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SENIOR *Living*



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October 21, 2026



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

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

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

Here are some foods seniors can incorporate into their daily diets that may provide that extra spring in their step, courtesy of the National Council on Aging

and Healthline.

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

• **Lean protein:** Seniors need adequate protein to slow down or prevent the natural loss of muscle that occurs as one ages. A person can use the U.S. Department of Agriculture calculator to figure out how much protein to eat based on their age and other factors. Good sources of protein include lean meat and poultry, seafood, eggs, lentils, beans, nuts, and seeds.

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

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

• **Healthy fats:** Some seniors may have grown up thinking that fats are something to avoid. However, healthy unsaturated fats are important for heart and brain health. They also are excellent for adding calorie density for those with smaller appetites. Olive oil, nuts and peanut butter are good choices for healthy fats.

• **Seeds:** A 2022 study

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

• **Fruits:** Seniors should enjoy around 1.5 to 2 cups of fruits each day. Fruits are an important source of potassium, fiber, vitamin C, folate, and vitamin A. Avocado is loaded with nourishing fats, antioxidants and other nutrients that support health.

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



Making sense of the information on food labels

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

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



whether they buy it.

One of the ways to be mindful of food ingredients is to understand food

labeling. Pertinent information is included on the label, and it pays to study these labels when choosing foods.

Here's how to navigate the Nutrition Facts Label, according to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration.

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

• **Serving size:** The serving size indicates how much of the food equates to one serving. It may be measured in cups, grams, ounces, or even pieces.

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

• **% daily value:** These numbers will appear next to the various nutrients in the product and show the percentage of each nutrient's recommended daily value is

in the food. Daily values are listed in grams, milligrams or micrograms. By understanding daily values, one knows how many nutrients to consume each day. As a general rule, 5% DV or less of a nutrient per serving is considered low, while 20% DV or more of a nutrient per serving is considered high.

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

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

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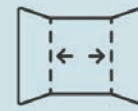
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How to determine if your retirement savings will be enough

Sufficient retirement savings can pave the way to a comfortable post-work life. In addition to ensuring retirees can finance recreational pursuits like travel, a robust retirement portfolio also increases the chances medical emergencies or other health-related costs like prescription medications won't jeopardize their financial well-being.

Despite the emphasis on the importance of building retirement savings, many people are not saving enough to be financially secure after calling it a career. The Vanguard Retirement Outlook released in October 2025 noted that just 42 percent of Americans are on track to achieving retirement security. The outlook is similar in Canada, where the BMO Financial Group's Annual Retirement Survey, released in February 2026, noted that 36 percent of Canadians feel

they will fall short of saving enough money to meet their financial needs in retirement.

No two retirees are the same, and that's something to keep in mind when saving for life after working. What might be a savings shortfall for some could be plenty to live on for others. Adults looking to identify if they're on track can consider this approach to determine if they will have enough money or insufficient savings to finance their retirement.

• **Determine the percentage of your current income that you're saving.** Before you can identify if you're on track you first need to determine how much you're saving. While recommendations vary, various financial planning firms and experts advise saving no less than 15 percent of annual pre-tax income for retirement. So a worker earning \$100,000 per year should be

contributing \$15,000 annually into retirement accounts and investment vehicles like a 401(k) or IRA.

• **Monitor the performance of your retirement accounts.** While it's important to avoid overreacting when market fluctuations result in losses within your retirement portfolio, it's vital that account holders monitor the long-term performance of their retirement investments. For example, if a given fund within your 401(k) is offering negative returns month after month, then it's probably time to reallocate those funds and future contributions. While it may seem obvious to monitor retirement investment vehicles, a 2025 survey from the investment experts at BlackRock found that 17 percent of retirement savings account holders never check in on their accounts. By checking accounts each month and reallocating funds away



from underperforming investment vehicles, account holders can increase the chances they will have the money they need to live comfortably in retirement.

• **Identify a realistic retirement date.** Early retirement may be a goal for millions of professionals, but choosing a realistic retirement date is a key variable when trying to determine if you will have enough money to enjoy

a comfortable retirement. Many retirement investment vehicles are target-based. With such accounts, the closer workers get to the target date, the less risky the investments within their retirement accounts become. But workers who pick a target date that's too early could be losing out on gains that could make a comfortable retirement more likely. Workers can

work with a financial advisor to determine a retirement date that's realistic so they are not missing out on earning money they're likely to need after leaving the workforce.

There's no magic number when it comes to saving for retirement. However, there is much professionals can do to determine if they're saving enough to live comfortably in retirement.

Simple ways to save in retirement

The importance of saving for retirement cannot be overstated. Expenses related to housing, transportation, medical care, and even recreational pursuits remain even after retirees are no longer earning a paycheck, and that underscores the need to build a sizable nest egg.

Running out of money in retirement is a legitimate fear for many retirees, including those who did what they could to save for their golden years. According to MetLife's 2026 Paycheck or Pot of Gold Study, 51 percent of retirees who invested in an employer's defined contribution (DC) plan worry about running out of money in retirement. And such fears are growing, as MetLife notes just 30 percent of retirees

expressed similar fears in 2017. MetLife notes that rising health care costs and longer lifespans are behind such anxiety, which can be tempered when retirees embrace some simple ways to save.

• **Get a library card.** Many professionals aspire to read more in retirement, and this rewarding hobby can be free when retirees get a library card. Retirees can find more than books at their local libraries, which also loan out movies and sponsor free or low-cost programs for seniors. Such programs might offer financial advice for retirees or sponsor book clubs that serve as a fun and free recreational activity.

• **Travel during off-peak seasons.** According to a recent poll from RBC Wealth Management, 63 percent

of respondents see travel as an important retirement goal. But more than half of those people feel the cost of travel could jeopardize those plans. But retirees can save on travel by choosing to vacation during off-peak times of year. Travel tends to peak at times of year when school is out, such as winter break, spring break and summer vacation. The costs of flights, lodging and rental cars tend to be particularly high during these in-demand seasons. Retirees have more freedom to travel whenever they choose, and they can use that to their financial advantage by avoiding peak travel seasons and saving on flights, hotels and other expenditures.

• **Take advantage of senior**

discounts. A wide range of businesses and services offer discounts to senior consumers. Amazon offers more than 50 percent off its Prime membership to seniors receiving certain types of government assistance, and Walmart Plus offers a similar discount. In addition, retailers like Home Depot and Lowe's, Kohl's and Michael's also offer percentage-based discounts to seniors. Many popular chain restaurants also offer discounts to senior diners.

• **Utilize credit card incentives.** Many credit cards offer benefits like points or cash back incentives. Seniors who have the money to pay their balances in full can use credit cards when purchasing big-ticket items, and then use the travel rewards or cash back benefits to save



A library card can help retirees save money on books and movies.

money on expenses like flights and hotels. Cash back bonuses can be directed however seniors see fit.

The prospect of running out of money in retirement

is a notable fear for many retirees. But some simple ways to save can help seniors keep more money in their pockets throughout retirement.



