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HEALTH & Wellness

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Beat exercise boredom

Exercise is essential for good health. But it can be challenging to find the motivation to get moving. It is easy to cite a lack of time for a failure to exercise, but boredom also might be to blame. Harvard Health says any activity can become tedious psychologically, even if a person knows it will benefit them physically.

Boredom may not just lead to lack of exercise, it could be a cause of injury while exercising. The Mayo Clinic says as a person gets bored with a fitness routine, it is easier to skip, take shortcuts with stretching or use poor form. Doing any of these things can increase the risk of injury.

Combatting exercise boredom may need to be part of managing fitness regimens, and the following are some ways to stay engaged with your routine.

- **Change your environment.** Adding variety to an exercise routine may come down to moving the activity to a new location. If you're used to the gym or a workout room in your garage, try moving outdoors. If you've grown tired of a particular fitness machine at the gym, move to a new one.
- **Try a new activity.** Swap out a typical activity for a new one. For example, if you're accustomed to running on the treadmill, opt for cycling instead.
- **Consider a "10-10-10" workout.** A 10-10-10 workout involves swapping out activities every 10 minutes. This brief change of scenery can help the minutes fly by.
- **Alter your fitness schedule.** Sometimes changing when your exercise schedule can be as effective as changing the activities. If you typically work out in the evening, wake up early and do a morning workout for a change of pace.
- **Get a buddy.** A workout partner can make it easier to stay accountable and transform working out into a social activity that is more fun. You may look forward to your time spent together and forget that exercise is involved.
- **Shorten the workout.** You may not have to work out hours on end to see results. In fact, most health experts say all that's needed is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise and two days of strength training per week to stay healthy. That comes down to 30 minutes a day, five days a week, plus extra time to build strength.



Set small goals along the way to larger ones.

Fitness-related progress does not come overnight, so what appears to be a lack of daily results can make it difficult to stay committed for the long haul. Setting short-term goals along the way to long-term ones can provide all the motivation people need to keep going. For example, if your ultimate goal is to lose 10 pounds, set a one-pound-per-week shorter goal. Being able to measure your progress each week can motivate you to stay the course.

• **Remind yourself why you're looking to get more fit.** There's no bad reason to get fit. Some people who find they lack the motivation to keep going simply need to remind themselves why they started an exercise regimen in the first place. Did you want to shed weight before a class reunion? Get healthy so you can be more active with your children? Exercise more to reduce your risk for a disease or condition that runs in your family? By routinely reminding yourself why you initially set out to get more fit, you may provide that little extra spark you need to stay the course. Set up smartphone notifications as reminders if you feel you need a daily refresher regarding your motivation to exercise.

• **Make it a family affair.** The buddy system is effective in many applications, and it can be particularly good at motivating people to stay the course and achieve their fitness goals. Encourage a spouse, sibling, friend, or even your whole family to join you as you begin your journey to a healthier you. With someone there to get you going each day, you're less likely to skip workouts.

Staying motivated to exercise may not be easy. But there's a number of things people can do to ensure their motivation to get fit does not wane.

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Tips to safeguard your mental health each day

The World Health Organization says more than a billion people across the globe live with a mental health condition. The need for action on mental health is urgent and undeniable, as safeguarding mental health is integral to a person's well-being.

The National Institute of Mental Health says that mental health is more than just the absence of a mental illness. It includes

emotional, psychological and social well-being. Self-care and action play key roles in maintaining good mental health and getting support and treatment if a serious issue is present. Here are steps anyone can take each day to protect their mental health.

• **Exercise regularly.** Just 30 minutes of exercise most days, which can include



walking, can boost a person's mood and improve health. The NIMH says small amounts of exercise add up, so it's possible to spread out the 30 minutes over the course of the day. Exercising outdoors also exposes a person to natural sunlight, which is proven to boost mood.

• **Foster relationships.** Good relationships are important for mental well-being. If possible, a person should take time each day to be with family, friends or colleagues. Volunteer work at a local school, community group or hospital can foster socialization for those who may not be able to get together with friends or family with regularity.

• **Learn new skills.** The United Kingdom-based NHS Services says research shows learning new skills can improve mental well-being by boosting self-esteem and

self-confidence. It also helps identify a sense of purpose.

