SENIOR

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Living

Balancing caregiving as a senior

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.

Grandparenting good for the aging brain, study finds

HealthDay News — Grandkids are a blessing in more ways than one for seniors, a new study says.

Grandparenting is good for the aging brain, potentially serving as a buffer against cognitive decline, according to findings published Jan. 26 in the journal Psychology and Aging.

Seniors who provide childcare for their grandchildren score higher on tests of memory and language, researchers found.

This effect is more pronounced among grandmothers, who saw less decline on cognitive testing if they cared for grandkids, researchers said.

Interestingly, it didn't seem to matter how often grandparents cared for grandkids. In general, any grandparent who provided care at any point in the past year benefitted from it, the study found.

"What stood out most to us was that being a caregiving grandparent seemed to matter more for cognitive functioning than how often grandparents provided care or what exactly they did with their grandchildren," lead researcher Flavia Chereches said in a news release. She's a doctoral student in psychology at Tilburg University in the Netherlands.

For the study, researchers examined data from nearly 2,900 grandparents who took part in a long-term English study of aging. The participants, with an average age of 67, answered survey questions and completed brain tests three times between 2016 and 2022.

The survey asked if they'd cared for a grandchild at any point in the past year. They were also quizzed on how often they provided care and what they tended to do with their grandchild.

"Many grandparents provide regular care for their grandchildren — care that supports families and society more broadly," Chereches said. "An open question, however, is whether caregiving for grandchildren may also benefit grandparents themselves."

Results showed that caring for a grandchild was good for the aging brain, regardless of how frequently it was provided.

Some activities appeared to provide slightly more brain benefit.

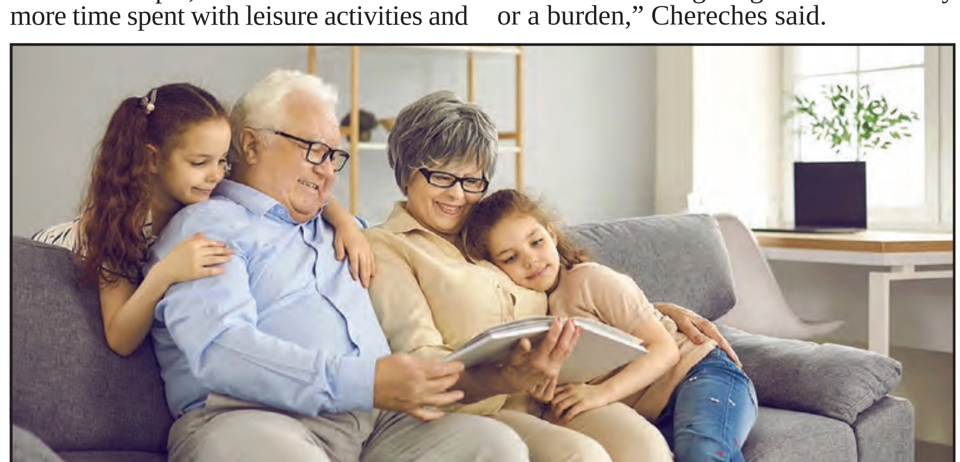
For example, researchers found that more time spent with leisure activities and more frequent help with homework appeared to boost verbal and memory skills.

Likewise, grandparents who regularly prepared meals for their grandkids or took them to or from school tended to have better verbal fluency.

"More research is needed to replicate these findings, yet, if there are benefits associated with caregiving for grandparents, they might not depend on how often care is provided, or on the specific activities done with grandchildren, but rather on the broader experience of being involved with caregiving," Chereches said.

She said further work should also be done to explore whether family dynamics might influence the potential brain benefits of grandparenting.

"Providing care voluntarily, within a supportive family environment, may have different effects for grandparents than caregiving in a more stressful environment where they feel unsupported or feel that the caregiving is not voluntary or a burden," Chereches said.



Physical and mental fitness for seniors

Growing older is often equated with slowing down. Aging may be characterized as a period of decline marked by an inability to do the things you once did, but recent data indicates otherwise.

According to a report in the journal Geriatrics, a far more optimistic reality awaits seniors. Nearly 45 percent of people age 65 and older show measurable improvements in brain health, physical function or both over time when they take certain steps to promote physical and mental wellness.