Necessary pieces of an estate plan

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

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

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

• **A living trust:** This document helps manage property during an individual's lifetime and facilitates a seamless transfer of assets to beneficiaries, allowing families to avoid the lengthy, public, and costly probate court process, according to Drexel.

• **Durable power of attorney:** MetLife says this grants a trusted individual the authority to oversee financial matters, pay bills and manage investments if the owner becomes incapacitated.

• **Health care power of attorney:** According to New York Life Insurance, a health care power of attorney appoints a surrogate

decision-maker to handle medical choices when an individual is unable to speak for themselves.

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

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

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

What to know about long-term care insurance

Insurance is a safety net that can help people confront accidents, injuries and other unforeseen events. People may be quick to associate insurance with injuries or property damage, but one insurance product is designed for something that has little to do with broken bones or homes wrecked by strong storms.

Long-term care insurance is an asset that can help people afford the fact that many are living longer. Indeed, a report from the National Center for Health Statistics in early 2026 indicated that life expectancy for someone born in 2024 reached 79 years in 2024. Life expectancy for someone born a year earlier was 78.4.

Longer life expectancies are good news, but when people live longer, they may need to tweak their financial approach to ensure they can afford the expenses associated with a longer life. Long-term care insurance can be a part of such changes. Families may have some common questions about long-term care insurance, including whether or not a family member needs it, what it covers and other details.

Will I even need long-term care?

A recent study from the Department of Health and Human Services concluded that

nearly half of all men and 64 percent of women who reach the age of 65 will require significant long-term care during their remaining years. For the 14 percent of people the DHHS estimated will need more than two years of paid care, the cost will exceed \$120,000. Long-term care can help to cover those costs, as AARP notes that Medicare coverage for long-term care covers little more than hospitalization after an illness or injury. Medicaid also might not be an option until seniors have spent all of their savings and exhausted additional assets beyond their homes and vehicles.

Won't I be covered by government programs in my golden years?

AARP notes that a survey from the nonprofit organization KFF (formerly the Kaiser Family Foundation) found that it is a widely held misconception that Medicare would finance a long stay in a nursing home if the need arises. However, long-term care insurance can help to finance a stay in a long-term care facility.

What are the basics of a long-term care policy?

The National Council On Aging notes that standalone

long-term care policies typically indicate a benefit amount, a benefit period and an elimination period. The benefit amount refers to the maximum amount the policy pays per day for long-term care services. The NCOA notes that many long-term care policies include protection against inflation so benefits keep pace with rising costs. A benefit period is the duration during which benefits will be paid, while the elimination period is how long new policy holders must wait before benefits can begin. Elimination periods are why it can be vital for adults to take out a long-term care policy before they get sick so they can access their benefits the moment the need for long-term care arises.

Who can I consult about a long-term care policy?

Insurance agents and financial advisors can help adults and their families navigate long-term care insurance so they can find the best fit for them. Financial advisors can be especially helpful, as AARP notes decisions surrounding long-term care policies may hinge on prospective policy holders asset portfolio.

Long-term care insurance can be the safety net some people need as they grow older and hope to cover the costs associated with living longer.





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The 7 stages of Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive and debilitating condition that slowly robs a person of their memories and personality. Alzheimer's disease is a form of dementia that produces various symptoms that occur in stages, ultimately arriving at a point when a person can no longer live independently due to cognitive decline.

The Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation says there are seven clinical stages of Alzheimer's. Stages 1 through 3 are the pre-dementia stages, while stages 4 through 7 are the dementia stages. Here is a close look at what these stages entail, according to the Global Deterioration Scale.

Stage 1

There is no cognitive decline, nor noticeable symptoms.

Stage 2

A person may experience very mild cognitive decline. This can include one feeling like he or she is having memory lapses, but no symptoms of dementia can be detected by others, including medical professionals.

Stage 3

During stage 3, mild cognitive decline begins to become noticeable. Friends, family or coworkers begin to notice difficulties, which may include problems coming up with the right words or names; trouble remembering names; greater difficulty performing tasks; and losing or misplacing a valuable object.

Stage 4

A careful medical interview

should reveal symptoms of moderate cognitive decline. Forgetfulness of recent events; difficulty performing complex tasks like planning a meal for guests or paying bills; forgetfulness about one's own personal history; and becoming moody or withdrawn are possible.

Stage 5

Cognitive decline continues to progress to where it becomes moderately severe. Gaps in memory are noticeable and individuals likely will need help with everyday activities. Some may be unable to recall their addresses or telephone numbers, while others may be confused about the day or where they are. Stage 5 is usually the stage when a person can no longer live without assistance.

Stage 6

Very severe memory loss, loss of communication skills and inability to recognize loved ones occurs during the severe cognitive decline stage. One will need total care.

Stage 7

This is the end-stage of the disease and is marked by profound cognitive impairment. Loss of mobility and effective communication typically occurs at this stage.

It's important to note that these stages are general guidelines of what can be expected as Alzheimer's disease progresses. Symptoms may vary among different people, and not everyone with Alzheimer's will progress through these stages at the same rate.



Promising advancements in Alzheimer's disease management

Alzheimer's disease has touched the lives of millions. Tens of millions of people have Alzheimer's disease worldwide, accounting for 60 percent to 70 percent of the total number of people living with dementia globally, according to the World Health Organization. However, when including early, pre-symptomatic stages like prodromal and preclinical phases, estimates indicate 400 million people across the globe are affected by brain changes linked to Alzheimer's, says the National Institutes of Health.

Expanding medications and clinical trials

For decades, medical interventions for Alzheimer's were limited to managing symptoms. Today, the treatment landscape is undergoing a profound transformation. Therapeutic strategies now directly target the biological drivers of the disease, supported by expanded drug offerings, advises Alzheimer's Research UK.

The Alzheimer's Association says that analysis of global clinical trials points to positive results of a growing body of medications. There are now 158 novel agents currently being evaluated across 192 clinical trials. While amyloid-targeting drugs once comprised 33 percent of the clinical

studies, that share has dropped to 20 percent, as therapies targeting neuroinflammation and tau protein tangles have increased.

The Alzheimer's Association also says approximately 35 percent of drugs currently in development are repurposed therapies previously approved for other conditions. This helps speed up the pathway of important medications for clinical availability.

Earlier diagnoses

Disease-modifying medications show the highest efficacy when administered during early stages. That means that early detection of Alzheimer's disease is critical. The Alzheimer's Impact Movement says high-accuracy blood tests prescribed in primary care settings can enable clinicians to screen for amyloid pathology using a simple blood draw.

Targeting genes

Researchers supported by the NIH are exploring gene therapy approaches to reduce amyloid accumulation early on and quiet brain inflammation. These include delivering protective APOE-e2 gene variants.

GLP-1s, shingles vaccines and promising findings

Observational and real-world

studies show that taking GLP-1 medications for type 2 diabetes or obesity is associated with a lower risk of developing Alzheimer's and cognitive decline, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Similarly, major published studies show that adults over age 65 who receive the two-dose shingles vaccine have significantly reduced risk of Alzheimer's and vascular dementia compared to unvaccinated individuals. Both of these treatments can reduce brain inflammation associated with dementia development.