• **Relax.** People should schedule time for relaxation and stress management. Yoga, meditation, reading, or spending time in nature are great ways to slow down, relax and recharge.

• **Seek help.** Anyone with a mental health concern should seek someone to talk to. For some, simply talking things through with a friend or family member may be enough to resolve issues. Others may find that talking to a therapist or counselor is the best course of action. There also are support groups where others who understand similar experiences can provide validation and support.

• **Curtail harmful behaviors.** Some people turn to drugs and alcohol to mitigate mental health issues. This self-medication is harmful and can exacerbate mental health conditions. Individuals should consult with medical professionals if they suspect they may need medication or additional help to treat mental health issues.

Efforts to safeguard mental health are essential. Anyone who has concerns about their mental health or the mental health of others should speak first to a primary care provider. He or she can then offer a referral to a qualified mental health professional.



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How nutritional needs change with age

The human body undergoes an assortment of changes over the course of a lifetime. Some of those changes are visible to the naked eye, but many more are not. The body's changing needs in regard to nutrition is one alteration that people cannot see.

A nutritious diet can be a building block of a long and healthy life. Nutritional needs change as the body ages, and recognition of those changes can help people rest easy that their diets are working in their favor and not to their detriment.

Calorie needs

The body requires fewer calories as individuals reach adulthood. That's because muscle mass begins to decrease in adulthood while fat increases. The National Institutes of Health notes that muscles use more calories than fat throughout the day, so it makes sense that a body experiencing a decline in muscle mass will require less calories than one in which muscle mass is on the rise. No two

individuals are the same, and some adults exercise more than others. So it's best for adults to consult their physician to discuss their own calorie needs and then adjust their diets based on such discussions.

What to eat

The American Heart Association notes aging adults' calories should come from nutrient-dense foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meat, and low-fat dairy. This recommendation aligns with adults' declining calorie needs, as nutrient-dense foods contain ample amounts of protein, vitamins and/or minerals but do not contain a lot of calories.

Water needs

It's vital for aging adults to make a concerted effort to drink water each day. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion notes that the sensation of thirst declines with age. Aging adults who are unaware of that unique biological reality may be risking dehydration because they are not compelled to drink water throughout the day. The Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration can contribute to dizziness, weakness and lightheadedness, among other symptoms. Those symptoms can be particularly menacing for older adults, who are at increased risk for potentially harmful falls even if they are not dehydrated. The body still needs water as it ages, and seniors taking certain medications may need more than usual due to medication-related fluid loss.

These are just some of the ways nutritional needs change with age. Adults are urged to pay greater attention to diet as they age and make choices that can counter age-related changes in their bodies.

What to know about processed foods

Anyone looking to eat right undoubtedly knows there's no shortage of advice in relation to dietary habits. Fad diets and nutritional trends are shared on social media platforms and websites every day. While access to such information is more available than ever, the volume of data can be overwhelming, especially for people looking to make simple and healthy tweaks.

One trending topic among advocates for improved nutrition concerns processed foods. Various health concerns, from the obesity epidemic to increased rates of high blood pressure, have been traced to processed foods. Such associations merit consideration, and that begins with answering some common questions surrounding processed foods.

What are processed foods?

The United States Department of Agriculture defines processed foods as any raw agricultural commodity that has been altered from its original state. Such alterations occur when foods are subjected to various processes, including pasteurization, blanching, freezing, dehydrating, or fermenting, among others. Fortification is another means to processing foods.

Is processing always unhealthy?



Processing food is not always bad for human beings. For example, milk is pasteurized and commercial milk products are fortified with vitamin D. In regard to fortified milk, adding vitamin D ensures milk drinkers receive sufficient amounts of a nutrient that helps strengthen bones.

So why the fear of processed foods?

The negative characterizations of processed foods arises mainly from foods that are considered ultra-processed. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics uses a spectrum to differentiate between various types of processed foods. Minimally processed foods include washed fresh spinach, while heavily processed foods include ready-to-eat foods like cereal and crackers. The negative attributes often associated with processed foods

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Safety and smarts necessary when exercising with arthritis



Physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. While the recommendations for exercise may vary for each individual, general guidelines from public health agencies typically suggest most people should get around 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per day.