Physical activity

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, supplemented by at least two days of muscle-strengthening exercises. Brisk walking or swimming can improve cardiovascular health and reduce the risk of stroke and hypertension, says the Massachusetts Council on Aging. Incorporating yoga or Tai Chi is vital for fall prevention, as it targets balance and flexibility. The CDC says improving joint mobility and balance can significantly extend the amount of time seniors can live independently. In addition, lifting light

weights or using resistance bands helps combat age-related muscle loss, which is essential for maintaining metabolic health.

Cognitive advantages

Mental fitness is just as vital to seniors as physical fitness. According to the World Health Organization, routine cognitive stimulation enhances “brain capital,” delaying the onset of dementia and Alzheimer’s. Strategies for effective mental engagement include:

Learning: Lifelong learning techniques include picking up a new language or learning an instrument. This helps strengthen neural pathways that allows the brain to reorganize itself even in later decades.

Play games: Play isn’t just for kids; games like chess or complex puzzles improve problem-solving and memory retention, according to Nixon Adult Daycare in Houston.

Socialize: Isolation is a leading risk factor for cognitive decline, says the National Institutes of Health. Group activities like book clubs or community volunteering can offer emotional fulfillment and mental stimulation.

Power of positivity

Findings from a recent Yale University study indicated seniors with a positive outlook on aging were significantly more likely to show physical and mental improvements compared to those with negative perspectives. Psychological resilience is an important tool for seniors to stay healthy.

Movement, social interaction, stimulating activities, and a positive attitude can help seniors maintain overall health.

A home-buying guide for empty nesters

The day a child leaves home can be bittersweet for parents. Although a son or daughter being successful and mature enough to move on to new opportunities can be a source of pride, parents typically lament the quiet that comes from empty rooms and a change to the daily routine they'd grown accustomed to when the kids were around. After some time, some couples decide to downsize to a home more befitting the empty nester lifestyle.

Downsizing presents an option for homeowners whose kids have left the nest. New analysis from a survey of 2,500 empty nesters commissioned by Regency Living found that 30 percent of empty nesters choose to downsize and move from their original family homes. When retirement is just around the corner, many professionals shift focus to how they want to live and where. Moving to a new home presents plenty of opportunities for older adults, including a chance to choose a home based on what's right for them in this stage of life. There are questions homeowners can ask themselves as they ponder if downsizing is right for them.

1. How much upkeep can I handle? A lifelong family home may be well-loved, but chances are it requires significant upkeep and repairs. Empty nesters may choose to move on to a home that offers lifestyle benefits like less maintenance. Homes in lifestyle communities or those overseen by a homeowners' association tend to have certain maintenance built into a monthly fee.

2. Is this layout still a fit? Many empty nesters may not immediately feel the effects of aging, but before selecting a next home, individuals should think about aging in place and any unique needs they may have. Opting for a single-level home, or at least one with the owner's suite on the main level, can be advantageous.