Lifestyle changes

Medications and other therapies are just the tip of the iceberg. Non-pharmacological interventions also are successful at reducing Alzheimer's disease prevalence. Findings published in the Journal of the American Medical Association demonstrate that targeted exercise, dietary changes and cognitive training significantly preserves brain function. This can yield memory performance equivalent to being one or two years younger.

Alzheimer's disease research continues, and various developments in prevention and treatment are going beyond symptom management.

Did you know?

The Alzheimer's Association says roughly one in nine people age 65 and older have Alzheimer's disease. More than seven million Americans are living with the disease. Around the world, Alzheimer's Disease International indicates there are more than 55 million people living with dementia. Alzheimer's disease gradually damages and destroys neurons in the brain. These changes can begin 20 years or more before memory



loss and other symptoms develop. Unfortunately, Alzheimer's disease is ultimately fatal, although several modifiable risk factors exist for dementia that, if addressed, may delay the onset of symptoms.

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How volunteering benefits seniors' mental health

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

Volunteering offers seniors many benefits, including a renewed sense of purpose. Volunteering also helps combat social isolation, which can lower rates of depression and anxiety. According to Voices for National Service, older adults who volunteer have reduced risk of mortality, more optimism and feel less depressed and lonely. People who were once working full



time and are now in retirement may find they have hours to spare. Those hours

can be directed toward volunteer efforts, which can boost seniors' mental health

in myriad ways.

• **Lowers depression and anxiety:** The National Institutes

of Health says research indicates consistent volunteering can help to reduce risk of depressive symptoms. Staying engaged and active combats feelings of hopelessness.

• **Decreased social isolation:** Points of Light says regular time spent with peers and the people being helped can mitigate loneliness. Having a strong support network can make stress more tolerable and increase feelings of belonging.

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

Service.

• **Mental stimulation:** Volunteering may lead to learning new skills and interacting with others, and that can keep the mind sharp.

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

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

Great gifts for gram and gramps

Shopping for grandparents can be challenging. Grandparents may insist they already have everything they need, and many are focused on downsizing and decluttering rather than accumulating more items. The best gifts for grandparents generally fall into two categories: sentimental keepsakes that celebrate family connections, or everyday comfort upgrades that make life easier and more enjoyable.

According to CNBC, nearly 86 percent of grandparents regularly buy gifts for their grandchildren, spending an average of \$805 per year on presents. That's undoubtedly one reason why their children and grandchildren want to give back in meaningful ways.

Here are several thoughtful gift ideas that grandparents will enjoy.

• **Digital picture frames:** Grandparents who love staying up-to-date on loved ones' daily lives will enjoy a smart digital picture frame. Unlike traditional photo albums that will get tucked on a shelf, connected frames enable family members to upload photos and short video clips directly from their smartphones in real time, no matter where they live. This means grandparents can see photos of their grandchildren and children pop up and serve as a source of constant joy.

• **Accessibility upgrades:** Practical technology can remove problems that make daily living challenging for seniors who prefer to age in

place. Items like smart plugs paired with a voice assistant will enable grandparents to turn off bedside lamps or holiday lights without bending down or reaching behind furniture. Keyless smart locks eliminate the frustration of fumbling with keys at the front door. Bluetooth item trackers make it easy to locate frequently misplaced items like keys or reading glasses.

• **Living history journal:** Every grandparent has a unique list of stories and experiences that will be lost forever unless they're preserved. Guided memory journals or digital story-recording services can provide prompts asking grandparents about their life experiences. Over the course of time, their responses



are compiled into a keepsake book that honors their life and preserves family heritage.

• **Comfort and relaxation:** Gifts that focus on everyday luxury can be a hit with grandparents. Examples

include a weighted heating pad for the neck and shoulders or high-end adaptive footwear that offers soothing relief. Gourmet teas, meal prep services and other food gifts also can be good fits for grandparents.

When it comes to grandparents, less is often more. When gifting tech, include installation and set-up as part of the gift. This way things are ready to go and do not require extra expertise.



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Emergency preparedness tips

One never knows when an emergency might strike, whether it's a natural disaster, home fire or flood, or the need to leave home quickly to visit a sick relative. Older adults may be facing health issues that are not necessarily affecting younger adults, and that reality makes it wise for seniors to emphasize emergency preparedness. A personalized plan can keep older adults safe during emergency situations.

Set up a support network

Seniors should reach out to at least two people, whether it's friends, neighbors or relatives who live nearby, and ask them to serve as contacts when emergencies strike. These individuals can check in on seniors, provide assistance with evacuation, if necessary, and hold spare keys. The support network also can be involved in coming up with an emergency plan regarding what to do if there is an emergency at home.

A member of a support network can serve as a liaison between a local adult recreation center or home-based care providers, if the senior participates in such services.

Plan for power loss

Electricity fuels daily life, but power outages are



becoming more common as the effects of climate change impact daily life. It's important for seniors who rely on power-dependent medical devices like stair lifts, motorized beds, motorized wheelchairs, and CPAP machines to figure out a backup power plan, says the American Red Cross. This may include installing a home house generator or having back-up batteries that are routinely charged.

Build a supply kit

A supply kit or a grabbable "go bag" will be filled with all the necessities. Some seniors take five or more daily medications, so it's important to maintain at least a 30-day supply of all prescriptions and keep copies of the prescriptions in case medication needs to

be filled at a different pharmacy. The American Red Cross also advises keeping extra batteries for hearing aids or mobility devices, a written list of pertinent health information, and ample water and non-perishable food for each person on hand.

Organize documents

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry suggests maintaining critical documents in a secure, dry and easily accessible waterproof container. These documents should include personal identification and health insurance cards, prescriptions, cash, and documentation for medical devices.

Having a plan in place should an emergency strike can help seniors stay safe.

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Practices that can benefit seniors' mental health

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

• **Spend more time with family.** Spending time with family members can be especially beneficial for adults 70 and older. According to a 2023 study published in the *Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, adults without family ties had worse mental health and were less likely to engage socially than older adults who were close to their family. The researchers behind the study noted those benefits are not affected by distance, as even the older adults who lived far away from their family members but maintained strong social ties to their families enjoyed higher levels of mental health and social participation than seniors with no such connections.

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

• **Incorporate travel into your golden years.** Working professionals have long expressed an intention to travel more during



retirement, and doing so may have an even bigger impact than seniors realize. According to a joint report from the Global Coalition on Aging and the Transamerica Institute® released in 2025, regular travel has been shown to lower Alzheimer's risk by up to 47 percent, a benefit researchers link to culturally enriching activities like visiting museums and exploring historical landmarks. The same report also notes that travel helps to address loneliness and social isolation, which are mental health issues that the senior population is especially vulnerable to, particularly during retirement.

• **Volunteer.** The Mayo Clinic Health System notes that volunteering can boost mental health in a number of ways. Volunteering has been found to reduce stress and increase positive, relaxed feelings. The Mayo Clinic also notes that volunteering leads to lower rates of anxiety and depression, particularly among adults 65 and older.