People with arthritis may be hesitant to head to the gym or engage in home workouts because the instinct to rest is strong when joints feel stiff or painful. However, health care advocates note that movement is one of the most effective treatments for arthritis.

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says arthritis remains a leading cause of disability in 2026. Roughly one in four adults in the United States have been diagnosed with some form of arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says exercise is not just a lifestyle choice, but an essential component of joint health. People who engage in physical activity report a 40 percent reduction in pain on average. Here is a prescription for safely navigating physical activity while managing arthritis.

• Emphasize exercise that improves flexibility. The Better Health Channel says people with arthritis should focus on exercises that reduce stiffness and keep joints moving through their full range-of-motion. Examples include gentle neck rotations, shoulder rolls and finger stretches daily,

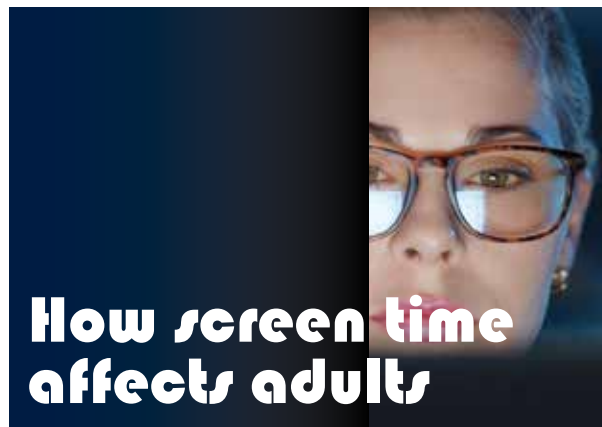
especially in the morning during flare-ups.

• Incorporate low-impact aerobic movements. Cardiovascular exercises improve heart health and help with weight management, which is essential for people with arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation says losing just one pound of body weight can remove four pounds of pressure from the knees. Walking, cycling and water exercises are low-impact ways to get the cardio a body needs, says the Mayo Clinic.

• Make resistance training part of your routine. Building strong muscles can help protect the joints by acting as shock absorbers. People can use bodyweight exercises like chair squats, resistance bands or light dumbbells to build muscle. The Arthritis Foundation recommends focusing on the muscles surrounding joints experiencing the most pain, such as quadriceps for knee arthritis or abdominals to protect the hips and spine.

• Assess pain. Experts suggest using something called the “two-hour rule” to determine if exercise added to or diminished arthritis pain. If joint pain is higher two hours after exercising, then it’s important to reduce the duration or intensity of exercise the next time. During a flare-up, do not stop moving entirely, but shift to gentle range-of-motion stretching only, suggests the Mayo Clinic.

Exercise can remain a key component of daily life, even for those with arthritis.



The effects of screen time are a point of frequent conversation. However, such discussions often focus on the impact of screen time on the health and well-being of children. But children are not the only age group who has to consider how much time they spend with their devices.

Many professionals spend hours on end in front of computers, and those same people may spend a lot of their free time watching shows and/or scrolling social media and news stories online.

There are quite a number of negative effects of too much screen time, even for adults. However, the point in time when device usage is considered detrimental to adults’ health is not clearly defined. Some health experts say that limiting social media use to 30 minutes per day leads to a “significant improvement in well-being.” If that isn’t enough to convince adults to put down their devices, perhaps an examination of the various harmful side effects of screens might do the job.

• Depression: A 2017 study published in the journal *Preventative Medicine Reports* found a significant association between

television watching and computer use with moderate or severe levels of depression. Several studies also have found a positive association between screen time and depression in adolescents.

• Eye strain: Looking at screens can impact eye health. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends the 20-20-20 rule for adults who work on a computer. This rule says that individuals look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds every 20 minutes of the day.

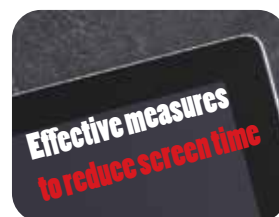
• Neck and back pain: Time spent sitting at a desk or on a phone and looking down adversely affects the body. This places strain on the neck, shoulders and back. In fact, many health care providers refer to the condition as “tech neck.” Pain can occur and the risk for severe musculoskeletal issues can increase when these positions are held for too long, according to Reid Health.

