoofing is often utilized when perpetrating this scam so an incoming call appears to be coming from the Social Security Administration.

• **Tech Support Scam:** This scam involves criminals claiming to be representatives from widely recognized companies who are calling to inform seniors

that viruses or malware have been detected on their devices. Some also may claim a target's computer has been hacked. The Federal Trade Commission notes perpetrators of this scam pretend to be tech support and request victims enable them to remotely access their devices or computer. Granting such access provides an avenue to view sensitive information, but scammers also may diagnose nonexistent problems and charge a fee. But the scam does not always stop there. Some call back later and offer a refund to account for services that can no longer be rendered or to correct an overcharge. The scammers then request victims' specific banking details under the guise of "correcting" these alleged oversights.

• **Lottery Scam:** The lottery scam involves scammers calling potential victims and informing them they have won a foreign lottery or sweepstakes. Perpetrators of this scam typically identify themselves as

lawyers, customs officials or lottery representatives. The telemarketers behind this scam may be based in Jamaica, but the U.S. Embassy in Jamaica warns that those behind the scam will ask winners to pay various fees, including shipping and customs duties, until victims' funds are exhausted.

• **Romance Scam:** The FTC warns that wildly popular dating sites, social networking platforms and chat rooms provide opportunities for scammers to identify and exploit potential victims. The aim of these scams, which many victims are too ashamed to report even after they realize they've been victimized, is to convince targets to send money in the name of love. But the EJI warns that online love interests who ask for money are almost certainly scam artists.

These are just a handful of the many ways that modern scammers target seniors. More information about these and other scams is available at justice.gov/elderjustice.

How to budget for retirement

After what feels like a lifetime in the workforce, retirement is a welcome change for many individuals. Upon retiring, people often engage in hobbies they may have previously relegated to the back burner. Travel opportunities increase in retirement, and retirees may live more relaxed and less stressful lives.

Stress stemming from a looming retirement can creep up for those people who have not taken the time to account for how their finances will change once they're no longer working. Without a consistent salary or other income coming in, retirees may have to change their habits and spending accordingly. This is particularly true for those who did not sock

away enough in retirement savings.

The key to enjoying retirement is creating a retirement budget and sticking to it. Budgeting sets retirees up for more enjoyable golden years. The following are a few steps to creating a retirement budget.

• **Add up all of your income.** As retirement nears, it can be helpful to sit down with a financial professional and calculate all of the income streams that ultimately will be replacing your paycheck. These include Social Security benefits, tax-advantaged retirement accounts like IRAs and 401(k)s, pensions, taxable investments, and even part-time earnings. This will give you a picture of projected income, which can

be divided by the number of years you expect to spend in retirement.

• **Figure out your mandatory expenses.** Charles Schwab suggests considering the spending items that you will really need in retirement. These can include housing, utilities, clothing, medical insurance costs, and transportation. These needs may change through the years, so the budget can be reevaluated each year.

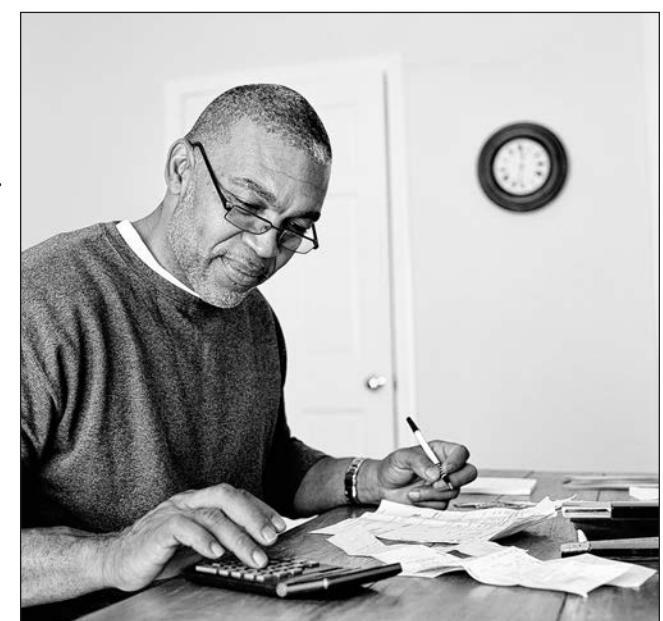
• **Calculate any discretionary expenses.** Spending that falls in the "want" territory may include travel, hobbies, gifting family members like grandchildren, and any big purchases like a boat or vacation timeshare.

• **Consider expenses that may go up.** While certain expenses may go down,

like commuting costs, grocery bills, and expenses related to children, bills for utilities, recreation, property taxes, and more likely will increase through the years.