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

What seniors should know about anxiety

Discussions surrounding older adults and health often focus on seniors' physical health. That's understandable, as age-related issues affecting the body can add up over time, making it vital that seniors emphasize a physically active lifestyle that can reduce their risk for an assortment of medical conditions.

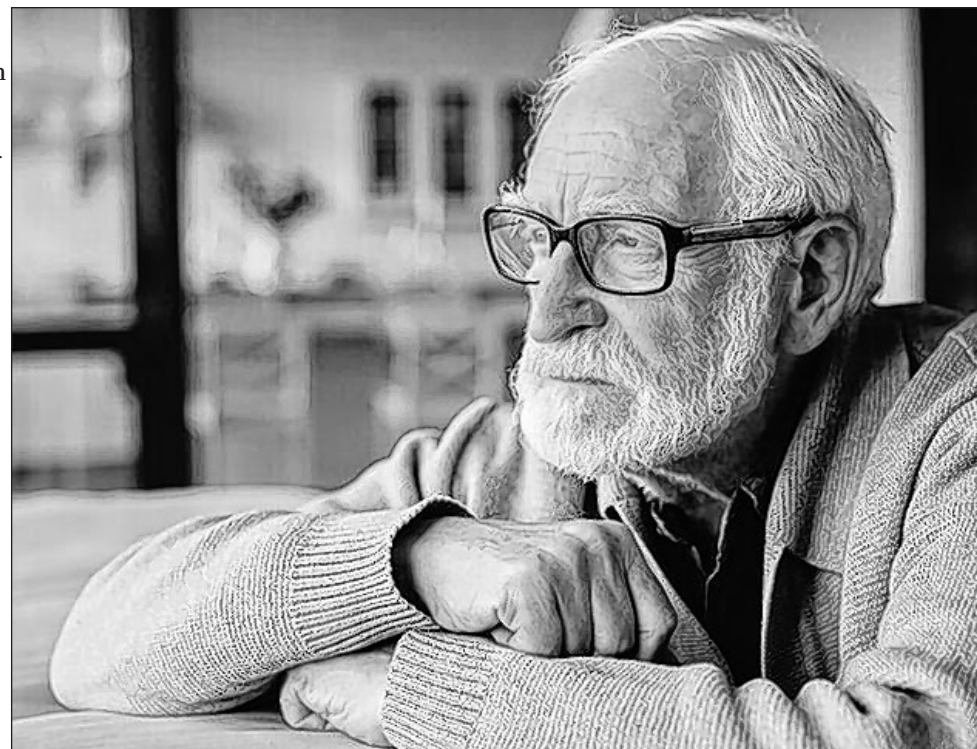
But mental health also is an important consideration for older adults, many of whom may be struggling. Anxiety is one mental health issue that affects a significant percentage of older adults. A 2024 study published in the *Journal of General and Family Medicine* noted that the global prevalence of anxiety symptoms among older adults is 28 percent. That means nearly one in three older adults is experiencing symptoms of anxiety. With so many seniors potentially confronting anxiety, it can be helpful to older adults and their loved ones to learn about the condition, its causes and its signs and symptoms.

Defining anxiety

The National Council on Aging notes that anxiety is a natural response to many life stressors. But when anxious feelings overwhelm an individual and make daily life more difficult, a person may be experiencing an anxiety disorder. According to the American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP), anxiety disorders cause feelings of fear, worry, apprehension, or dread.

What distinguishes anxiety from an anxiety disorder?

The American Psychiatric Association notes occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. But occasional anxiety comes and goes rather quickly, whereas an anxiety disorder is marked by a more persistent level of anxiety that's harder to control. In addition, an anxiety disorder can affect how people interact with others, how they work, and even their overall well-being.



Are there different types of anxiety?

Yes. The AAGP notes that anxiety may be a specific phobia in which a person harbors an intense and irrational fear of a place, thing or event. Social anxiety is another type of disorder that occurs when an individual feels overwhelmingly anxious and self-conscious in the typical social situations people encounter each day. Generalized anxiety disorder is marked by constant worry even when there is little or nothing to cause concern. These are just some of the various types of anxiety.

What causes an anxiety disorder?

The AAGP notes a number of factors can contribute to an anxiety disorder, including:

- Extreme stress or trauma
- Bereavement and complicated or chronic grief, which may be of particular concern for older adults dealing with the death of a spouse or a long-time friend
- Consumption of alcohol, caffeine or drugs, including prescription or over-the-counter medication
- A separate medical condition or illness
- Neurodegenerative disorders, such as dementia

Signs someone is experiencing an anxiety disorder

Seniors are urged to speak to a health care professional if they feel they are overwhelmed by anxiety. Family members also can learn to look for signs of anxiety disorder, which the AAGP notes include:

- Excessive worry or fear
- Refusing to engage in routine activities or being overly preoccupied with routine
- Avoiding social situations
- Excessive concern about safety
- Physical symptoms such as a racing heart, shallow breathing, trembling, nausea, and/or sweating
- Difficulty sleeping or poor sleep
- Muscle tension, feeling weak and shaky
- Hoarding, which the Cleveland Clinic notes is a distinct mental health condition but also a sign of an underlying anxiety disorder
- Depression
- Self-medication with alcohol or other central nervous system depressants, including benzodiazepines and barbiturates

There are many ways to treat anxiety disorders in older adults, so seniors should not hesitate to open a dialogue with a health care professional if they feel they are dealing with excessive anxiety. More information can be found at aagponline.org.

Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is an irregular and often accelerated heart rhythm. According to the Mayo Clinic, left untreated, AFib can lead to blood clots in the heart, which increases the risk of stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

How does AFib originate?

AFib most often is caused by changes to the heart's tissue or the electrical signaling that helps the heart to beat. The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute says the electrical signals that make the heart pump start in a special area of the upper right chamber of the heart (right atrium) called the sinoatrial node. The signal makes both the right atrium and the left atrium contract, which pumps blood to the lower heart chambers, or ventricles. When a person has AFib, unusual electrical signals interrupt this process, causing the upper chambers of the heart to contract irregularly. This compromises

What causes atrial fibrillation?

the ability of the upper and lower chambers of the heart to work together to effectively pump blood.

What changes lead to AFib?

Changes in the heart that can lead to AFib may include factors such as aging, heart disease, infection, or genetics. Also, tissue changes that affect the heart's ability to contract in rhythm may include fibrosis, inflammation, thinning or thickening of the heart walls, reduced blood flow to the heart, or a buildup of protein, cells or minerals in heart tissue.

Symptoms of AFib

Symptoms of AFib may include any of the following.

- A fast, fluttering or pounding heartbeat
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness

- Shortness of breath
- Weakness

The Mayo Clinic notes some people with AFib may not notice any symptoms at all, or symptoms may come and go.

What raises risk of AFib?

Some lifestyle choices or experiences can raise a person's risk for AFib.