• Cognitive changes: A 2020 study in *Science Direct* found that adults who have been diagnosed with smartphone addiction had problems with the part of their brains responsible for transmitting messages. Such adults also exhibited reduced cognitive performance. In addition, Stanford Lifestyle Medicine reports adults who watched television for five hours or more per day had an increased risk of developing brain-related diseases like dementia, stroke or Parkinson’s.

• Reduced physical activity: People who spend too much time on screens may be less likely to engage in physical activity, such as going on walks, working in the garden, playing sports, or engaging in active hobby projects. A sedentary lifestyle is linked to various health implications, such as increased risk for obesity and the health problems that come with being overweight.

• Impact sleep: The JAMA Network reports that among a cross-sectional analysis of 122,058 participants in the American Cancer Society Cancer Prevention Study-3, screen use was associated with decreased sleep duration and worse self-reported sleep quality. Electronic screen use before bed can disrupt circadian rhythms, leading to poorer sleep.

Screen time is not just a concern for children. Adults should moderate screen usage to safeguard themselves from an assortment of negative, device-related outcomes.



Constant phone notifications and a tendency to “doomscroll” for hours in an effort to keep abreast of the latest news has conditioned people to keep their phones in hand at all times.

The Mayo Clinic cautions that excessive screen time threatens physical, social and mental health. Everything from obesity to eye strain to neck and back pain may be linked to spending too much time on phones, tablets and computers. Excessive screen time also has been linked to mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Limiting daily screen time is recommended to foster better overall well-being. Pulling away from the draw of screens can be challenging, but it’s not impossible.

Audit your time

Getting a clear picture of daily screen time can help a person make changes for the better. Identify three applications that take up

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The multifaceted benefits of aerobic exercise

Routine physical activity has a significant impact on physical and mental health. Though the temptation to be sedentary is ever-present and arguably greater than it's ever been, getting up and moving can prolong life and make for happier, healthier days.

There's no wrong way to be

physically active, and many health professionals urge people to find a physical activity they enjoy so they're more likely to maintain a commitment to exercise. Aerobic exercise is one option to consider because it encompasses a wide range of activities and pays a wealth of

dividends.

Aerobic exercise and disease prevention

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons notes that a fitness regimen that includes regular aerobic exercise can help people avoid potentially deadly

diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and some cancers. Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that aerobic exercise, which organizations such as the American Heart Association advise combining with strength-training exercises at least twice per week, is effective at preventing disease because it helps to control or modify various risk factors for conditions like heart disease.

Aerobic exercise and bone strength

Another notable benefit of routine aerobic exercise is it helps to build stronger bones. Harvard Health notes that various studies have shown that weight-bearing exercises, including aerobic activities like walking or running, put stress on bones which stimulates the formation of extra deposits of calcium and activates bone-forming cells. This process ultimately results in denser, stronger bones, which is a particularly notable benefit for adults over

40, a point in time when bone strength typically begins to decline at a rate of roughly 1 percent each year.

Aerobic exercise and mental health

Harvard Health notes the benefits of aerobic exercise extend beyond the physical and into the mental. That link is neurochemical in nature, as aerobic exercise stimulates the production of endorphins, which Harvard Health notes are chemicals in the brain that naturally elevate mood, contributing to feelings of both relaxation and optimism. While that's happening, aerobic exercise also helps to reduce levels of the body's stress hormones.

Aerobic exercise is accessible and highly beneficial. Individuals of all ages are urged to commit to routine aerobic exercise so they can reap the physical and mental health rewards such a commitment produces.

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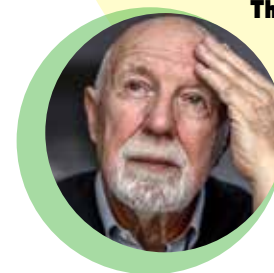
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Did You Know?

The number of seniors with mental health disorders is expected to double by 2030,



according to a recent report from the American Hospital Association. Some of that increase could be due to lack of treatment, as the AHA notes two-thirds of

seniors with mental health issues do not receive necessary treatment for their conditions. The estimated increase in mental health condition incidence rates among seniors also could be due to what the World Health Organization notes is an increased vulnerability to such issues among aging adults. According to the WHO, mental health is shaped by numerous variables, including earlier life experiences and age-related stressors like a loss of functional ability and a reduced sense of purpose after retirement.

