



Health and Medicine 2025

5 questions seniors can ask their doctors during routine checkups

Seniors may not have the same busy schedules they did when they were younger and juggling an assortment of personal and professional responsibilities. But one constant on many seniors' schedules is routine trips to see their doctors. Trips to see primary care physicians and specialists are part of many seniors' monthly routines. Such appointments can ensure seniors stay healthy throughout their golden years, especially when patients remain vigilant and engage with their physicians during office visits. One of the most effective ways to remain an engaged patient is to ask questions during each appointment, and the following are five queries seniors can keep in mind as they prepare for their next appointment.

1. Is my blood pressure high? This is a vital inquiry because high blood

pressure, also known as hypertension, has been linked to a host health problems, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, kidney disease, and diminished vision.

2. What can I do to lower my blood pressure? If doctors discover high blood pressure, ask for a detailed plan to lower that blood pressure, including safe physical activities and dietary recommendations.

3. Do I need to change my medications? Though the data is somewhat outdated, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and the Canadian Health Measures Survey revealed in 2019 that nearly seven in 10 adults between the ages of 40 and 79 in the United States and 65 percent of adults in Canada used at least one prescription drug in the 30 days prior to being surveyed. Roughly one in five adults in the

same age group in each country acknowledged using at least five prescription drugs. If seniors find those statistics familiar, then it's wise to ask their doctors if there's anything they need to change or look out for. Adverse medication interactions can be dangerous and even deadly, so it's imperative all of a patient's doctors are up-to-date on any drugs they might be taking.

4. Can I do anything to improve mobility? A 2020 study published in the journal *Frontiers in Physiology* noted that 35 percent of persons age 70 and over live with mobility limitations. Reduced mobility can increase risk for falls and hospitalization and lead to a reduction in quality of life. When visiting their physicians, seniors can report any mobility issues and ask what they can do to address them



and prevent them from progressing.

5. Do I need additional health screenings? Screening saves lives, even if

exams can sometimes be inconvenient if not unpleasant. Seniors can use each doctor's appointment as an opportunity to

discuss screenings and determine if there's any additional tests they should be getting each year.

The impact of AI on senior health care experiences

Artificial intelligence (AI) continues to change the world. The "Logic Theorist" program, created by Herbert A. Simon and Allen Newell in 1955, which was designed to prove mathematical theorems, is widely considered to be the first AI program. Today, AI is employed to answer questions, solve problems and even create artwork.

AI can serve amazing purposes in health care settings. Though AI can benefit persons of all ages, seniors

may find it especially improves their health care experience. Here are some ways AI can enhance seniors' quality of life, independence and support systems.

- **Monitoring:** AI-powered systems can be used to monitor vital signs like heart rate, oxygen levels and blood pressure. Some wearables even can detect irregular heartbeats or other anomalies and alert individuals or caregivers.

- **Early detection:** Echelon

Health says AI can be invaluable in the early detection of illnesses by predicting risk factors in patients. AI can be utilized with the first levels of screening, which may detect the smallest changes that could highlight underlying issues. Research has shown AI can detect serious diseases such as lung cancer or heart disease earlier to offer patients a better chance of effective treatment before diseases progress.

- **Predictive analytics:** Those with a particular

health condition can rely on AI to predict the likelihood of certain health events, like heart attacks or stroke, by analyzing data and genetic information. This allows doctors to take proactive approaches to adjusting treatment plans.

- **Chronic disease management:** The integration of AI into chronic disease management can enhance patient care efficiency and lead to optimized treatment strategies, says the National Institutes of Health. AI can

monitor data patterns that offer insight into disease progression and can help seniors manage medications by providing reminders, tracking compliance and dispensing correct dosages.

- **Smart home technology:** A person's environment impacts his or her health. AI-powered devices can automate tasks like adjusting interior temperatures to safe levels, turn on lights for safer navigation, turn off appliances if they have been left unattended, and offer

additional safety features like fall detection. This may enable seniors to live securely and independently longer.

- **Daily tasks:** In addition to specific disease management, AI can be used to create healthy meal plans and schedule appointments. This can promote autonomy and reduce reliance on helpers or caregivers.

Artificial intelligence is infiltrating daily life in many ways. In health care settings, AI benefits seniors in many different ways.

Common health issues affecting women



Preventive health care is a multifaceted approach that aims to keep people healthy and reduce their risk for various diseases and conditions. Health education is one facet of preventive health care that can be easily overlooked, particularly by busy adults juggling an assortment of responsibilities.