- Alcohol consumption in large amounts.
 - Use of illegal drugs.
 - Participation in endurance sports or vigorous workouts.
 - Smoking increases the risk of atrial fibrillation, according to many studies.
 - Stressful situations, panic disorders and other types of emotional stress.
- AFib will need to be diagnosed by a health care professional. Medicines may be needed to control the heart rate and prevent blood clots.



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RSV and adults: What you need to know

Respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that can infect people of all ages. While most people develop mild symptoms, for some, including older adults, it can develop into severe illness.

Each year in the United States, up to 180,000 older adults are hospitalized due to RSV. Age, underlying medical conditions and other factors increase the risk of developing severe and even life-threatening illness. That's why the American Lung Association is launching an educational public health initiative to increase awareness of the virus, the importance of vaccination, and additional prevention methods to help reduce its spread. As part of the campaign, they are answering some commonly asked questions about RSV:

How does RSV spread? Like many other respiratory viruses, RSV spreads easily from person to person, with seasonality beginning during the fall and peaking in winter months. The virus spreads through close contact with infected individuals from coughing and sneezing, direct contact with an infected individual, and by touching objects that have the virus on them.

Who is most at risk for developing complications? Severe complications from RSV include pneumonia, and the worsening of existing long-term health conditions like asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and congestive heart failure. These complications can lead to a decreased quality of life due to long-lasting symptoms, a diminished ability to carry

out daily activities, and a loss of independence.

Among adults, those at increased risk include people ages 75 and older, adults with chronic lung or heart disease such as asthma, COPD, interstitial lung disease or congestive heart failure, adults with weakened immune systems, and those living in nursing homes.

How can people protect themselves? As of February 2026, only 43% of adults 75 and older and 33% of adults 50-74 with a condition that increases their risk for RSV reported having ever received an RSV vaccine, leaving many eligible adults without vaccination protection. The Lung Association encourages people to speak with their health-care provider about staying up to date on all respiratory vaccinations to protect their

health. RSV, flu and COVID vaccines can be received in the same visit.

Who is eligible for RSV vaccination? The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends RSV vaccination for adults 75 and older and for adults ages 50 through 74 who are at high risk of developing severe RSV disease. The best time to get vaccinated is in the late summer or early fall, before the virus spreads widely. However, people can be vaccinated at any time. RSV vaccination is not recommended annually. For adults who have already received an RSV vaccine, no additional doses are needed at this time.

What other measures can people take to prevent RSV transmission? In addition to vaccination, the following healthy habits can help

reduce the spread of RSV and other respiratory infections: washing hands regularly, covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, avoiding close contact with people who are ill, staying home when sick, cleaning frequently touched surfaces, improving indoor air quality and wearing a mask when sick or around others who are ill.

For more information about RSV prevention and vaccination, visit Lung.org/rsv.

RSV is not only common, it can be dangerous. Fortunately, tools are available to protect those at higher risk for serious illness this fall, winter, and beyond.

This campaign is supported by educational grants from GSK and Moderna.



Tips to lower your blood pressure as you age

(StatePoint) As you age, there's a pretty good chance you'll eventually develop high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. In fact, according to one study, about 60% of people get hypertension by the time they reach age 60.

Fortunately, high blood pressure is highly treatable and manageable through a combination of lifestyle changes and, when necessary, medication. Unfortunately, it often appears without symptoms, putting people at risk of stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, and death, without them even knowing it.

"High blood pressure is sometimes called the silent killer," said Dr. Jennifer Ziemianin, chief medical officer for HealthSpring. "But we're not going to be quiet about it. We want older adults to know about the risks and take action to

manage hypertension."

The first step is to get your blood pressure checked. The American Heart Association recommends adults get their blood pressure checked at least once a year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, high blood pressure is an upper reading of 130 or above or a lower reading of 80 or above.

If your blood pressure is high, you should check it regularly using an automatic, upper arm cuff-style monitor. These monitors are widely available, affordable and easy to use. You can ask your doctor for tips if needed.

Although hypertension generally can't be cured, it can be effectively managed through a variety of measures, Ziemianin said, including the following:

Exercise. Moderate activity, such as brisk walking or



swimming, can lower high blood pressure. Always talk with your doctor before starting an exercise plan. If you belong to a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, you may have access to a fitness program at no extra cost to you.

Eat a heart-healthy diet. Having a higher body mass index is a risk factor for hypertension. That's why it's important to eat a balanced

diet, including vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, dairy and oils.

Cut down on salt. As you get older, the body becomes more sensitive to salt. Too much salt can increase your blood pressure. Limit the amount of salt in your diet by choosing low-sodium seasonings when preparing meals.

Drink less alcohol. Even moderate alcohol use can

increase your blood pressure. The American Health Associations recommends no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

Quit smoking or don't start. Smoking increases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. It's never too late to quit. If you have a Medicare plan, you have access to counseling services to help you quit. Additionally, a Medicare Part D plan may cover medications to help you stop smoking.

Manage stress. Stress can increase your blood pressure. Medicare and MA plans cover counseling services, including telehealth in some cases, to help you cope with stress.

Talk to your doctor about medication. There are several medications available to help lower your blood

pressure. You may need to try several types or combinations before you find a plan that works for you. Once you find the right plan, always take your medication as prescribed. If cost is an issue, an MA plan with drug coverage, or a stand-alone drug plan, helps pay for most blood pressure medications.

For more information about Medicare and MA benefits that can help you lower your blood pressure, visit <https://www.healthspring.com>.

"Lowering blood pressure, even a small amount, can make a big difference," Ziemianin said. "That's why it's so critical for you to identify high blood pressure early and then work very closely with your primary care physician to develop a plan for managing your hypertension so you can live a longer, healthier life."



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What men should learn about heart disease

Heart disease has remained the leading cause of death for men in the United States for the last century. It's also the second leading cause of death among men in Canada. Despite significant medical breakthroughs in recent years, the American Heart Association 2026 Statistical Update reveals approximately 54 percent of adult males currently live with some form of cardiovascular disease (CVD).

High burden for men

The overall burden for CVD remains high. CVD claims the lives of more than 350,000 men annually, says Kirby Medical Center. Men need to know about heart health so they can take proactive steps to protect themselves against CVD. One thing to realize is



that a man's risk begins to climb sharply around age 35, according to Northwestern University. On average, men develop coronary heart

disease a full decade earlier than women. Many men miss the window to catch rising blood pressure or cholesterol that can lead to

future damage.

Recognizing symptoms

Men are more likely to experience the textbook symptoms of a heart attack than women. Still, these symptoms may be ignored. Here are some key signs, courtesy of Brown University Health.

- **Intense chest pain:** A crushing pain, often described as an elephant sitting on the chest.

- **Radiating pain:** Discomfort may move to the left arm, jaw or neck.

- **Shortness of breath:** Difficulty breathing, even while resting.

Prevention strategies

The AHA says up to 80 percent of heart disease cases are preventable with some simple lifestyle adjustments. Clinical focus has shifted toward the following advice.

