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# Changing

# NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Eating right becomes even more important as we age



**D**iets should conform to our changing needs, with a specific focus on reducing inflammation, strengthening bones and lowering blood pressure.

The recommended daily balance of vegetables, fruits, proteins and whole grains builds a foundation for health. But even those who are trying hard can find hidden dangers, as with sodium. That's just one of the issues that we need to address when dealing with specific issues associated with getting older.

Here are three habits to incorporate into your regular diet in order to promote better senior health.

## FOCUS ON OMEGA 3

Seniors are more prone to heart disease, arthritis and cancer, and the risks can be lowered by focusing on regular intake of Omega 3 fatty acids. They're usually associated with

specific kinds of fish, but you can also find these inflammation-reducing nutrients in walnuts, flaxseed and canola oil. Physicians recommend that seniors eat foods rich in Omega 3 fatty acids at least twice each week. If you're struggling to meet that standard, consider purchasing a supplement — but check with your doctor first.

## BOOST YOUR CALCIUM

Calcium becomes a critical need as we get older, as it helps with bone health and can lower blood pressure. Both are particularly important for seniors, but calcium is critical for those who are prone to falls. Women over the age of 50 and men over 70 should get at least 1,200 milligrams of calcium a day, according to the World Health Organization. That's about four cups of dairy milk, fortified nondairy products made from soy or

almonds, and calcium-enriched orange juice. If those aren't palatable, you can also get the calcium you need from certain foods — including cheese, kale, yogurt, winter squash, sardines, almonds, tofu, collard and mustard greens.

## WATCH SODIUM INTAKE

One of the most important things to do in the fight against hypertension is lower your intake of sodium. Begin by sharply cutting back or preferably eliminating usage of table salt or salty seasonings. Many foods are already very high in sodium, including soups, processed foods and meals at many restaurants. Limit your intake of those items, and watch how you're doing by consulting product labels. Many canned vegetables, nuts, luncheon meat and even breads have a surprisingly high amount of sodium.



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# FINDING A NEW HOBBY

You've retired after a lifetime of work — now what?



**O**ur golden years are certainly an opportunity to relax, but you might find yourself with a little too much extra time.

Going back to the endless bustle of a five-day work week isn't the answer. But neither is being bored silly. That's when finding a new hobby might be smart.

You can keep yourself engaged and entertained, make new friends and maybe help your community through meaningful volunteer hours that simply weren't possible before.

## TRY NEW THINGS

As busy parents raising a family, building a career and trying to find time for one another, there probably wasn't much calendar space left for things like becoming artsy or trying a new recipe. Things are different into retirement, as time now allows you an opportunity to express yourself through painting, woodworking projects or sewing.

You'll be sparking your imagination and keeping your mind sharp while creating one-of-a-kind objects to enjoy or gift to others. Beer or wine making are growing trends, or consider old standbys like gardening or crochet.

## JOIN A CLUB

Seek out local chapters of nationwide clubs, or ask around. You can create fast new friends among people with common goals. If established clubs like those aren't nearby, or don't exactly dovetail with your interests, consider starting one yourself. People in your friend and family group may have suggestions about unaddressed needs in your community. Aim toward those goals then, once you've begun building a foundation base of members, begin work on a new project together.

## BECOME A VOLUNTEER

If you've always believed in certain

causes but weren't able schedule time to get involved, now's the time to volunteer. These efforts are also great way to meet new friends, while also creating a sense of civic pride and enriching your community through services provided to schools, rights groups, health care or other non-profits.

## SAVING MEMORIES

As we get older, we naturally become more interested in documenting and saving memories for future generations. Consider writing projects or scrapbooking as a way to turn your stories into lasting creative ideas. These hand-crafted stories and inventively collected images will become a treasure trove of family history, fun vacations, personal milestones and favorite moments. If you find yourself particularly interested in writing, let your imagination run wild through novels, poetry or short stories.

# Watching for healthcare fraud

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Vermont SMP is sponsored by Community of Vermont Elders  
and funded by the Administration for Community Living #90MMP0029-05.



# Friendships Are Important

Seniors may lose touch after downsizing or retirement

**S**tudies show that there's never a more important time to keep up with these old connections.

But even the strongest relationships may have been somewhat reliant on proximity. Then you move away or stop regularly going to the office, and it may suddenly be hard to maintain the easy camaraderie that existed before.