Health education includes recognition of various conditions that pose a threat to individuals. Women can do their best to learn about issues that commonly affect them with a goal of taking steps to reduce their risk for various diseases and conditions. Northwestern Medicine® reports that the following are some of the most common health issues affecting women today.

- **Heart disease:** It's common to view heart disease as a killer of men, but women should know it's the No. 1 cause of death for women. Menopause does not cause heart disease, but certain risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels

and lower levels of estrogen, are more common in post-menopausal women.

- **Stroke:** Both men and women might be shocked to learn that more women die from stroke than men. Difficulty with speech and numbness of the arms and legs are prominent symptoms of stroke.

- **Diabetes:** Women with diabetes have a four times greater risk for heart disease than women who do not have diabetes. Making an effort to maintain a healthy weight and committing to routine exercise can lower risk for type 2 diabetes. Quitting smoking also lowers a woman's risk for diabetes.

- **Urinary tract infections:** People assigned female at birth have shorter urethra than those assigned male at birth. A shorter urethra means bacteria does not have to travel as far to reach the bladder, and UTIs are caused by germs that enter the urethra and multiply. Frequent urination, painful urination and cloudy urine are common symptoms of UTIs.

- **Breast cancer:** Breast

cancer is the most common form of the disease in women. Women in the United States have a 13 percent chance of developing breast cancer, and that risk may be even higher for women living outside the U.S. Age-based screening and healthy lifestyle choices like exercising and avoiding tobacco can help women in the fight against breast cancer.

- **Alzheimer's disease:** More than two-thirds of the six million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease are women. Women historically have lived longer than men, but researchers are exploring if that is the only reason for the disparity between rates of Alzheimer's in women compared to men. A healthy diet and routine physical activity are some of the ways to promote brain health and potentially reduce Alzheimer's risk.

Recognition of risk for specific diseases can be a vital component of preventive health care that encourages women to take steps that can decrease the chances they develop various conditions.



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Why walking is a perfect exercise for seniors



Aging changes the human body in myriad ways. But even with those changes, seniors' bodies have many of the same needs as the bodies of their younger counterparts.

Exercise is one thing the human body needs regardless of how old it is. But some exercises are better suited for particular demographics than others. Walking, for example, is an ideal activity for seniors, some of whom may be surprised to learn just how beneficial a daily stroll can be.

Walking strengthens bones and muscles. The Mayo Clinic notes that regular brisk walking strengthens bones and muscles. Intensity is important when looking to walk to improve muscle strength. A 2015 study published in the journal Exercises and Sports Sciences Reviews found that achieving a 70 to 80 percent heart rate reserve during workouts lasting at least 40 minutes four to five days per week can help build muscle strength. GoodRx defines heart rate reserve as the difference between your resting and maximum heart rate, so it's important that seniors looking to walking to build muscle strength exhibit

more intensity during a workout walk than they might during a recreational stroll.

Walking helps seniors maintain a healthy weight. Overweight and obesity are risk factors for a host of chronic illnesses, including diabetes and heart disease. The Mayo Clinic notes walking can help seniors keep pounds off and maintain a healthy weight. In fact, SilverSneakers® reports that a 155-pound person burns around 133 calories walking for 30 minutes at a 17-minute-per-mile pace. A slight increase in intensity to 15 minutes per mile can help that same person burn an additional 42 calories.

Walking lowers seniors' risk for various diseases. It's long been known that walking is a great way for seniors to reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease. In fact, a study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society noted in 1996 that walking more than four hours per week was associated with a significantly reduced risk of being hospitalized for cardiovascular disease. How significant is that reduction? A 2023 report from the American Heart Association indicat-

ed people age 70 and older who walked an additional 500 steps per day had a 14 percent lower risk for heart disease, stroke or heart failure. In addition, the Department of Health with the Victoria State Government in Australia reports walking also helps seniors reduce their risk for colon cancer and diabetes.

Walking boosts mental health. Researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health note that replacing one hour of sitting with one hour of a moderate activity like brisk walking can have a measureable and positive effect on mental health. The researchers behind the study, which was published in the journal Psychiatry in 2019, saw a 26 percent decrease in odds for becoming depressed with each major increase in objectively measured physical activity.

Walking can benefit all people, but might be uniquely beneficial for seniors. Walking is free, which undoubtedly appeals to seniors living on fixed incomes, and it's also a moderate intensity activity that won't tax seniors' bodies. Such benefits suggest walking and seniors are a perfect match.