5 ways seniors can get moving

People of all ages are encouraged to be physically active, and that includes seniors. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say seniors ages 65 and older should aim for at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity and at least two days a week of muscle-strengthening exercises. Although some people may be drawn to the gym, others with no such preference may need to identify other ways to incorporate more physical activity into their lives. Seniors can stay active in various ways by enjoying activities that get them up and moving. The following are five ideas to get started.

1. Play a sport. Pickleball and padel are the fastest-growing recreational sports among seniors. Pickleball blends tennis and badminton while padel blends tennis and squash. These activities combine challenging cardio workouts with a social component.

2. Go dancing. A recent meta-analysis found that group dancing enhances social interaction while providing moderate aerobic exercise. Dancing is fun and can get anyone to break a sweat, and it doesn't feel like exercise.

3. Join or start a walking club. Seniors can engage with other like-minded individuals by turning their daily walks into something that offers companionship and exercise. An app like Charity Miles offers an additional layer of purpose to the activity, as it turns walks into fundraising opportunities.



4. Take up gardening.

Gardening can be a thorough workout. The Royal Horticultural Society says gardening provides moderate-intensity, full-body exercise that burns approximately 165 to 300 calories every 30 to 60 minutes.

5. Consider aquatic endeavors.

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) in the water is a new exercise trend that allows people to elevate their heart rates without placing any extra strain on the joints. Water activities in general tend to be easy on the body but provide immense benefits for flexibility and gentle resistance. Everyday

Health says HIIT in a pool can improve fitness capacity roughly as much as HIIT done on land.

Seniors have various options to stay active and keep moving. Many such activities are entertaining and social in nature, which can help seniors maintain a commitment to being physically active.



Did You? KNOW?

Regular physical activity is often associated with immediate effects, and rightfully so. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, physical activity can improve cognition and thinking, reduce short-term feelings of anxiety, and make it easier for people to manage their weight. But physical activity also boasts some notable long-term benefits, particularly in regard to disease prevention. The CDC notes that regular exercise can reduce risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and metabolic syndrome, infectious diseases like COVID-19 and pneumonia, and various forms of cancer, including cancers of the breast, colon, kidneys, and lungs.

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Tips to ensure a better night's sleep

A state of sleep is necessary to give the body and mind time to recharge and prepare for the next day. Though such benefits are widely recognized, a significant percentage of individuals across the globe are failing to get sufficient rest, a dangerous reality that could be putting people at risk for various diseases and conditions.

Lack of sleep is such a prominent problem that the research team behind a 2024 study published in the journal *The Lancet: Diabetes & Endocrinology* dubbed insufficient sleep as a “neglected public health issue.” That study surveyed 2,000 adults in the United Kingdom and found that 90 percent of respondents reported current sleep problems, with two-thirds of those individuals indicating

they had experienced their issues for more than six years. And it's not just adults suffering from sleep issues, as a 2023 peer-reviewed editorial written for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the modern 24-hour lifestyle and pervasive utilization of electronics and social media is normalizing insufficient sleep among children and adolescents.

Sleeping problems are not to be taken lightly, as the National Institutes of Health notes sleep deficiency has been linked to heart disease, kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, obesity, and depression. Children who are not getting enough sleep may experience difficulty paying attention, which could adversely affect their

academic performance, and might be prone to misbehavior. Of course, many of these side effects can be avoided by getting sufficient sleep. With that in mind, adults, parents, children, and adolescents can consider these strategies to get a better night's sleep, courtesy of the Sleep Foundation.

- **Replace an old mattress.**

Old mattresses can be uncomfortable and thus make it harder to fall asleep.

- **Block out light.**

Light exposure adversely affects circadian rhythm, so keep external light out of your bedroom and dim lights as bedtime approaches. Avoiding bright light as you transition to bedtime can contribute to the production of the hormone melatonin, which facilitates sleep.

- **Set an appropriate temperature.**

The Sleep Foundation advises setting a bedroom temperature thermostat to between 65 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit to prevent feelings of being too hot or too cold when going to bed.

