

- TECHNOLOGY
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- NUTRITION

# BOOMERS

SPRING 2026



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**BOOMERS**

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# Mindful Technology Use

Technology is everywhere. It's the way we stay in touch with family, manage our appointments, explore hobbies, control our environment, play games and track medication.

**D**igital tools can offer connection and convenience. At the same time, too much screen time or poorly chosen technology habits can leave people feeling distracted, frustrated or fatigued. Mindful technology use focuses on balance, intention and well-being.

Rather than asking whether technology is good or bad, the more useful question is how it fits into daily life. When used thoughtfully, digital tools can support independence, learning and social engagement without overwhelming the senses or replacing meaningful offline experiences.

## Using Technology with Purpose

Mindful technology use begins with clarity. Knowing why you are using a device helps prevent endless scrolling or digital overload. Technology works best when it serves a specific purpose, such as connecting with loved ones, accessing information or supporting health needs.

Video calls and messaging apps can help maintain relationships across distances, especially for seniors who live alone or far from family. Online classes, museum

tours and discussion groups make it possible to explore interests and continue learning from home. Health portals and reminder apps can simplify medication schedules and appointments when used selectively.

It can be helpful to periodically review which apps and services are truly useful. Removing rarely used or stressful applications can reduce clutter and make devices easier and more pleasant to use.

## Setting Healthy Boundaries with Screens

Spending long periods in front of screens can strain eyes, disrupt sleep and reduce physical activity. Creating gentle boundaries helps technology remain a tool rather than a drain.

Designating screen-free times, such as during meals or before bedtime, can support better sleep and more present conversations. Adjusting font sizes, brightness and sound settings can reduce physical discomfort and make devices more accessible. Short breaks from screens throughout the day encourage movement and mental rest. Even brief pauses to stretch, step outside or change activities can restore focus and energy.

## SHERYL'S SUGAR HOUSE:

# A NEW HOPE FOR DEMENTIA CARE AT MAYO HEALTHCARE

Mayo Healthcare has exciting news for the New Year! We would like to officially announce that this year we will be opening Sheryl's Sugar House! This is an exciting new initiative aimed at enhancing the lives of our dementia residents. This innovative program is designed to create a warm, inviting environment that prioritizes the well-being and quality of life for individuals living with dementia.

A home away from home, Sheryl's Sugar House focuses on offering a safe, home-like atmosphere rather than a sterile clinical setting. With familiar furnishings and welcoming decor, the space is designed to make residents feel comfortable and at ease. Cozy common areas bathed in natural light encourage social interaction, creating inviting spaces for residents to connect with one another. Each resident will also have a personalized memory box, filled with items that hold special meaning to them.

At the heart of Sheryl's Sugar House is the concept of communal meals. Residents gather around a family-style table, fostering a sense of community and togetherness. Residents are encouraged to participate in the meal preparation process, from setting the table to cooking and cleaning up afterward. The menu will feature nutritionally balanced meals that cater to dietary restrictions, ensuring that residents enjoy flavorful and healthy options. Residents will engage in daily cooking activities, from baking cookies to making homemade bread, allowing them to take pride in their contributions. These smells stimulate appetite and can decrease with loss.

To add variety, themed meal days will celebrate different cultural cuisines and seasonal delights. A small garden will also flourish at Sheryl's Sugar House, where



residents can grow herbs and vegetables, further promoting a sense of accomplishment and connection to their food.

A consistent daily schedule is essential for providing residents with security and orientation. Regular activities, including meals, exercise, and leisure pursuits, help establish a comforting rhythm. Morning stretches and evening relaxation sessions create gentle rituals to start and end each day, which can reduce sundowning and related behaviors.

While routines are important, staff members at Sheryl's Sugar House also offer flexibility to accommodate individual preferences, ensuring that every resident feels valued. Relaxation periods are

integrated into the schedule, providing opportunities for quiet activities such as reading or listening to music, which help reduce stress.

Sheryl's Sugar House offers a diverse range of activities designed to stimulate both the mind and body. Daily cognitive stimulation activities, such as puzzles and arts and crafts, encourage mental engagement, while regular physical exercise, including gentle yoga and walking groups, promotes overall health.