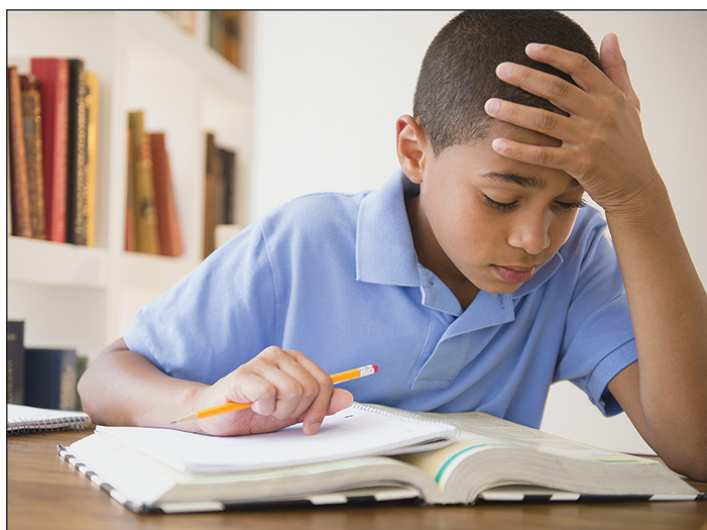
What can be done to help students with ADHD improve focus

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) may seem like a relatively recent phenomenon that perhaps developed late in the twentieth century, when more and more distractions started vying for humans' attention. However, WebMD notes the condition actually dates back several centuries to 1798, when a Scottish doctor recognized some people were more easily distracted than others.

The ADHD people know today may or may not bear much resemblance to the condition first identified in the eighteenth century, but it's notable that issues affecting human beings' ability to focus are not exactly a recent phenomenon. Many students with ADHD, diagnosed or undiagnosed, face an uphill battle in the classroom, where the ability to focus is integral to their success. It may take some trial and error and some help from educators and physicians, but the following are some strategies that could help students with ADHD as they seek to improve their focus in the classroom.

Ask educators about behavioral classroom management. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes behavioral classroom management is an approach that involves encouraging students when they behave positively in a classroom. The approach may be centered around a reward system or involve teachers issuing daily report cards. Teachers also discourage negative behaviors. The CDC notes behavioral classroom management is driven by teachers and has been shown to have a constructive impact on students of all ages that increases their academic engagement.

Emphasize organization skills to students. The




CDC notes organizational training that emphasizes time management and planning has been tested on children and adolescents and found to be effective. The Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA) suggests people with ADHD learn how to break down complex tasks, such as end-of-semester school projects or exams, into smaller sub-tasks, and the planning skills emphasized by the CDC can be employed to do just that.

Take breaks. It's hard for anyone to maintain intense focus for lengthy periods of time, and that's true for people with ADHD and those who do not have the condition. A report from the American Psychological Association notes that routine breaks from challenging tasks, including coursework, can restore energy, prevent burnout and improve performance. Fatigue can compromise a person's ability to focus, so students and parents should not see routine breaks as counterproductive in relation to the goal of improving focus. In fact, purposeful breaks that are not too long can sharpen focus.

Adjust students' environment. The ADDA notes that several strategies can

help students optimize their environment so they can better focus on the task at hand. Utilizing noise-canceling headphones while studying in a quiet spot away from noise and distraction is one way students can optimize their environment. Turning off smartphone notifications, periodically decluttering a workspace and keeping only study materials in spots where schoolwork is done can help students with ADHD sharpen their focus.

Students with ADHD may be able to improve their focus, and thus their academic performance, with a few simple strategies.



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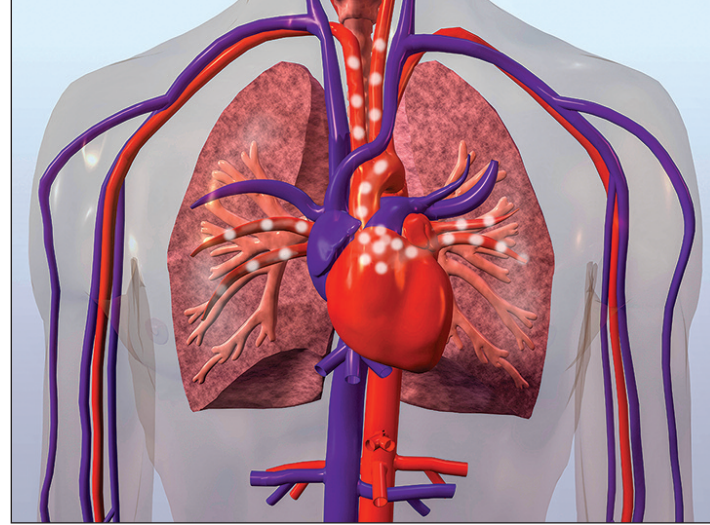
Warning signs for heart disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women, men and people of most ethnic and racial groups, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One person dies from heart disease every 33 seconds. Understanding the risk factors for heart disease is the first step toward prevention and management.