• **Compare projected income against projected expenses and see where the chips fall.** If you find that income streams fall short, you may have to adjust investments before your retirement or you may have to take a part-time job after retirement. Sometimes spouses may not be able to retire at the same time if one person's salary will be needed to continue covering all expenses.

• **Don't overlook health care.** Although you may be covered by Medicare and an insurance plan from a former employer,



supplemental premiums and out-of-pocket costs may continue to rise during retirement. According to the 2024 Fidelity Retiree Health Care Cost Estimate, on average, a 65-year-old person may need \$165,000 in after-tax savings to cover health care expenses.

Retirement comes with exciting prospects, and careful budgeting for the days when you aren't working can make for a more enjoyable post-work life.

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Stroke statistics tell a deadly story

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death across the globe. In a recent examination of death statistics, the World Health Organization found that stroke was responsible for the third most deaths in 2021. Notably, the WHO analysis found that stroke was the leading cause of death in upper-middle-income countries. In that same year, stroke was the second leading cause of death in low-income countries and the third leading cause of death in low-middle-income countries. Stroke was the third-leading cause of death in high-income countries, which includes the United States and Canada. The threat posed by stroke is indeed significant, and McLaren Health Care cites the following statistics in an effort to raise awareness of this potentially deadly but often preventable disease.



- **15 million people have a stroke across the globe each year**
 - Three in five, or 60 percent, of strokes occur in people under age 70
 - 16 percent, or roughly one in six, of strokes occur in people under age 50
 - Five million people die from stroke each year
 - Four in five strokes are preventable
 - 38 percent of people are aware of all major stroke symptoms

Raising awareness of stroke and its symptoms can spur immediate action that can greatly reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes, which can include death, paralysis and brain damage. Adults are urged to contact their physician to identify their risk factor for stroke and to learn how to spot its symptoms and what should be done should any signs appear.

What to know about stroke

A healthy brain is vital to a healthy body. The brain is responsible for controlling both autonomic functions and somatic nervous responses. Stroke is a disease that can affect the brain and greatly diminish quality of life, which is why it's so essential to learn the basics of stroke.

What is a stroke?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says a stroke occurs when something blocks blood supply to a part of the brain or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts. Stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention.

How serious is a stroke?

The Cleveland Clinic says strokes are the second-leading cause of death worldwide and the fifth most common cause of death in the United States. A stroke causes parts of the brain to become damaged or die, so it can cause lasting damage, long-term disability, or even death.



The Mayo Clinic suggests using the acronym FAST to recognize if a stroke is occurring.

- **Face:** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

- **Arms:** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward? Or is one arm unable to rise?

- **Speech:** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is speech slurred or different from usual?

- **Time:** Time is of the essence when a person is suffering a stroke.

If any of these signs are observed, call for emergency medical help immediately.

What causes a stroke?

Ischemic strokes occur because a blood clot blocks a blood vessel connected to the brain. They may be brought on by hardened arteries, atrial fibrillation, clotting disorders, heart defects, and microvascular ischemic disease.

Hemorrhagic strokes, which happen when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures, can result from brain aneurysms, brain tumors, high blood pressure, and any condition that weakens blood vessels in the brain.

In some instances, treatment for these underlying conditions may help reduce the risk that a stroke will occur. It's important to note that a transient ischemic attack, sometimes called a "mini-stroke," is a temporary stroke. A mini-stroke often is a warning sign that a true stroke will occur soon and intervention is needed.

People who are older than 65, smoke or use other forms of tobacco or nicotine, use recreational or nonprescription drugs, have type 2 diabetes, and those with alcohol use disorder are at higher risk for stroke. All individuals are urged to speak with their doctors about stroke risk and prevention.

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Prioritize Your Brain Health: Free Resources from NH DHHS

Your brain health matters at every stage of life. The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is making it easier to take charge of your cognitive well-being with the Brain Health webpage at www.dhhs.nh.gov/BrainHealth.

This online resource provides tools to help you understand brain health, talk with your healthcare provider about early dementia detection, and take proactive steps to maintain cognitive function. You'll find:

A quick brain health quiz – Learn about key risk factors and how to support long-term brain health.

Memory loss and dementia information – Understand the difference between normal aging and concerning symptoms.

Tips for a brain-healthy lifestyle – Discover simple ways to boost mental wellness through diet, exercise, and social connection.

Resources for caregivers and families – Get support and guidance for loved ones affected by dementia.

Real Stories from New Hampshire Residents

New Hampshire is launching a campaign to raise awareness around brain health and

the importance of early dementia detection. To ensure this campaign reflects real experiences, DHHS partnered with New Hampshire residents living with early dementia to share their stories. Their insights helped to create a campaign that speaks to the realities of an early diagnosis—the challenges, the emotions, and, most importantly, the possibilities.