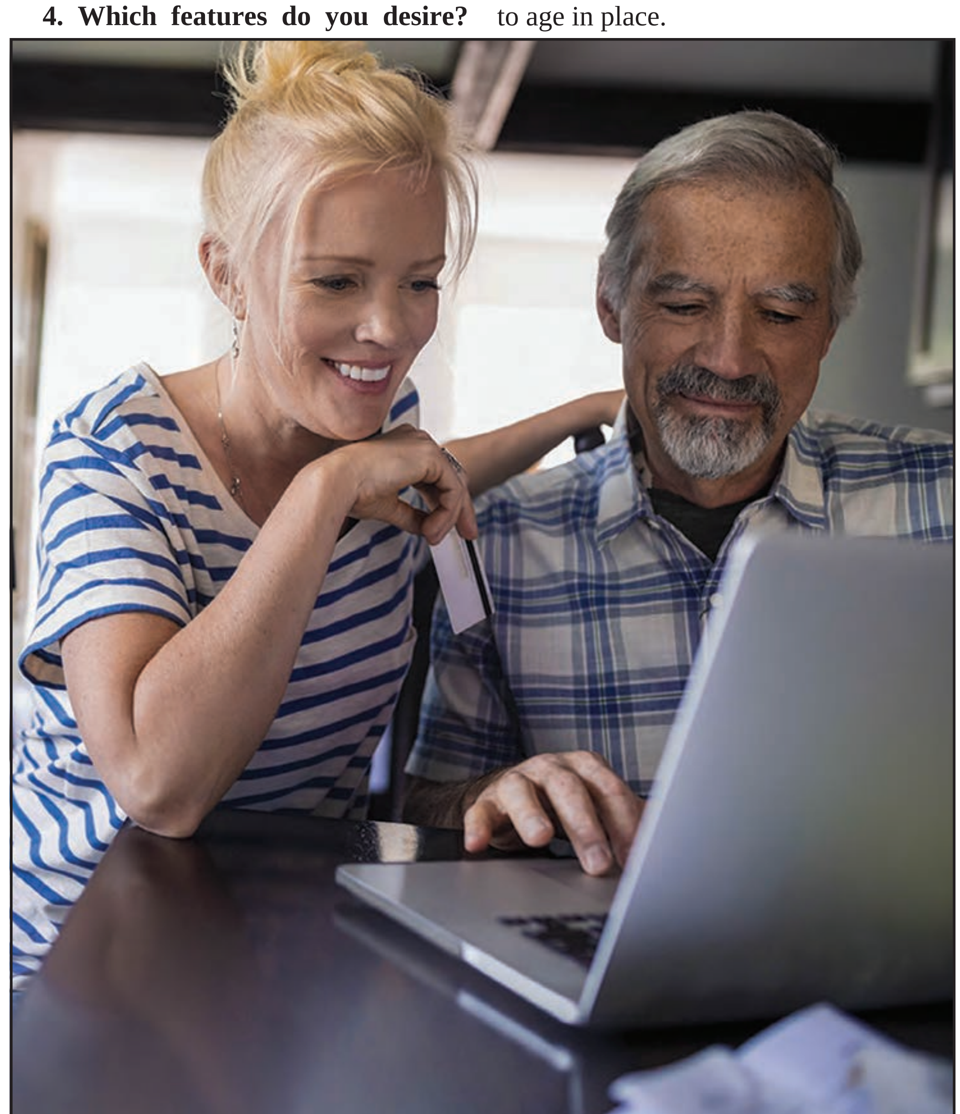
3. Can I make due with less square footage? A cavernous home with many rooms often isn't desirable for empty nesters. All of that square footage requires heating, cooling and maintenance. Rattling around inside a big, empty house may precipitate the decision to downsize. Downsizing also can free up home equity, which can be used to fund retirement needs.

4. Which features do you desire? Many empty nesters want the next home to focus on some luxury items they may have bypassed in the first home when priorities lay elsewhere. Upscale environments like gourmet kitchens, spa-like bathrooms and outdoor living spaces may be in the budget when moving into a home with a smaller footprint.

5. Will my home be secure while I travel? Empty nesters might want to choose homes in gated communities or condominium complexes for safety reasons. Should they opt to spend a portion of time at a vacation rental or second home as snowbirds, secure communities enable residents to leave their primary residence with the peace of mind that those homes will be less vulnerable to thieves.

6. Does this home have enough light? The American Optometric Association says many adults start to have problems seeing clearly beginning at age 40. Homes with more light from large windows and artificial lighting can reduce accident risk.

Moving to a smaller home is a consideration for many empty nesters. Various features offer benefits to adults who want to age in place.



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Is moving the right move after retirement?

Retirement is a milestone moment in life. Each person has their own vision of an ideal retirement. Some may want to travel the world. Others may look for a second career or a chance to volunteer in support of a cause near and dear to their hearts. Retirement also may lead some to ponder if it's the right time to sell their homes.

Retirement is often associated with downsizing a home, but data indicates that even seniors who sell are not necessarily moving into smaller homes. A spring 2026 report from the National Association of Realtors found that seniors between the ages of 61 and 70 who sold a 2,000-square-foot home between June 2024 and June 2025 typically moved into a similarly sized property.

Downsizing may not be compelling seniors to move after retirement, but that doesn't mean newly minted retirees should not give the idea of moving ample consideration. In fact, there are many reasons to move after retiring, and considering those factors can help seniors determine if moving is right for them.

Real estate market: Real estate markets fluctuate, and retirees can monitor home prices where they currently live and where they might want to move to see if the time is right to relocate. If prices are high in your current market and low in areas where you may want to spend your retirement, then a relocation might enable you to pocket a sizable amount of money, which can then be redirected toward retirement expenses like travel, entertainment and health care.

Taxes: Working with an experienced tax attorney can help retirees determine if moving is in their long-term financial interest. Capital gains taxes, income taxes, and property taxes are just some of the financial variables affected by location. Retirees could save substantial amounts of money by moving to locations with lower tax obligations. Those savings can help to ensure seniors do not outlive their money. Even if you're attached to your current home, the tax savings associated with relocating to a more retiree-friendly locale may be too great to pass up.