Social interaction is a key aspect of the program. Group activities such as games, movie nights, and music therapy sessions help strengthen social bonds and combat feelings of isolation. Residents will continue

to participate in larger special events, creating a vibrant community atmosphere.

The team behind Sheryl's Sugar House includes Shellie Stevens, Administrator, Vicki Slocum, Director of Activities and Marketing, and Devin Leno, Activity Assistant and Mentor. Vicki and Devin have undergone extensive training through Mariposa Dementia training and are now certified to train staff in dementia care. Vicki's own mother, Sheryl, battled dementia, at Mayo, this program is built from love and experience. They will continue to provide compassionate care, ensuring that residents receive empathetic support tailored to their individual needs. Regular one-on-one check-ins will help foster trust and assess residents' emotional well-being, while training all staff in up-to-date dementia care.

Therapeutic approaches, such as reminiscence therapy, utilizing memory books and discussion prompts to evoke positive memories and facilitate meaningful conversations. The introduction of pet therapy will also bring friendly animals into the routine, providing comfort and joy for residents.

Sheryl's Sugar House is dedicated to creating a nurturing and safe environment for individuals with dementia. By emphasizing social interaction, structured routines, and emotional support, the program significantly enhances the quality of life for residents. This holistic approach not only promotes physical health but also nurtures emotional and cognitive well-being, fostering a vibrant community where every resident feels valued.

Mayo Healthcare is thrilled to offer this innovative service to its residents, expanding its knowledge and care in the field of dementia support.



### For More information

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# Climate Change and Older Adults

Climate change has been a hot topic for discussion for years now and more than ever, older adults are starting to feel the effects.



From extreme heat to severe storms and prolonged power failures, changing weather patterns are shaping daily life and health risks for seniors across the country.

According to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, 74% of people age 50 and older experienced at least one extreme weather event in the past two years. These events included extreme heat, poor air quality from wildfires, severe storms and long power failures. For many seniors, these disruptions are not rare occurrences but part of an emerging pattern.

## How Extreme Weather Affects Senior Health

Extreme weather events can affect health in both direct and indirect ways. Heat waves increase the risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke, particularly for older adults who may have chronic conditions or take medications that affect temperature regulation. Poor air quality from wildfires or pollution can worsen respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.

Severe storms and power failures can interrupt access to medical equipment, refrigeration for medications and reliable transportation. Flooding and infrastructure damage may limit access to clean water, nutritious food and health care services. These disruptions can be especially challenging for seniors who rely on regular routines or outside assistance.

The poll found that a majority of older adults are already concerned about these risks. Nearly six in 10 respondents, or 59%, said they are concerned about the effect of climate change on their own health. Even more, 74%, expressed concern about the health of future generations.

# Celebrating Cultural Curiosity

Curiosity does not fade with age. For many older adults, it deepens, shaped by decades of experience and a growing appreciation for the wider world.

Exploring art, history, food and traditions offers seniors a powerful pathway to lifelong learning, meaningful connection and renewed vitality.

Cultural curiosity is not about mastering new subjects or traveling far from home. It is about remaining open to ideas, stories and experiences that broaden perspective and spark joy. Whether through a museum visit, a shared meal or a new tradition, engaging with culture keeps the mind active and the heart connected.

## Learning Through Art and History

Art and history invite reflection, conversation and discovery. Visiting galleries, attending performances or exploring historical sites can awaken memories while offering new ways to see the world. Many cultural institutions provide senior-friendly programming, virtual tours and discussion groups that make participation accessible and social.

Learning does not require formal study. Reading historical fiction, watching documentaries or listening to lectures can deepen understanding at a comfortable pace. Even revisiting familiar eras or artistic styles can reveal fresh insights when viewed through the lens of lived experience.

Engaging with culture supports cognitive health. Research shows that activities involving interpretation, analysis and storytelling help stimulate the brain and encourage curiosity. Discussing what one has seen or learned with others adds an important social dimension to the experience.