Leah and Kerry's Stories

Leah first noticed memory issues at work, and hearing her diagnosis was scary. Yet over time, fear turned into empowerment as she discovered new ways to embrace life. Now, she's traveling more, making plans, and redefining what's possible.

When Kerry was diagnosed with early-onset dementia, she felt something unexpected—relief. After struggling with unanswered questions, she finally knew what was happening. And the way she embraced her diagnosis changed everything.

Hear the rest of Kerry and Leah's stories at www.dhhs.nh.gov/BrainHealth.

Early detection can make a difference. Visit dhhs.nh.gov/BrainHealth today to explore the tools available and take the first step toward a healthier brain.



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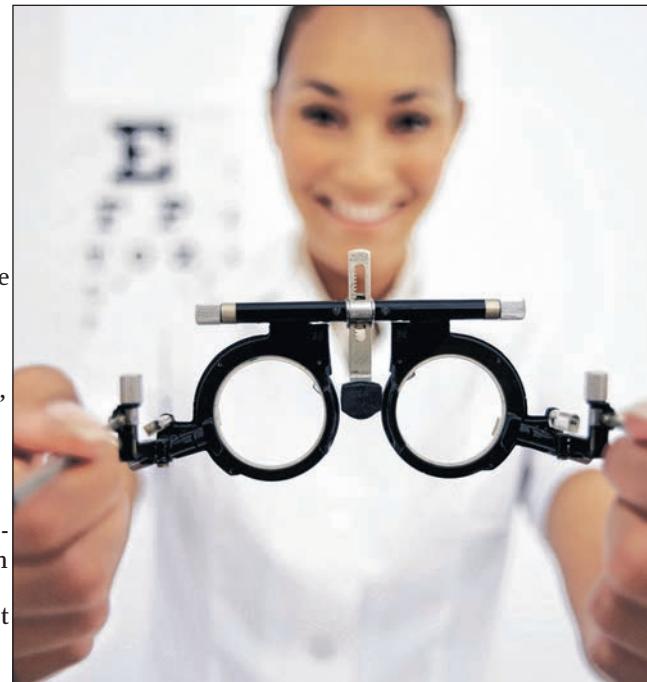
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Did you know?

The National Eye Institute reports that age-related macular degeneration, also known as "AMD," is very common. The condition, which is a disease marked by blurred central vision caused by age-related damage to the macula, affects 11 million people in the United States. AMD also is a notable threat in Canada, where the organization Fighting Blindness Canada reports that 2.5 million Canadians have the condition. AMD is a leading cause of vision loss in both nations, and adults over 50 should know that they're more likely to develop the disease than other demographics.

AMD is often detected during routine comprehensive dilated eye



exams, which is one of many reasons why such tests should be part of

anyone's, but particularly aging adults', wellness regimens.

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Did you know?

A high cost of living and advancements in medicine that have contributed to longer life expectancies would seemingly compel individuals to work longer, but data indicates the average professional is retiring shortly after turning 60. Data from the 2024 Mass-Mutual Retirement Happiness Study indicates that the average retirement age among American retirees is 62. That's in spite of the fact that pre-retirees and retirees who participated in the study indicated that 63 is the ideal retirement age.

Canadians are staying in the workforce a good deal longer, as Statistics Canada reports the average retirement age across



Canada in 2023 was 65.1.

That disparity could be due to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), which replaces part of retirees'

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How to plan a memorable, celebratory retirement party

Professionals spend years saving for retirement. Many enroll in an employer-sponsored retirement plan the moment they begin their careers in their early twenties, and continue to build their nest egg until the day they officially call it quits.

The effort people put into retirement planning makes the moment individuals call it a career worthy of an extraordinary celebration. The following retirement planning party tips can ensure a celebration that suits an occasion as significant as the day professionals call it a career.

- **Pick a unique venue.** Whether the party will be a sizable affair with a guest list that includes long-time colleagues and friends or a smaller gathering with a retiree's close knit inner circle, a unique venue underscores how significant a moment and achievement retirement is. For larger affairs, shop around for venues in much the same way you might when celebrating other milestones, such as a child's graduation from college or a wedding. If the guest list includes just a handful



of friends and family members, consider planning a trip to a resort locale or renting an impressive home through a site like Airbnb or Vrbo.

- **Take a stroll down Memory Lane.** In the months leading up to the celebration, work with the retiree to identify key moments and people in his or her career. A photo montage of those notable moments and

individuals can be a great way to commemorate a lengthy career and simultaneously thank and honor the people who helped along the way. Play the montage for guests at a key moment during the party.