- **Wake up at the same time each day.**

A routine that includes the same wake-up time each day can acclimate the body to a healthy sleep routine.

- **Begin to relax 30 minutes before bed.**

A pre-bedtime routine focused on relaxation can facilitate sleep. The Sleep Foundation notes activities like quiet reading, low-impact stretching, listening to soothing music, and mindfulness meditation can help you ease into sleep.

- **Avoid devices an hour before bed.**

The light emitted by tablets, smartphones and laptops can suppress melatonin production, making it hard to fall asleep. Make the hour before bedtime each night a device-free time.

- **Exercise each day, but avoid intense activity close to bedtime.** Daily exercise has been found to promote sleep, but intense exercise right before bed can make it hard for the body to settle down.

Insufficient sleep is an emerging issue for people of all ages across the globe. Some simple strategies can be employed to facilitate a better night's rest.



How to recognize mental fatigue

Everyone feels tired at some point. The signs of physical fatigue are often easily recognizable. Slower movements, heavy eyes, achy muscles, and even frequent yawning are some telltale signs that a body is tired. But what about mental fatigue?

WebMD notes that mental fatigue affects the mind instead of the muscles. That can make mental fatigue difficult to spot. But identifying the presence of mental fatigue is important, as untreated mental fatigue can affect decision-making and performance at work and in the classroom. Anyone can develop mental fatigue, but those who find themselves frequently overwhelmed by work, school or personal obligations may be particularly vulnerable. Recognition of the following signs of mental fatigue may compel those dealing with such exhaustion to take a break and seek help.

- **Mood changes:** People suffering from mental fatigue may experience mood changes that would otherwise be considered out of character. Increased irritability, a shortened temper, a lack of patience for others, and increased instances of snapping at people are some mood changes that indicate the presence of mental fatigue.

- **Loss of productivity:** A noticeable dip in productivity is another sign of mental fatigue. WebMD notes that a loss of productivity induced by mental fatigue occurs because the feeling of tiredness compromises a person's ability to concentrate. Mental fatigue also can drain a person's motivation. Distractions become harder to ignore when suffering from mental fatigue, which in turn diminishes productivity.

- **Instances of zoning out:** Mental fatigue can get in the way of a person's ability to focus on what he or she is doing. This sense of zoning out can be particularly dangerous, as it can strike



even when driving a vehicle. In fact, WebMD notes a link between mental fatigue and car accidents.

- **Inability to sleep:** It may seem counterintuitive that mental fatigue would make it difficult to sleep, but it can. People with mental fatigue may struggle to wind down and stop thinking about work- or school-related tasks come bedtime. That can trigger insomnia. One of the dangers associated with this side effect of mental fatigue is that lack of sleep can worsen feelings of exhaustion.

- **Increased anxiety:** WebMD notes that mental fatigue triggers the sympathetic nervous system, which can lead to feelings of anxiety and panic. These feelings may be ever-present.

- **Physical side effects:** Some people find it harder to exercise when their minds are fatigued. A 2017 study published in the journal *Sports Medicine* found that the duration and intensity of a physical task are important variables when considering the potential effects of mental fatigue on physical performance. Researchers identified a decreased time to physical exhaustion, and a resulting decline in endurance performance, as a side effect of mental fatigue. Mental fatigue can take a serious toll. Anyone who suspects they are suffering from mental fatigue is urged to contact a health care provider.



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How some seniors benefit from looking after their grandchildren

Modern seniors are spending a lot of time with their grandchildren, and much of that time is spent providing care for youngsters, which might be helping grandparents in some unique ways. According to the National Poll on Healthy Aging from the University of Michigan's Institute for Healthcare Policy & Innovation,

8% of grandparents provide daily or near-daily care for their grandchildren. 1 in 5 grandparents reports providing care for one or more grandchildren at least once a week.

Though it can be a tall order for grandparents to look after their grandchildren, the time grandparents spend with their children's children can provide some unique benefits. The National Poll on Healthy Aging found that 72 percent of people with grandchildren indicated they hardly ever feel isolated, compared to 62 percent without grandchildren. The poll also found that 13 percent of seniors without grandchildren indicated their mental health was fair or poor, while just 9 percent of seniors with grandchildren characterized their mental health in that way.