Maintenance: While financial considerations may be foremost on the minds of retirees pondering a move, it's equally important to ask if you can keep up with the maintenance associated with your current home. There's also the question of desire in relation to home maintenance. If you're physically incapable of routine maintenance tasks or simply want someone else to handle chores like maintaining the landscape, then a move to a 55+ community where maintenance is paid for by monthly homeowner' association fees might be the best decision.

Family: Modern families tend to spread out. According to the Pew Research Center, 32 percent of adults with a postgraduate degree do not live near any extended family members. But 42 percent of such adults live within an hourÕs drive of some extended family members. Retirees who aspire to reconnect with grown children and build strong relationships with grandchildren who may live an hour or more away might consider relocating to be closer to the people they love most.

Seniors considering a relocation in retirement can ponder a number of variables to determine if a move is in their best interest

Q&A: Questions to ask before joint replacement surgery

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: I need to have a joint replacement, but I'm really nervous. What questions should I ask my orthopedic doctor?

ANSWER: Knee and hip replacements have changed so much due to advanced surgical techniques, making them far different from those even five years ago. From multiple-day hospital stays, total joint replacement has advanced to a one-night stay or even going home the same day as surgery.

Questions from my patients usually fall into three categories:

- How do I know it's time for surgery?
- What will happen during surgery?
- What will recovery be like?

Let's start with the "when" question. Patients undergoing replacement surgery have arthritis in the joint. Arthritis is the loss of the protective cartilage layer between bones, and when that cushioning is gone, you have bone-on-bone contact, pain and swelling. Physical therapy, over-the-counter medications and injections can help for a while.

Eventually, the pain and discomfort affect your mobility and activities of daily living, whether it's walking the dog or playing with grandkids. That's when you may decide it's time.

But joint replacements aren't only for older patients. Total joint replacement in people in their 50s is no longer uncommon.

Deciding on surgery

Once you've decided on surgery, the next step is preparation, particularly making sure any chronic conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure are under control. To reduce your risk of infection, stop any steroid injections at least three months before surgery. You'll also need to address dental work, such as cleanings.

Your orthopedic care team will provide you — through classes and printed guides — with a wealth of information on how to prepare, including:

- Required preoperative tests and exams.
- Adapting your home for recovery.
- Arranging for care when you return home, such as having a support person with you through the early weeks.
- Setting up transportation to and from physical therapy and medical appointments.
- Requesting a temporary accessible parking permit.

If you have questions or concerns, be sure to ask your care team so that you feel ready for surgery and recovery.

Your surgeon also will be preparing. This includes using X-rays or CT scans to study your bones and anatomy.

If your surgeon is using robotics, they're able to make a 3D model of the joint to assist with planning your joint replacement. In knees, this lets them correct issues caused by arthritis, such as bow-leggedness or knock knees. During your surgery, the surgeon will map your knee in the operating room to the 3D model on the computer built from your preoperative CT scan. Your surgeon will use the robot to collect information on ligament balance and alignment so they can determine the best position to place your implants.

While robotics makes total joint replacement more accurate, it doesn't make it less invasive. It helps achieve a more precise balance, which can lead to less pain and wear and tear on the implant.

When it comes to hip replacement, there are multiple surgical approaches available. The two most common approaches are the posterior and the direct anterior. The direct anterior approach is a more recent surgical technique that has gained popularity over the last decade. The anterior approach is considered "muscle-sparing" because the surgeon is working between the muscles. As a result, patients tend to recover faster, and there's less risk of dislocation.

For both knee and hip replacements, don't hesitate to talk with your surgeon about the techniques they'll be using.

After surgery

After surgery, knee and hip recovery differ:

Knees. For the first two weeks, there's pain and swelling, but also the need to regain range of motion to minimize stiffness and scar tissue. Therapy is a big focus of early recovery. At-home physical therapy is every day; in-person is typically twice a week.

Hips. The first few weeks are for letting the incision heal and reducing pain and swelling. That means gradually increasing activity, using a walker, then a cane. Most patients do home-based therapy but not in-person therapy.