- **Ask colleagues to share well wishes.** Brief messages from colleagues, whether they're delivered via handwritten letters or videos each individual films, can be a great way to

show the guest of honor how much he or she meant to others throughout their careers. Messages can be incorporated into a montage video or shared privately with the guest of honor.

- **Kick the curfew to the curb.** It might have been a while since a newly minted retiree had a late night, but a retirement party can stretch into the wee hours. After

all, the guest of honor won't need to wake up for work the next day (or any other day), so let invitees know that the party will keep going well into the night. If booking a venue for the party, plan an after party at your home for a handful of guests who are particularly close with the guest of honor.

- **Keep the focus on fun.** While reaching retirement is a celebratory moment that merits a good party, many retirees also feel a degree of sorrow because they're leaving behind rewarding careers they worked so hard to build. Such sentiments may not be entirely avoidable, but party planners can emphasize fun and a festive atmosphere to ensure the night is celebratory and not sorrowful. Book a band and submit a play list of the retiree's favorite songs, and encourage guests to dance the night away.

The day professionals reach retirement merits a celebration that's worthy of the years of hard work and dedication individuals put in over the course of their careers.



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What seniors can do to maintain a healthy weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight is a lifelong process. Children tend to be so physically active and grow at such a consistent pace that it's easier for them to consume a high-calorie diet without becoming overweight. That's generally not the case after adolescence, and it might be particularly difficult for seniors to avoid gaining weight.

In a 2020 interview with Tufts Medicine, Jillian Reece, a bariatric dietitian at Tufts Medical Center, noted that a person's basal metabolic rate slows down with aging. The basal metabolic rate indicates the rate at which the body uses energy while at rest. As that rate slows down, body weight can increase. But seniors should know they aren't helpless against nature and Father Time. In fact, there is much aging adults can do to maintain a healthy weight throughout their golden years.

• Limit portion sizes when eating. Controlling portion sizes is

easier said than done, particularly for seniors who dine out with frequency. When dining out, seniors can order off the appetizer menu instead of ordering an entrée, especially when visiting an establishment known for its hefty portions. At home, pay attention to serving size data on product labeling. If necessary, measure portions when eating foods such as cereal so the portion you eat reflects the serving size noted on the box.

• Eat breakfast each morning. Seniors who skip breakfast, which may be more likely upon retiring, could be doing their waistlines a notable disservice. A 2017 statement from the American Heart Association noted that several large, long-term, prospective, observational studies have found an association between breakfast consumption and lower risk of obesity. The less structured pattern of retirement living may compel some seniors to skip breakfast, but committing to a morning meal

can help keep off extra pounds.

• Commit to routine exercise. Diet can go a long way toward helping seniors maintain a healthy weight. However, diet is not the only area where seniors can help their waistlines. Routine physical activity can help seniors maintain muscle mass and make it easier to be more mobile. Staying mobile can help keep pounds off, as a sedentary lifestyle is one of the more notable risk factors for overweight and obesity. The National Institute on Aging recommends seniors aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Moderate-intensity aerobic activities are those that raise the heart rate and help seniors break a sweat, such as walking, jogging, swimming, and cycling.

• Make a concerted effort to remain hydrated throughout the day. The Cleveland Clinic notes that age-related body composition changes make seniors particularly vulnerable to dehydration. An aging body does not



Eating breakfast each day can help seniors achieve their goal of maintaining a healthy weight.

demand water like it once did, so it's easy for seniors to forget to hydrate because they don't feel thirsty. But remaining hydrated is important for seniors looking to maintain a healthy weight because dehydration can mimic symptoms of hunger. Seniors

may reach for snacks feeling they're hungry when all they might need is a glass of water to hydrate.

A healthy weight can allow seniors to live life to the fullest. Various strategies can help seniors achieve a healthy weight.

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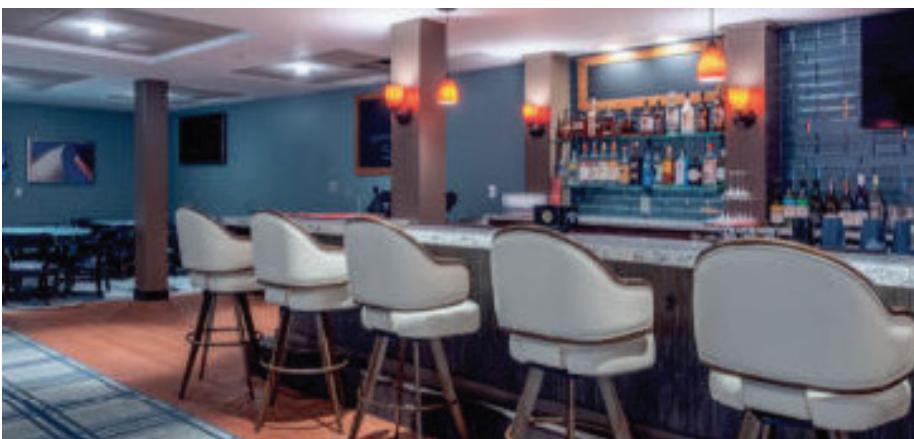
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How to pay homage to dementia care workers