- **Reduce noise exposure.**

Reducing exposure to high levels of transportation and industrial noise can help, as noise is linked to chronic hypertension, according to Labcorp.

- **Avoid sleep extremes.** It's important to get between seven and eight hours of sleep each night. Less than five hours or more than 10 hours is directly linked to higher coronary event risks, says UChicago Medicine.

- **Manage CKM syndrome.** The AMA says CKM syndrome is a systemic disorder defined by an interconnection between obesity, diabetes, kidney disease, and heart disease. Left untreated, it can progress to organ failure, heart attack or stroke.

Early screening for CVD is advised for men so they can head off potential heart problems.

A guide to prostate and testicular cancers

Each November, men embrace a popular and fun yet serious phenomenon known as Movember®, an annual effort to raise awareness about health issues that affect men. The prostate and the testes are exclusive to the male reproductive system. Prostate cancer and testicular cancer are two issues that garner much attention thanks to Movember®, so now is an ideal time for men to learn about these conditions.

Testicular cancer

The testes are small, egg-shaped glands responsible for making and releasing male sex hormones for growth of muscle, body hair and bone. They also make and move semen and sperm for reproduction.

According to the Urology

Care Foundation, testicular cancer occurs when cells in the testicles grow to form a tumor, which is rare. More than 90 percent of testicular cancers begin in germ cells that are responsible for producing sperm. The Mayo Clinic says it can happen at any age, but testicular cancer occurs the most between the ages of 15 and 45 and is first noticed as a bump or lump on a testicle.

Testicular cancer can quickly spread outside of the testicle, but it is highly treatable even if it spreads.

Prostate cancer

Unlike testicular cancer, which affects a relatively small amount of men each year, prostate cancer is one of the most common types of cancer, indicates the Mayo

Clinic. Oftentimes prostate cancers grow slowly and are confined to the prostate gland. Still, some types of prostate cancer are aggressive and can spread quickly.

Catching prostate cancer in its early stages when it is localized greatly improves the odds that treatment will prove successful. The American Urological Association says ethnicity plays a role in prostate cancer, with African American men having a higher risk of the disease than men from other demographics. Men over the age of 55 as well as those who have a grandfather, father or brother with prostate cancer face a higher risk as well.

Sometimes prostate cancer shows no symptoms. In other cases, dull pain in the lower pelvis, frequent



urination, trouble passing urine, blood in urine, and painful ejaculation may be associated with prostate cancer. These symptoms also can be related to a condition called benign hyperplasia, so it's best to speak to a doctor. Doctors will use prostate-specific antigen

(PSA) tests and other information to check for prostate cancer. Some men never need to have any treatment other than active surveillance or watchful waiting, particularly if they are at advanced ages when a slow-growing prostate cancer is detected.

As with any health abnormalities, individuals should know their bodies and what is normal for them. Anything that seems out of the ordinary, particularly lumps, bumps, pain, blood, or issues around the groin, should be brought to the attention of a physician.

Lifestyle choices that could affect outcomes of colorectal cancer

The World Health Organization reports that colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer worldwide, accounting for roughly 10 percent of all cancer cases each year. Colorectal cancer also is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths across the globe. But colorectal cancer may not be as formidable a foe as those statistics suggest.

The American Institute for Cancer Research notes that lifestyle factors are among the main risk factors for colorectal cancer. Such factors are within individuals' control, and when individuals embrace healthy lifestyle choices, they might be able to improve outcomes in relation to a colorectal cancer diagnosis.

Physical activity

Routine physical activity has been linked to a wide range of healthy outcomes, including a reduced risk for chronic diseases and improved mental health. The AICR notes that people who are more physically active have better health outcomes after a colorectal cancer diagnosis than people who live a sedentary lifestyle. While there's no guarantee such outcomes will improve by incorporating physical activity into a daily routine, the benefits of regular exercise are so profound that it can benefit anyone living a sedentary lifestyle to get up and move more frequently.

Diet

The AICR notes that people who eat more whole grains have better health outcomes after a colorectal cancer diagnosis. AICR research also indicates eating three servings of whole grains each day lowers a person's risk of colorectal cancer by 17 percent. The Mayo Clinic notes that whole grains include quinoa, brown rice, oatmeal, whole wheat flour, and popcorn. The AICR cautions that people who have been treated for colorectal cancer have reported difficulty consuming whole grains



after treatment, including surgery. In such instances, a gradual reintroduction of whole grains under the supervision of a health professional can help people get back on track and reduce the need to consume refined grains.

Sugary drinks

Sugary drinks have been associated with a number of negative health outcomes, including overweight and obesity, each of which are risk factors for type 2 diabetes. The AICR also indicates people who consume less sugary drinks have better health outcomes after being diagnosed with colorectal cancer. The AICR recommends people consider reducing their consumption of sugary drinks.

Colorectal cancer is a common and often deadly form of the disease. But the right lifestyle choices may make a colorectal cancer diagnosis easier to overcome.

What to know about colonoscopies

Adults in their early 40s know the day is looming when their physicians indicate it's time for them to get a colonoscopy. According to the MD Anderson Cancer Center®, most people should get their first colonoscopy at age 45 and continue to get semi-regular screenings through age 75.

Colonoscopies are an effective means to screening for colorectal cancer, which the World Health Organization reports is the third most common cancer worldwide. Though the MDACC characterizes colonoscopies as the "gold standard" for colorectal cancer screening, many people still approach the test with a degree of apprehension. But a closer look at these highly effective screenings shows there's little to fear when getting a colonoscopy.

What happens during a colonoscopy?

During the procedure, a long, flexible tube known as a colonoscope is inserted into the rectum and around the colon. A camera and light at the tip of the colonoscope allows the doctor to examine the lining and the walls of the colon. The MDACC notes that ability is what makes colonoscopies so effective. During a colonoscopy, a doctor can remove any polyps, which are small, typically benign growths. Stool-based colorectal screenings and virtual colonoscopies do not allow for the removal of polyps.

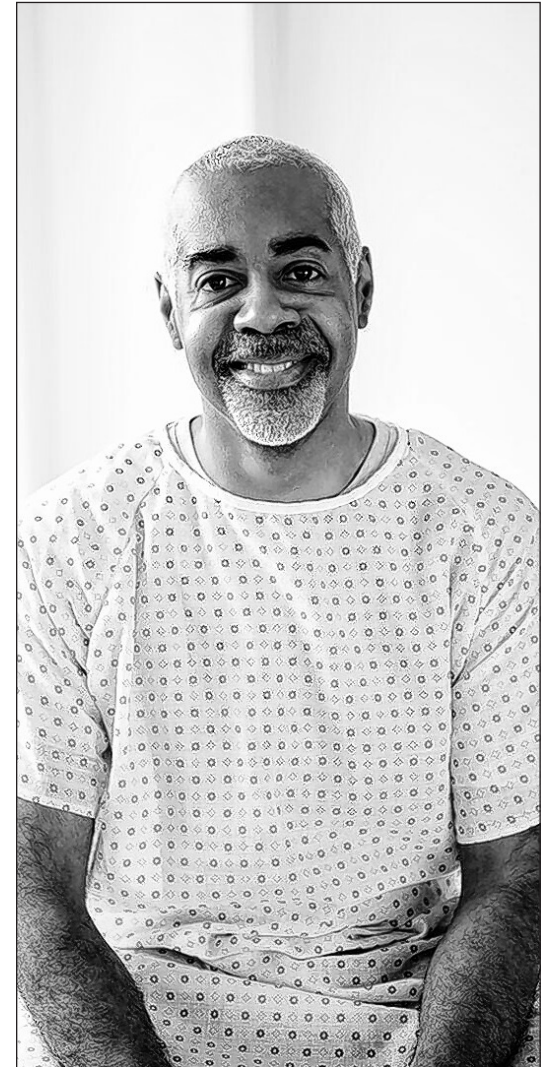
Why do colonoscopies inspire anxiety?