Whether you've had a knee or hip joint replacement, you're able to return to your regular activities within three months. However, there may be some restrictions. For the hips, these may include avoiding extreme positions, such as deep squatting and certain yoga poses, to decrease dislocation risk. For knees, kneeling may be uncomfortable and often isn't recommended. Also, don't be alarmed by clicks and pops from your implants — they're normal.

Overall, patients do well with total joint replacement. This is a long journey, so an incredibly important part of your success is the relationship with your surgeon and care team. They'll be with you from beginning to end to ensure you have the best possible outcome.

Create a bucket list for a long and healthy life

Retirement marks a significant new chapter in your life, filled with opportunities to pursue passions and cultivate well-being. Crafting a thoughtful retirement bucket list can help you live a long, healthy, and fulfilling life.

Travel the world

Retirement is the perfect time to explore new destinations and cultures. Whether it's a long-awaited trip to Europe, a serene beach vacation, or an adventurous safari, traveling can enrich your life in countless ways. It broadens your perspective, stimulates your mind, and creates lasting memories. Make a list of must-visit places and start planning your trips.

Stay in shape

Maintaining physical fitness is crucial for a healthy retirement. Regular exercise can improve your mood, boost your energy levels, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Consider joining a local gym, taking up yoga, or participating in outdoor activities like hiking or cycling. Staying active will help you enjoy your retirement to the fullest

Explore new hobbies

Retirement offers the chance to delve into hobbies and interests you may not have had time for before. Whether it's painting, gardening, playing a musical instrument, or learning a new language, pursuing hobbies can provide a sense of accomplishment and joy. It's also an excellent way to keep your mind sharp and engaged.

Build and connect with friends

Social connections are vital for mental and emotional well-being. Make an effort to build and maintain friendships during retirement. Join clubs, attend social events, or volunteer in your community to meet new people. Spending time with friends can reduce stress, increase happiness, and provide a support network.

Eat healthy

A balanced diet is essential for maintaining good health in retirement. Focus on eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Avoid processed foods and sugary drinks. Cooking at home can be a fun and rewarding way to ensure you are eating nutritious meals. Consider taking a cooking class to learn new recipes and techniques.

Volunteer your time

Giving back to the community can be incredibly rewarding. Volunteering allows you to make a positive impact on the lives of others while staying active and connected. Find causes that resonate with you and seek out opportunities to contribute your time and skills. It can also be a great way to meet like-minded individuals and form new friendships.

Create a comprehensive plan

Having a well-thought-out plan can help you make the most of your retirement. Consider your financial goals, healthcare needs, and personal aspirations. Consult with a financial advisor to ensure you have a solid strategy in place. A comprehensive plan can give you peace of mind and help you focus on enjoying your retirement.

Great gifts for retirees

Millions of working professionals may feel as though retirement is a long way off. But data suggests retirement may be a lot closer than many people believe. According to separate findings from the Employee Benefit Research Institute and the Transamerican Center for Retirement Studies, the average worker in the United States retires at 62. Professionals tend to work a little longer in Canada, where Statistics Canada notes the average retirement age in 2025 was 65.

Regardless of which country professionals call home, retirement is a milestone moment worthy of celebration. Retirees may have their own private celebrations planned, but loved ones can still make this notable moment in a person's life more meaningful with the right gift.

Luggage: Give a nod to many retirees' stated desire to travel more in retirement by gifting some new luggage. Hard shell luggage is particularly durable, which may be especially useful for individuals who plan to become jetsetters now that they no longer have to work. Personalize the gift by having the recipient's initials monogrammed onto the new luggage.

Chef's knives: Another goal many people have upon retiring is to fine-tune their culinary skills. Some feel a chef is only as good as his cutlery, so the gift of a professional chef knife set can get retirees on the road to crafting delicious, top-notch meals.

Reading chair: Many working adults lament that they have little time to read, a common refrain that no longer applies once professionals retire. A brand new comfortable reading chair can make an ideal gift for retirees with a bucket list of books to get through now that they have plenty of time to read for pleasure.

Ergonomic gardening tools: Ergonomic gardening tools are easy on the joints and tailor-made for new retirees who now have plenty of time to invest in their gardens and landscapes. Pair the tools with a cushioned kneeling pad and sturdy gardener's gloves and retirees will have all they need to get to work in the great outdoors.

Photo albums: Anyone with a smartphone is familiar with the notion that great pictures are routinely snapped but easily forgotten thanks to the ease of taking photographs in modern life. Some high-end photo albums can encourage retirees to take a stroll down Memory Lane as they pick and choose memorable photographs to include in their new books.