Dementia can affect just about anyone. The World Health Organization says 57 million people had dementia worldwide in 2021, and every year there are nearly 10 million new cases. Dementia can result from a variety of diseases and injuries that affect the brain. Alzheimer's disease is one of the more prevalent and well-known types of dementia.

While many people living with dementia may be able to manage on their own for a few years, or with somewhat minimal help from family, as the disease progresses, professional assistance likely will be needed. Often those facing a dementia diagnosis will require the services of a skilled nursing facility or memory care unit at some point; otherwise, they may have 24-hour, in-home care from a dementia care professional. Caring for those with dementia can be rewarding,



but it is very taxing. Alzheimer's San Diego says 35 percent of Alzheimer's caregivers report their own health has suffered from their care responsibilities, as caring for someone with dementia takes

an emotional toll. It doesn't take much to show a dementia care professional that they are appreciated. Here are a few ways to be gracious and honor these compassionate individuals.

Offer kind words. One of the easiest ways to honor memory care workers is to provide support and offer compliments. Saying, "You're doing a great job," or "I couldn't do this without you" will

help the professional feel appreciated.

- Ask how you can help.** Dementia care professionals are being paid for their services, but that doesn't mean someone can't pitch in and lend a hand. Offering to sit with the patient so that the worker can take a break for a few minutes, or offering to brainstorm solutions to a problem that has come up is an opportunity to share some of the burden that caring for someone with dementia can bring.

- Advocate for care workers.** Advocate for policies and programs that provide assistance and resources to dementia caregivers, whether they are professionals or family caregivers. Write to government officials about what more can be done to support these individuals who have very challenging jobs.

- Listen to caregivers.** Sometimes listening is the best

support a person can offer. Dementia care professionals may want to share experiences and feelings without judgment.

- Order food for the staff.** Bring food platters, beverages and snacks to long-term care facilities so dementia care workers can grab a treat when they have time to do so. Check with the facility beforehand so they can approve any potential offerings, as there may be rules governing how individuals can show their appreciation to the professionals working there.

Dementia care professionals work long hours and face challenging conditions that are ever-evolving as patients' memories decline. Expressions of gratitude and additional gestures can indicate to these vital workers that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

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How aging and dehydration are intertwined

The human body is ever-changing. Though it's not often so easy to detect the changes the body goes through, such alterations may become more noticeable with age.

One age-related change that's easy to overlook is related to thirst. The Cleveland Clinic notes seniors typically do not feel as thirsty as they once did. That compels seniors to consume less fluids, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to dehydration.

Why is my risk for dehydration higher now than when I was younger?

Seniors may ask this question, and body composition changes that correspond to age are often to blame. According to the Cleveland

Clinic, seniors' bodies do not demand water in the same way they did when they were younger. So people tend to drink less water as they age. Some also suffer from decreased kidney function that also compromises fluid levels in the body. These things mean many seniors have less water in their bodies than they used to, which increases their risk for dehydration.

How serious is this threat?

The threat posed by dehydration is serious. In fact, the Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration is a common cause of hospitalization among adults age 65 and older. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality also notes that adults 65 and over have the highest hospital admission

rates for dehydration of any group.

How do I know if I'm dehydrated?

As noted, aging adults do not typically feel as thirsty as they did when they were younger. That's important to remember, as the Cleveland Clinic notes that thirst might actually be a sign of early dehydration. The following are some additional physical signs of dehydration:

- **Fatigue and weakness**
- **Dizziness or a loss of coordination**
- **Dry mouth and/or a dry cough**
- **Headache**
- **Muscle cramps, which can be caused by a loss of electrolytes through sweating**
- **Chills or heat intolerance**
- **Flushed skin**

• **Flushed skin**

some may make seniors vulnerable to additional issues. For instance, dizziness or a loss of coordination resulting from dehydration may make seniors more vulnerable to falls. Falls are a significant threat because they increase the likelihood of broken bones and other serious injuries, but a fall also can adversely affect mental health. A fall that causes injury may lead seniors to withdraw from certain activities, including recreational sports or other physical activities often performed alongside fellow seniors. Withdrawing from such activities can lead to isolation and depression.

How can I avoid dehydration?