There are many things people can do to modify their risk for heart disease, but also some that cannot be changed. Ultimately, education is essential either way, and learning the risk factors for heart disease is vital to such education.

Age: The risk for heart disease increases with age. For men the risk rises after age 45, and for women, it increases after menopause, or around age 55. Aging naturally leads to changes in the heart and blood vessels that increase the likelihood of developing cardiovascular problems, says the National Institute on Aging.

Sex: Initially men are at a higher risk of developing heart disease. However, over time a woman's risk after menopause tends to equal that of a man's. As estrogen levels decline after menopause, fat can build up in the arteries, causing them to narrow, says the British Heart Foundation. After menopause, body weight may increase, which also is a risk factor for heart disease.



Family history: Those with a close relative who developed heart disease at an early age may be at elevated risk.

Race: UChicago Medicine says Black and Hispanic people have an elevated risk of dying from heart disease compared to white individuals.

People may be able to change the following controllable risk factors for heart disease.

Hypertension: Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, forces the heart to work harder and can stiffen the arteries. This can damage blood vessels over time. Medications and additional lifestyle changes can help seniors combat hypertension.

Smoking: Smoking tobacco can damage blood vessels and reduce oxygen in the blood. Smoking also increases the risk of blood clots. Johns Hopkins Medicine says cigarette smokers

are two to four times more likely to get heart disease than nonsmokers.

Cholesterol: High levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), known as "bad" cholesterol, contribute to the buildup of plaque in the arteries. This can narrow arteries and restrict blood flow.

Sedentary lifestyle: A lack of physical activity is a risk factor for obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, each of which increases a person's chances of being diagnosed with heart disease.

Dental health: Poor dental health can allow bacteria to enter the bloodstream, which can potentially lead to inflammation that affects heart health.

By understanding risk factors and actively making changes to behaviors that can be modified, people can take strides toward protecting heart health and avoiding cardiovascular disease.

Health conditions that can affect newborns

Parents of newborns know that no two days of caring for such young children are the same. Each day presents a new challenge for parents of newborns, and many of those challenges can be linked to the youngsters' health.

Newborns cannot explain what's bothering them, so parents must work with their children's health care team to identify any medical issues that arise. The American Academy of Pediatrics notes the following are some common conditions in newborns that parents can learn to recognize.

Blue baby: Mildly blue or purple hands and feet is not typically a cause for alarm. The AAP notes some newborns' hands and feet turn blue when the child is cold and then return to being pink once they become warm again. Crying also can cause the face, tongue and lips to turn slightly blue. A blue tone to the skin can sometimes be a cause for alarm, as in certain instances this indicates the heart of lungs are not functioning optimally and there is insufficient oxygen in the blood.

Blood in the stool: A small amount of blood in newborns' bowel movements is not unusual and may indicate a small crack in the anus that the AAP notes is generally harmless. However, it's best to report blood in the stool to a child's pediatrician to rule out other issues that can be more harmful.

Coughing: Some newborns cough because they drink too quickly, and that coughing will likely subside quickly. Report coughing to a pediatrician if coughs are more persistent and the child gags during feedings, as such symptoms may indicate problems with the lungs



or digestive tract.

Jaundice: Jaundice is characterized by skin having a yellow tinge to it. Mild jaundice is typically harmless, but this condition merits a discussion with a child's pediatrician because it's caused by a buildup of bilirubin in the blood. If bilirubin levels in the blood continue to rise and this is not treated, children may develop a brain injury, according to the AAP. Jaundice also can affect the whites of the eyes and may progress from the face to the chest, the abdomen, and finally the arms and legs.

Respiratory issues: The AAP notes it takes a few hours for newborns to form a normal breathing pattern. Blocked nasal passages may contribute to unusual

breathing patterns, and that often can be remedied with nasal drops or a bulb syringe that suctions mucus from the nose. But parents must recognize that some respiratory issues merit immediate consultation with a child's pediatrician. Such issues include fast breathing, retractions (sucking in muscles around the ribs with each breath), flaring of the nose, grunting while breathing, and persistent blue skin coloring.

It's easy to grow worried when newborns exhibit symptoms that suggest they're experiencing a medical issue. Though many issues ultimately prove harmless, they still merit attention and possibly even consultation with a pediatrician.

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