## Food as a Gateway to Connection

Food is one of the most approachable ways to explore culture. Trying new cuisines, learning family recipes or attending cultural food festivals can create opportunities for shared enjoyment and conversation. Meals often carry stories, traditions and memories that connect generations.

Cooking and eating together fosters social bonds while celebrating diversity. Hosting a themed dinner, participating in a community potluck or taking a cooking class can transform everyday meals into meaningful cultural experiences. For seniors living alone, food-focused activities offer a welcoming way to connect with others.

Cultural curiosity through food encourages mindfulness. Paying attention to flavors, textures and traditions brings a sense of presence that enhances enjoyment and appreciation.

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# Health Care Companions

Health care appointments can be overwhelming at any age, but for many older adults, they come with added complexity.

New diagnoses, multiple medications and unfamiliar terminology can make it hard to absorb everything discussed in a short visit. That is why more seniors are choosing not to go it alone. Bringing a trusted companion to medical appointments is becoming an important part of navigating care.

According to the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging, 38% of adults age 50 and older had someone attend their health care appointments with them in the past year. Most commonly, the person was there to provide company or help ask and answer questions. The results highlight how valuable shared support can be in medical settings.

## Why Having Someone There Helps

Appointments often move quickly, and it can

be difficult to process information in real time. A companion can listen closely, take notes and help clarify instructions. They may notice details that the patient misses or remember questions discussed ahead of time.

The same poll found that 92% of older adults who brought someone with them to a health care appointment agreed the presence of another person was helpful. That overwhelming agreement reflects more than just practical assistance. Emotional support also plays a role. Simply having someone there can ease anxiety and help patients feel more confident speaking up.

Companions can also help bridge communication gaps. They may ask follow-up questions, request clearer explanations or help restate concerns in ways clinicians can address. This

can lead to better understanding and more informed decision-making.

## Making the Most of a Health Care Companion

To be effective, companions should be chosen thoughtfully. Trust, good communication and respect for privacy are key. It helps to discuss goals ahead of time, such as what questions to ask or what information to focus on.

According to the poll, adults said having another person at their appointments improved their experience. Specifically: 92% said it was helpful, 83% said it helped them feel comfortable sharing their health information, 79% said it helped them follow through on the provider's instructions and 76% said it positively affected the quality of care they received.



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# Nutrition for ENERGY

**For many older adults, nutrition advice can start to feel repetitive: Eat less, avoid this, limit that.**

**W**hile managing health conditions matters, food can be a powerful source of energy, pleasure and connection. Shifting the focus from restriction to nourishment can help seniors feel more vibrant and engaged in daily life.

Eating well is not just about preventing illness. It is about fueling the body for movement, conversation, creativity and enjoyment. When meals are satisfying and supportive, they become something to look forward to rather than another task to manage.

## Fueling Stamina

One common nutrition-related complaint among seniors is low energy. Skipped meals, overly restrictive diets and inadequate protein intake can all contribute to fatigue. Building meals around steady sources of fuel helps support

stamina from morning through evening.

Protein plays a key role in maintaining muscle strength and endurance. Including foods such as eggs, yogurt, beans, fish, poultry or nut butters at each meal can help prevent energy dips. Pairing protein with complex carbohydrates like whole grains, fruits and vegetables provides longer-lasting fuel than refined sugars alone.

Healthy fats matter. Olive oil, avocados and nuts support satiety and sustained energy while adding flavor and texture. Staying hydrated is equally important, as even mild dehydration can lead to sluggishness and headaches. Water, herbal teas and foods with high water content can all help meet daily fluid needs.

## Bringing Enjoyment Back to the Table

Nutrition works best when food is enjoy-

able. Taste changes and appetite shifts can occur with age, but meals don't have to be bland or boring. Using herbs, spices and varied textures can revive interest in eating and make meals more satisfying.

Enjoyment can come from flexibility. Allowing room for favorite foods, cultural traditions and occasional indulgences supports a healthier relationship with food. Eating ought to feel nourishing rather than punitive.

Cooking does not have to be complicated to be satisfying. Simple meals prepared with care can provide comfort and pleasure without requiring hours in the kitchen. For those who find cooking challenging, meal kits, community meals and shared cooking arrangements can help maintain variety and interest.



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