The anxiety associated with colonoscopies typically does not stem from the procedure itself but the preparation required the night before it. The Mayo Clinic notes that the colon, which is normally filled with stool, will need to be emptied prior to getting a colonoscopy. That means patients cannot eat solid food the day before the exam, and any drinks they consume may be limited to clear beverages, including water, tea and coffee without milk or cream, or broth (patients should first consult with their physicians about what they can and cannot consume on the day prior to the procedure).

Avoiding solid food and sticking to clean liquids can be inconvenient, but the anxiety from a colonoscopy often can be traced to the prescription laxative patients typically consume in pill or liquid from the night before the procedure. That laxative facilitates the emptying of the colon, and patients may make several trips to the bathroom after consuming the laxative. Patients also may need to wake up in the middle of the night and take a second dose, after which they may make several additional trips to the restroom.

What about the procedure itself?

During a colonoscopy, patients will wear a gown but likely nothing else. Sedation or



anesthesia is typically administered, and after that patients often fall asleep and ultimately awake in another room after the procedure has been completed. The Mayo Clinic notes some patients feel stomach cramps and/or bloated after the procedure. When patients awake from the sedative, the doctor who performed the procedure will offer his prognosis.

How soon do I need another colonoscopy?

Recommendations regarding a subsequent colonoscopy depend on what was found during the procedure. The MDACC notes that the typical timeline if no polyps were discovered is 10 years before the next colonoscopy.

Colonoscopies have a reputation for being unpleasant, but any pre-procedure discomfort is worth it given the efficacy of the exams.

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The changing nutritional needs of aging bodies

Getting older requires adapting to the changes that come one's way. The human body is ever-changing and health requirements typically need to be modified as people age. One area that merits consideration is the body's changing nutritional needs. Individuals should know that generally the body absorbs nutrients less efficiently as it ages. That's just one of many changing needs.

• **Fewer calories:** Healthline notes that older adults likely need to eat fewer calories than they did when they were younger since they tend to move and exercise less and carry less muscle. Overeating may lead to gaining extra fat around the belly area.

• **Vitamin B12:** As people

age, their stomachs produce less hydrochloric acid, and some medications can make it harder for the body to absorb B12. Adults should speak with a health care provider about whether or not a B12 supplement might be right for them.

• **Fiber:** Regular bowel movements are an important part of staying healthy. Fiber will help support healthy digestion and prevent constipation. Fiber is found naturally in most fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, according to Penn Health. Men 50 years of age and older should aim for 30 grams of fiber a day, while women should strive for 21 grams, according to Maureen Boccella, MS, RD, CDCES, LDN, at Chester County Hospital.

• **Protein:** Eating more protein might help older adults avoid loss of muscle mass and diminished strength, which are hallmarks of a condition known as sarcopenia, says Healthline. A study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found those who ate the most protein lost 40 percent less muscle mass than people who ate the least.

• **Calcium:** Bone health is a consideration as a person gets older, says the United States Department of Agriculture. Calcium supports bone health and plays a role in muscle function, hormone secretion and nerve transmission. Calcium can be found in yogurt, cheese, milk, and some vegetables like kale and broccoli.

• **Potassium:** According to Harvard Health, diets that

emphasize significant potassium intake can help keep blood pressure in a healthy range compared to potassium-poor diets. Potassium also is necessary for the normal operation of all cells, ensuring proper function of muscles and nerves. While bananas are good sources of potassium, apricots, prunes, orange juice, squash, and some potatoes also contain this often-neglected

nutrient.

• **Water:** While not a nutrient per se, water is essential for older adults, who do not feel thirst as readily as they did when they were younger, making them more vulnerable to dehydration. Low-fat milk and unsweetened juices also can help.

Older adults are urged to speak with their doctors or dietitians to discuss their changing nutritional needs.



Turn to your plate for vitamins and minerals

Health is a multibillion dollar industry. People who may be short on time may look to the most efficient routes for maintaining health and wellness. For some, that could mean turning to supplements to ensure they are consuming the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals. But is supplementation the best way to fuel the body?

According to MyProtein.com, a supplement and nutrition company, the average American spends close to \$56 per month on supplements, which include protein powders, vitamins and more. Those expenditures are in addition to their other health spending, which may include gym memberships and meal plans. However, leading health experts point healthy



individuals in the direction of getting their vitamins and minerals from eating nutrient-rich foods instead of taking supplements. According to VNS Health, a New York-based home and community health care organization, people in good health are better off getting the majority

of their daily nutrients from food.

Harvard Health seconds that advice, saying vitamin and mineral supplements cannot match all of the biologically active compounds available through a varied diet. There are 13 vitamins in total, and eight belong to

the B group. Together with minerals, these nutrients are essential for bodily functions like wound healing, regulating hormones and fighting infection. Nutrients that are consumed through foods are often easier for the body to absorb. Furthermore, it is much less likely

one will experience toxicity from getting too many vitamins and minerals through diet alone, whereas it can be easy to go over the recommended daily values when using supplements.

Although vitamins and minerals consumed via a balanced diet are generally the best bet, there are some instances when supplementation may be necessary. A health care provider can guide people as to when supplementation might be necessary. Individuals with Crohn's disease, Celiac disease or irritable bowel syndrome should know that each condition can make absorbing nutrients challenging. Those with osteoporosis or age-related macular degeneration also may find supplementation

or eating fortified foods can be advantageous.

Individuals should keep in mind that many supplements are not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or other countries' government regulators. Such products may contain hidden ingredients or vitamins and minerals in levels not deemed safe. Also, some supplements can interact with medications. Again, it is best to consult with a healthcare provider before supplementation to find out if it is necessary.

People concerned about their vitamin and mineral intake should first turn to food to get all of the nutrients they need, and then discuss supplements with their physicians if they still have deficiencies.