The good news is that it's easier now to stay in touch with faraway friends through the modern technology of a cell phone. You'll be able to keep up with one another again through texting, sharing pictures, and on social media — so you'll always feel connected.

Then you can use your phone to set up lunches, dinner parties and trips out in the real world.

## **BENEFITS OF FRIENDS**

Research has repeatedly confirmed

that healthy, close friendships are a major contributing factor in our overall health. That's especially true for seniors, who are more active when they are part of a circle of friends. Reaching out may be uncomfortable, in particular if it's been awhile. But try to remember how close you once were, when life brought you together on a more regular basis — and trust that you can be again, with a little help from technology. As you rebuild your friend-filled life, you'll find new energy and support. That's good for your emotional health, too.

## **TEXT AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

Our phones allow us to share the little moments that make up an intimate friendship, either through texts or social media. If you don't have your old friend's phone number, try searching for them

through the most popular apps. Connect there with a re-introductory message, then share your direct contact details. If both of you are active in posting thoughts, memories and photos, you'll be part of one another's daily lives again.

## **WIDENING YOUR CIRCLE**

Social media also allows you to confirm new friendships by connecting with those who you meet along the way at social events, club meetings, church or the library. If you're new to an area after relocating, look for online groups based in your new neighborhood or town. Senior citizens centers will also sponsor events where a foundation for your new support group can be found. Keep an eye out for notices about sponsored parties, golf outings or shared boat trips, dances or volunteer opportunities.





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# SPEND TIME WITH GRANDCHILDREN

One of the greatest joys of old age can be having grandchildren—whether the actual children of your children or members of the younger generation that you've unofficially adopted. Intergenerational relationships are good for all involved.



**A**nd research shows that there may be good effects for both grandparents and grandchildren. Utah State University Extension reported the results of several studies over the past decade that have found:

Children who are emotionally close to their grandparents are less likely to be depressed as adults.

A close relationship with grandchildren can boost brain function in the grandparents, protect against depression and increase their lifespan.

What sort of things can you do to connect with your grandchildren and form good relationships? There are more opportunities than ever before.

## VISIT

The simplest and most obvious is to have frequent visits. This requires maintaining a good relationship with the parents of the children and coordinating with them to have visits at both the homes of the children and your own.

Activities you can do together will vary depending on your interests and the interests of the child. Some grandparents like to take their grandchildren to concerts, plays or art museums. Others like to play with Legos or do puzzles. Others like to go swimming, ride bikes or play basketball.

Sometimes a visit can be as quiet as curling up to watch a movie together or read a book while other times in can involve trips to the zoo or a sporting event.

If you live close to your grandchildren, try to plan weekly dates. If you are further away, your visits may be more of an event filled with special occasions.

## USE TECHNOLOGY

Technology is simply an everyday part of life for the younger generation and it can be a great tool to help the two of you connect.

Use social media to share pic-

tures or create and post videos together. Use communication devices to bolster your relationship by texting, Facetiming, emailing or connecting over Zoom.

Technology is especially a bonus if you live far apart. You can sing your grandchild a lullaby or read a bedtime story over Zoom or through the phone. You can play online games together or watch streaming movies at the same time while apart.

## SEND MAIL

While technology is great, there is something special about getting mail the old-fashioned way. Send your grandchildren cards, letters or photos through the mail.

If you are artistic, make pictures for your grandchildren and send it to them and ask them to send you their artwork—which you can display proudly in your own home for them to see when they visit.

## TEACH SKILLS AND SHARE HOBBIES

You have unique skills, passions and interests that are likely different from others in your grandchild's life and that they will associate with you. Take them fishing. Teach them how to cook your favorite recipes. Show them how to sew and make special accessories for them to wear. Sing your favorite songs with them.

Set aside part of your garden and devote to anything your grandchild wants to plant and care for. Take them bird watching. Let them in on the secrets of amateur radio and show them how to message the International Space Station. Take them to visit art museums or go to a pottery painting store to create treasures together.

Whatever you decide to do, have fun with your grandchild and don't be afraid to laugh, be silly and give plenty of hugs. Create a relationship that will give both of you joy and long-lasting memories.

**Volunteering supports healthy aging and builds strong communities.**

**CVCOA has a variety of volunteer opportunities to fit your schedule.**

***Contact us today to start your journey!***



## **Your Impact Matters!**

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