The goods news is that hydrating is pretty easy.



particularly when seniors are aware of their vulnerability to dehydration. The Cleveland Clinic urges seniors to consume sufficient fluids each day, even spicing up water with a fruit slice if necessary. In addition, seniors are urged to avoid caffeine, which can force more trips to the bathroom to urinate and thus lose fluid. Cucumbers

celery and, of course, watermelon also can be incorporated into seniors' diets each day, as these foods are high in water content.

Dehydration poses a serious threat to seniors' health. But that threat can be easily overcome when seniors make a concerted effort to stay hydrated each day.

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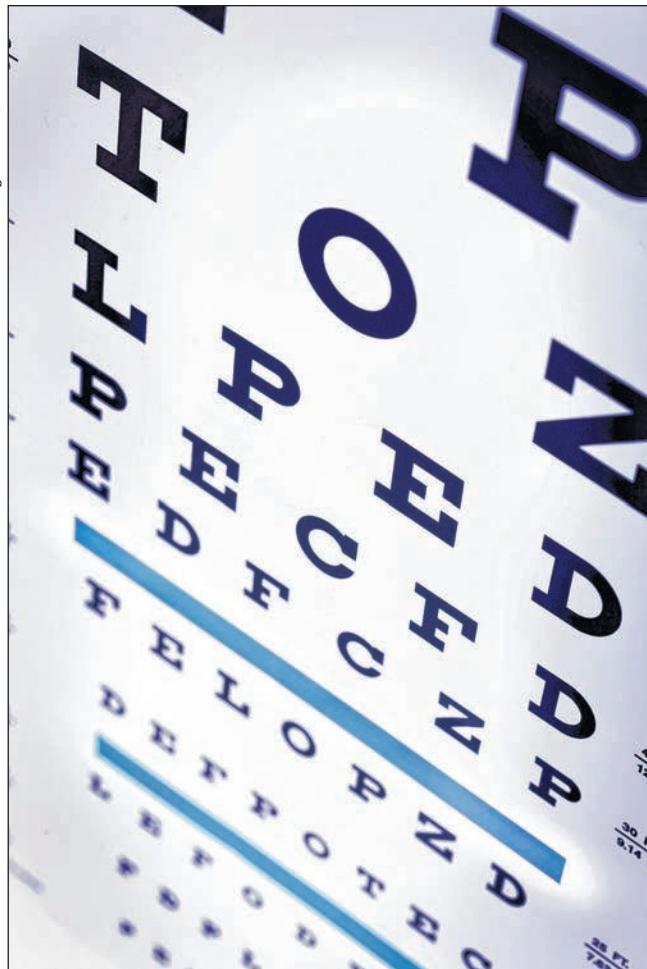
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Common warning signs for cataracts

No one wants to imagine a day when their vision might abandon them, but diminished eyesight is a common occurrence that affects people of all ages and from all walks of life. A 2022 report from the World Health Organization indicated that at least 826 million people have distance- or near-vision impairment that could be addressed with an appropriate pair of eyeglasses. Those people are among the estimated 2.2 billion people who currently have issues that affect their ability to see.

Cataracts are a common and treatable vision problem. Access to cataract treatment is limited in various countries. In fact, a 2021

study published in the journal *Lancet Global Health* found that 94 million people ages 50 and over have vision impairment or blindness that could be corrected through access to cataract surgery. Surgery might not even be considered if people are not first aware of the symptoms of cataracts, which can manifest in various ways.

• Blurry vision: The American Academy of Ophthalmology notes that blurriness may be associated with an assortment of vision problems, including cataracts. Blurry vision makes it difficult to see clearly or sharply, and cataracts are characterized by cloudiness that affects the

natural lens of the eye. The blurriness associated with cataracts is the result of a breakdown of proteins in the lens of the affected eye, according to the AAO.

• Seeing double: Double vision also is symptomatic of various vision issues, including cataracts. The AAO notes that when a person is seeing double, he or she may be seeing two, often overlapping, images of a single object.

• Sensitivity to light: The AAO notes a need to shield eyes from light to prevent eye pain could indicate a sensitivity to light that is characteristic of cataracts. This sensitivity may be especially noticeable when confronted by oncoming headlights at night.

• Difficulty seeing at night: The AAO reports that this symptom is often characterized by difficulty seeing in dark conditions that can make it harder to adjust to seeing when going from a well-lit space into darkness. That adjustment also may take longer in people experiencing cataracts. Some people may not be able to see at all in dimly lit conditions.

• Seeing faded colors: Bright colors that appear faded or yellow is another symptom of cataracts.

Cataracts compromise vision, but it's important that people recognize there are effective treatments for this condition. More information is available at www.aoa.org.