Exercise gear: Some comfortable and UV-resistant exercise gear and outerwear can be just what retirees need to comfortably enjoy a more active lifestyle. Hoodies and joggers designed for comfort and protection against the elements are ideal for retirees who love the great outdoors.

Retirement is a milestone moment in life that can be made even better with the right gift.

Exercising safely and smart 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.

Hobbies to get seniors out and about

The threat posed by social isolation has been known to medical researchers and health care professionals for years, but the issue gained wider attention during the pandemic. Restrictions on social gatherings during the pandemic opened millions of peopleÕs eyes to the ill effects of social isolation, and while that threat proved temporary for the majority of people across the globe, many seniors continue to live largely isolated lives.

According to the Mayo Clinic, depression, anxiety, increased risk of suicide, and various chronic health problems are some of the outcomes associated with loneliness. That’s a troubling assessment that becomes even more disconcerting when considering a general decline in socialization as evidenced by the 2021 American Perspectives Survey. Survey participants indicated they have fewer close friendships than they once did, speak with their friends less often and rely less on friends for personal support. That’s challenging for adults of all ages, but it can be especially difficult for aging adults, who may be dealing with the loss of a spouse or other close confidantes they would otherwise rely on when confronting personal problems. Hobbies that promote socialization can help aging adults reestablish friendships and build new ones, paying dividends that can have a profound impact on their overall health. With that in mind, adults who feel as though their social circles are shrinking in mid-life or in retirement can look to these activities as means to rebuilding their social lives.

Book club: A book club offers multiple benefits to adults. Book clubs are inherently social and tend to bring like-minded individuals together, which can help build new and lasting friendships that extend beyond weekly discussions. A 2021 study published in the journal Neurology also linked regular reading to a lower risk of developing dementia.

Sports: Sports provide another avenue to socialize with like-minded individuals. Golf is not a team sport, but it is typically played in groups of two or four, making it an ideal activity for adults with free time on their hands to get out and about and meet other people. Leagues for softball, bowling and pickleball also provide opportunities to socialize, and many adults are participating in such leagues for that very reason. A CivicScience study released in 2025 found that 49 percent of adults who planned to participate in adult recreational sports leagues were doing so for social interaction and the chance to make friends.

Travel: Travel can provide another means for aging adults to make friends. Group tours to foreign countries, day trips to local attractions arranged by township recreational offices or even overseas trips with friends you’ve fallen out of touch with can be a great means to build new friendships and reinvigorate old ones, all the while getting you out of the house.

These are just some ways for men and women to get out of the house and socialize with others their age, a worthy endeavor that can be highly beneficial to adults’ overall health.

What are the warning signs of social isolation?

Human beings are wired for social connection, but millions of people confront isolation every day. Many of those people are seniors who lose contact with loved ones as time goes by. While temporary loneliness can be tolerated, prolonged isolation can be very harmful.

Research by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found roughly one-quarter of American adults age 65 and older live in isolation. Identifying the early warning signs of isolation may help to prevent the physiological and psychological toll isolation can take.

Here are some signs of social isolation to watch for.

Withdrawal from events: An early indicator of social isolation, according to Healthline, is a pattern of canceling plans, not answering phone calls, and withdrawing from established social circles or hobbies.

Self-care is not prioritized: Another sign of social isolation is personal hygiene and other self-care habits like eating nutritious meals becomes neglected. It can signal that a person’s routine has changed due to a lack of social accountability.

Home upkeep falters: A person who is withdrawing from social connections may feel it’s no longer necessary to keep a home clean and tidy since they don’t anticipate visitors.

Irritability and low mood: Persistent isolation can trigger a sense of hopelessness. Individuals may become defensive or experience dramatic shifts in mood and sleep patterns, according to Healthline.

Reliance on social media or television: Socially isolated individuals may turn to television or non-interactive social media scrolling as a proxy for human interaction, offers HealthDirect.

Social isolation can take its toll on anyone, particularly seniors. Individuals are urged to check in with friends, family or neighbors they suspect may be isolating to provide the companionship and help they may need.

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

Travel tips for the over-50 crowd

Travel has long been viewed as a positive hobby that can pay short- and long-term dividends. Some of those benefits may surprise even the most devoted jet-setters. For example, a joint study from the Global Commission on Aging and the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies found that women who vacationed twice a year had a considerably lower risk of heart attack than women who vacationed once every six years. The same study noted men who did not take an annual vacation had a 30 percent greater risk of heart disease than men who did vacation each year.