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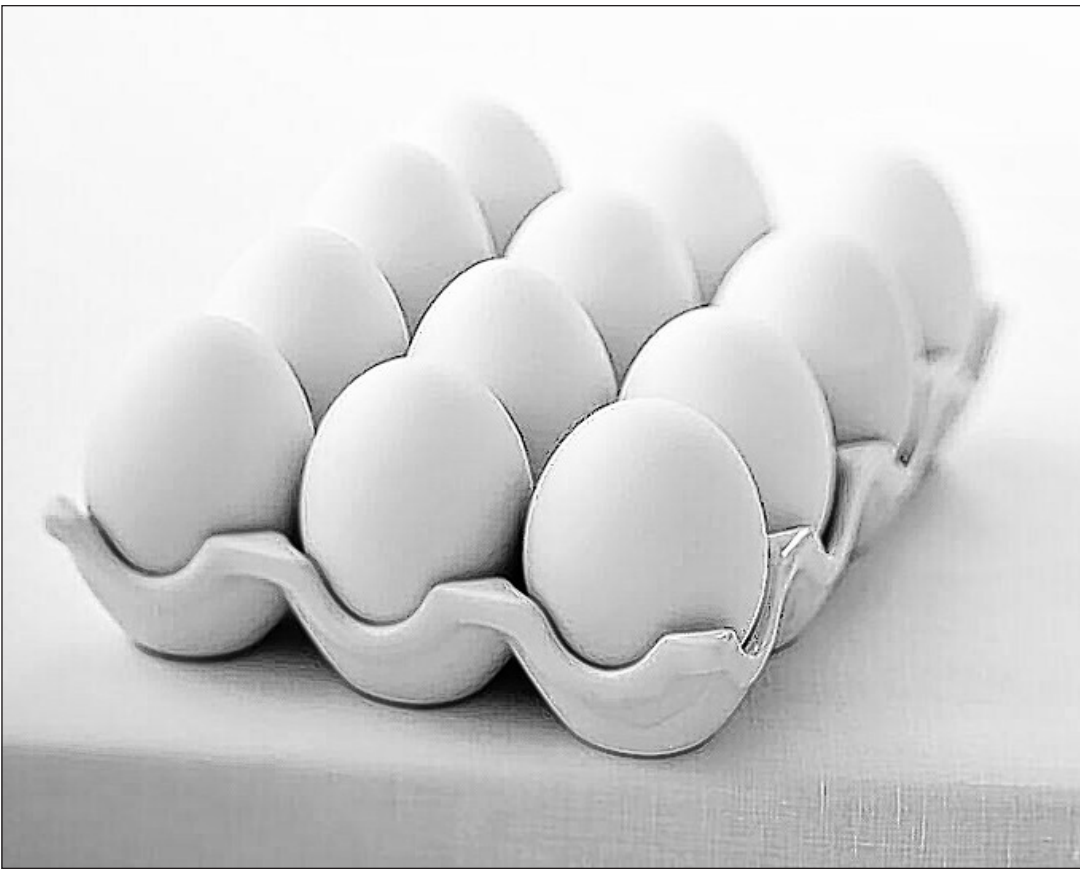
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5 foods that promote long-term eye health

A nutritious diet is often touted in relation to its link to maintaining a healthy weight and reducing risk for chronic disease. Though healthy foods certainly provide each of those benefits, a nutritious diet also can protect vision.

The World Health Organization estimates that at least 2.2 billion people have a near or distance vision impairment, and roughly half of those instances could have been prevented or have yet to be addressed. Vision loss is often characterized as a natural byproduct of aging, and the National Institute on Aging notes that it's normal for individuals to notice changes in their vision as they age. But it's a mistake to think there's little people can do to protect their long-term vision. In fact, a nutritious diet can be a great ally as individuals aspire to protect their long-term eye health. According to the Optometrists Network, a collective that includes clinical optometrists and respected researchers, the following are five foods that can help people protect their eyes.

1. Fish high in omega-3 fatty acids: Omega-3 fatty acids help with vision development and can

reduce a person's risk of developing dry eye, a condition marked by chronically dry eyes that either don't produce enough tears or produce tears that cannot adequately lubricate the eyes. Various types of fish, including salmon, anchovies, herring, and trout, among others, are high in omega-3 fatty acids.

Individuals who don't like eating fish can consider various nuts and legumes, such as walnuts, lentils and peanuts, which all contain omega-3 fatty acids as well.

2. Seeds: Flax seeds, chia seeds, hemp seeds, and sunflower seeds contain either omega-3 fatty acids or vitamin E, which the Optometrists Network notes can help to prevent age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.

3. Leafy green vegetables: WebMD reports that lutein and zeaxanthin are potent antioxidants that can help to prevent age-related eye disease and protect the eyes from the harmful effects of exposure to ultraviolet rays in sunlight. Leafy green vegetables such as collards, kale and spinach are high in lutein and zeaxanthin.

4. Sweet potatoes: Though their popularity spikes in fall, sweet potatoes are available year-round.

That's good news for sweet potato aficionados hoping to use diet to protect their eyes, as the Optometrists Network reports that sweet potatoes are high in beta carotene, which helps the eyes adjust to darkness. Sweet potatoes also are high in vitamin C, which may help individuals reduce their risk for cataracts.

5. Eggs: Like leafy green vegetables, eggs are high in lutein and zeaxanthin. The Optometrists Network also reports that eggs are rich in vitamins C and E and a good source of zinc. The presence of zinc is notable in relation to eye health, as it's been shown to help the body utilize lutein and zeaxanthin found in the yolk. Zinc also has been found to protect the retina from potentially harmful blue light and helps to increase the amount of protective pigment in the macula.

Many benefits associated with a nutritious diet are widely known. But even the most devoted healthy eaters may not recognize how much certain foods are helping to maintain their long-term eye health.

Common warning signs for cataracts

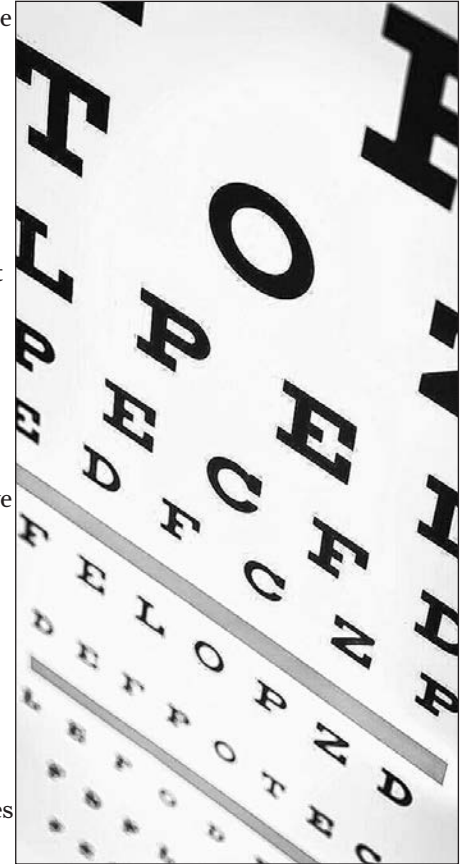
No one wants to imagine a day when their vision might abandon them, but diminished eyesight is a common occurrence that affects people of all ages and from all walks of life. A 2022 report from the World Health Organization indicated that at least 826 million people have distance- or near-vision impairment 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 aao.org.

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