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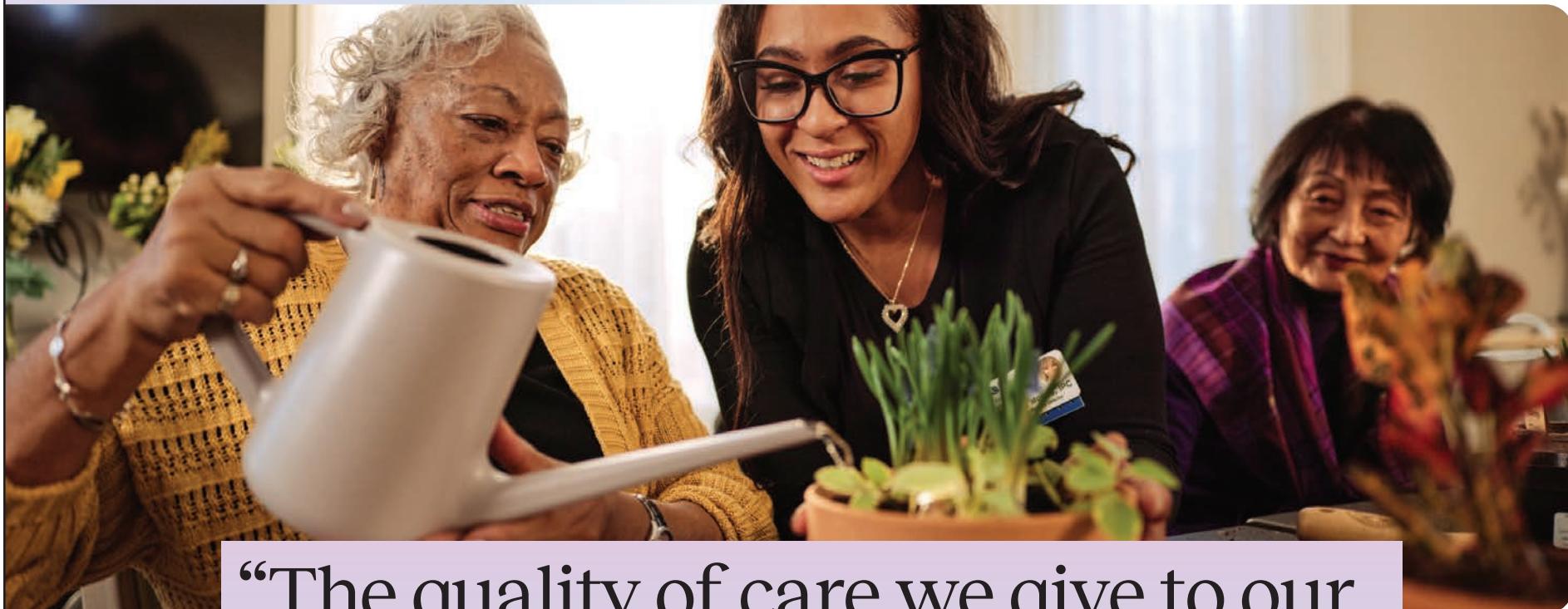
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Activities that promote good cognitive health

Maintaining physical health as a body ages is an important consideration, and often one of the first things that comes to mind when people think about being healthy. Yet physical health is only one component of a healthy lifestyle; individuals also must pay attention to what they do to promote cognitive health.

A 2023 study from the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the National Institutes of Health indicated that some decline in cognitive abilities is a natural part of the aging process. Attention, memory, executive cognitive function, language, and visuospatial abilities

all exhibit measurable declines with age, according to the study.

Just because some measure of cognitive impairment occurs as the years march on doesn't mean that seniors are powerless against Father Time. Certain behaviors and activities can help improve cognition.

Physical activity

It is important to stay physically active, not only for the body, but also for the brain. Harvard Health says research shows when animals exercise regularly, the number of tiny blood vessels that bring oxygen-rich blood to the

brain increase. More oxygen can reach an area of the brain that is responsible for thought and help improve brain function. Exercise also lowers blood pressure, cholesterol levels and blood sugar, all of which can be beneficial to the brain.

Engage in relaxing activities

People who are depressed, sleep-deprived or anxious tend to score poorly on cognitive function tests. While this may not be an indicator of cognitive decline, it is important to engage in behaviors that promote happiness

and restfulness for mental health. Meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, and activities that help a person smile and laugh can be good for the brain.

Participate in stimulating activities

Stimulating activities, like word games, gardening, dancing, or playing a musical instrument, can help maintain cognitive function and enhance memory, says Healthline. Doing things that require mental effort can help stimulate and maintain cognitive function and also may improve emotional well-being.