Grandparents spending ample time with their grandchildren also may help to build stronger social and cultural connections between themselves and their grandkids. The healthy aging poll found that slightly more than six in 10 grandparents indicated they shared at least one meal with a grandchild or grandchildren over the previous month, and nearly half indicated they had prepared food for them. In addition, 36 percent of grandparents indicated they had baked or cooked with their grandkids over the previous month. One researcher who worked with the team behind the poll noted that eating and cooking with grandchildren affords grandparents an opportunity to pass down knowledge and recipes to younger generations.

Caregiving for grandchildren can be a tall order for grandparents. However, seniors who provide such care may be benefitting in some unique and important ways.

Seniors can emphasize balance when caregiving

Spending time with grandchildren can make seniors feel young and valued. Grandparents are often asked to step in as caregivers to the youngsters they love. The U.S. Department of Labor reports 2.74 million children in the United States were being raised by a grandparent in 2021, the most recent year for data. Census data from 2021 also shows one in five Canadian grandparents regularly helps with grandchild care.

Chasing around a toddler or school-aged child can affect seniors differently than it affects parents in their 20s or 30s. Effectively and safely managing the physical and emotional toll of caring for grandchildren may come down to emphasizing balance.

•**Protect your body.** Grandparents should rely on strollers, high chairs and step stools to minimize heavy lifting. When a child wants to be held, a senior can sit on the couch or a chair and have the child climb up to them.

•**Incorporate downtime.** Seniors should schedule quiet time so they can get a physical and mental break. Whether this time involves reading books or engaging in easy crafts, ensuring there are blocks of time for rest is essential.

•**Conduct a safety check.** It's important for a home to be safe for kids and seniors alike. Removing breakable items and covering up sharp edges on furniture and other hard surfaces can protect grandparents and grandkids.

•**Establish some boundaries.** Grandparents should establish clear communication with their own children regarding their expectations. It's important to define a schedule that works for the senior, and he or she should be honest about how much they can manage.

•**Know the rules.** Grandparents should discuss what parents expect regarding screen time, naps, food, and more. A united front from parents and grandparents can reduce the need to negotiate with headstrong children.

•**Make a backup plan.** Seniors should emphasize to their children that they need to have a backup caregiver available for when they are not able to watch the grandchildren. Seniors deserve days off.

Grandparents frequently are called upon to pitch in and help their children with caregiving needs. Bonding with grandchildren can be rewarding, but seniors must balance their own needs with the needs of their children and grandchildren.



Did You KNOW?

A significant percentage of American children are being raised by a grandparent. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2.74 million children in the United States were being raised by a grandparent in 2021. The USCB notes that such children were living with at least one grandparent who was responsible for most of their basic needs. Though the figures from the USCB suggest a growing number of grandparents have taken on caregiving roles in recent years, data indicates that such increases are generally applicable only to older grandparent caregivers. Indeed, the USCB reports that the number of grandparent caregivers between the ages of 30 and 59 declined between 2009 and 2021, while the number of grandparent caregivers ages 60 and older increased during that 12-year period.

Screens

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most of your time, and check how many times each day you reach for your phone or tablet to engage with these apps. Noting each engagement can shed light on how much time you're spending on screens.

Make it less accessible

Technology often is over-used because designers engineered it to be easily accessible. By making things slightly less convenient, a person may be less inclined to use it. Deleting apps that are over-used from a phone or tablet and only gaining access through a computer web browser is a start. Ban the phone from the bedroom and switch to a regular alarm clock. Kondo, a direct messaging management company, suggests turning settings on the device to display in grayscale, which makes things appear dull and less enticing.

Turn off notifications

Govern your notification permissions more strictly, turning off any that aren't of the utmost importance. Disabling news alerts, sports scores, social media likes, and less vital notifications can greatly reduce the number of times a person looks at screens.

Replace with something else

Kicking a bad habit can be challenging, but finding something new and healthier to take its place can be effective. Convert to more analog hobbies like journaling, reading, knitting, doing puzzles, or something else that engages the brain. Another idea is to try to commit to a few hours at least one day a week to put the phone away. Out of sight truly may mean out of mind.

Screens dominate people's time. While it can be uncomfortable at first to take a break, reducing screen time usage for the betterment of your overall health is worth some initial discomfort.

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