Read more often

Various studies indicate that reading can promote strong mental health. In addition to keeping a person entertained or informed, reading exercises the brain. There are new words to learn, new scenarios to imagine and locations to envision. Sharing a summary of what was read with others also helps work the brain in different ways, all of which are good for cognitive health.

Make new recipes

Browsing through a recipe, shopping for the ingredients, putting the ingredients together, and producing the finished product all can work the brain. A person is reading, engaging in math, predicting the results, and utilizing the senses during the process of cooking.

Various activities can promote strong cognitive health and may help to reduce or delay cognitive decline through the years.



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Retired and bored? How to make an active retirement a reality

Scores of people view retirement as a time in their lives when they aren't beholden to schedules and can finally indulge in hobbies and interests they'd been dreaming about while sitting in meetings or commuting to the office. Although retirement often is billed as a time to enjoy life, research suggests a different scenario plays out all too often. According to a recent study commissioned by The Oddfellows, one of the oldest friendly societies in the United Kingdom, 39 percent of retirees have experienced feelings such as loneliness, boredom and a reduced sense of identity and purpose shortly after the retirement glow wears off.

Staying active and engaged during retirement may take some creative effort, especially for those who were used to the regimented schedule of work. But the following are some ways to maintain your active engagement with the world after calling it a career.

Take that trip. According to AARP, travel is one of the most popular things to do during retirement. Odds

are there are places retirees have always wanted to visit, and the world is just waiting. Taking a tour or being part of a travel group can simplify travel planning by leaving the organizing to someone else. Travelers just enjoy the ride.

Get moving physically. The National Council on Aging says regularly engaging in physical activity a person enjoys can help prevent bone loss, boost immunity, improve mood, and even prevent chronic illnesses. Team sport participation is a top choice for seniors looking to stay active because sports provide physical exercise and also an opportunity to socialize with friends or teammates.

Maintain a consistent schedule. Some people thrive when they know what is coming next. If you need a routine in order to be happy, establish a consistent schedule that works. For example, people can wake up at the same time each morning and eat lunch during at the same time they did while working. Upon retiring, incorporate a daily plan for

exercise if physical activity is not part of your traditional routine.

Try something new. It is never too late to try a new activity, class, sport, or hobby. Challenging yourself can stimulate the mind and provide a pathway to new relationships. Individuals can even consider going back to college. According to Kiplinger, New Jersey residents age 65 and older can take regularly scheduled courses tuition-free at the state's public colleges and universities, provided classroom space permits. There are similar programs in other states across the country.

Pick up a new language. Learning a new language is a beneficial tool for seniors who are looking to maintain cognitive abilities. The National Institutes of Health says bilingualism has been linked to higher cognitive reserve, delay in dementia onset and better performance in executive control.

There are many ways for seniors to keep their brains and bodies active in an effort to overcome boredom and improve overall well-being.



How seniors can enjoy safe travels

Research your destination

Travel is often cited as something to look forward to when retirement rolls around. With work no longer demanding retirees' time, they have an opportunity to dust off their passports, take their suitcases out of the attic and book whirlwind trips.

It's important for senior travelers to keep their personal safety in mind when away from home. That's because seniors are considered a high risk group for travel-related dangers, including vulnerability to crimes like pickpocketing, says the National Institutes of Health. Seniors also may be more vulnerable to accidents or health-related incidents. Seniors can follow these guidelines for safe travel the next time they head off for parts unknown.

Check travel documents

Some countries will not allow travelers to enter if their passports expire within six months of their arrival. Ensure that your travel documents will be valid at least six months after you will return home, says the U.S. Department of State. You don't want to risk any hiccups that will put you in a precarious situation or prevent or delay your trip.

Don't publicize your trip

It's natural to want to share news of an upcoming trip with others, but reconsider posting about it on social media, both before leaving and while you're away. There are cases of thieves using social media to target the homes of those who have advertised they're going on long trips.

Pack prescriptions correctly

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says nearly nine in 10 older adults take at least one medication. Always store medication in a carry-on bag where you can

access it easily and it can't be lost. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will allow you to carry liquid medication, syringes, pumps, freezer packs, or IV bags on the plane. Just check the TSA's rules so you know how to pack them properly.

Streamline airport procedures

Americans can apply for TSA Precheck or Global Entry programs to cut down on time spent in security lines. These travel certifications can help you avoid removing your shoes or separating a laptop or liquids from your carry-on. Each program has a non-refundable application fee, but if approved, precheck certification lasts for five years.

Consider a tour or group travel

There is safety in numbers. Booking a tour or group travel package may cut down on the risk of being taken advantage of while away from home.

These are just a few safety precautions seniors can take to travel safely.



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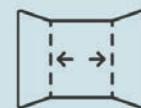
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