Traveling after 50 may necessitate a slightly different approach than it did when individuals were younger. Though adults over 50 can reap the same travel-related rewards they did when they were younger, some additional safety measures may be necessary at this point in travelers' lives.

Determine vaccination requirements if you plan to travel overseas. The Health In Aging Foundation urges older travelers hoping to go overseas to identify vaccination requirements in countries they plan to visit. Make this part of your early planning, as the HIAF notes some countries require vaccinations be administered at least six weeks prior to entry. Information regarding travel-related vaccinations can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines.

Get a pre-trip medical checkup. A pre-trip medical checkup can ensure adults over 50 are healthy enough to travel. A doctor visit also can be a great opportunity to update vaccinations and discuss medications. It can be tricky to manage medications when crossing time zones, and travelers can work out a schedule with their physicians to ensure they don't miss any doses. This also can be a good time to renew prescriptions to ensure you don't run out while away from home. Work with your physician and pharmacist to create a list of prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, which the HIAF notes will make it easier to get through customs and get replacement medicines should you need them while traveling.

Beware of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT) and how to avoid it. The Mayo Clinic notes DVT occurs when a blood clot forms in one or more of the deep veins in the body, typically in the legs. Lack of movement is a risk factor for DVT, which can affect immobile travelers during long flights, train rides or road trips. DVT risk can be reduced by getting up and walking around when allowed to do so on long flights or train rides. If you'll be driving long distances, make frequent pitstops to get out of the car and stretch your legs.

Stay hydrated. The Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration can cause dizziness, elevate a person's heart rate, contribute to swollen feet and muscle cramps, and result in fatigue, among other side effects. Travel is exciting, and it can be easy to forget to hydrate during engaging trips. But the HIAF recommends individuals bring a large bottle of water with them and drink even if they do not feel thirsty.

These simple safety precautions can protect travelers 50 and over from health issues that might not have posed as significant a threat when they traveled in years past.

Seven foods every senior should consider

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. MedlinePlus 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 carotonoids, 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.

How to remain independent in your home

Aging in place isn't what keeps most people up at night. What matters is how life feels today. They picture the quiet comfort of morning coffee in a kitchen they've stood in for years. They picture neighbors who know their name, a favorite chair that feels like home, and the simple freedom to live on their own terms.

That sense of independence matters. It ties into dignity, confidence, and the comfort of knowing you still get to decide how your day unfolds. Keeping it doesn't require a dramatic overhaul or a loss of control. It takes a few thoughtful choices, a little planning, and changes that work quietly in the background to make everyday life safer, easier, and less stressful.

While it's true that we may need a little more support as we get older, independence can still look vibrant and empowering.

Most people want that future for themselves. A 2024 AARP survey found that 75% of adults ages 50 and older want to remain in their current home as they age, and that number speaks volumes. Wanting to stay home means wanting to stay connected to routines, memories, and the life you've built.

While independence feels natural, maintaining it requires a proactive plan. Use these practical tips to ensure your home remains a safe, functional sanctuary for years to come.

How falls can affect independence

Falls don't just bruise pride. They can derail routines, limit mobility, and shake confidence fast. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that over 14 million (about 1 in 4) adults 65 and older fall each year.

Try a simple fall-risk sweep today

Walk your home like a guest who's never seen it before, and look for the usual troublemakers:

Trip hazards: loose rugs, cords, clutter in walkways

Lighting gaps: dim hallways, dark stairs, no night lights

Wobbly support: shaky railings, slick steps, unstable chairs

The National Institute on Aging recommends basics such as good lighting on stairs and grab bars near toilets and in the tub or shower.

Embrace smart home technology

Technology no longer feels like science fiction; it serves as a vital tool for independence. Smart devices act as an extra set of hands and eyes, providing peace of mind for both you and your family:

Voice-activated assistants: Devices such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home let you set medication reminders, make hands-free calls, and control your thermostat with your voice.

Video doorbells: See who stands at your front door without getting up. This layer of security protects against solicitors and improves overall home safety.

Smart locks: Keyless entry systems let you lock or unlock doors via a smartphone app, which is helpful if you need to let in a caregiver or family member.

Modify the bathroom for functionality

The bathroom presents the highest risk for slips and falls. Simple modifications transform this high-traffic area into a much safer space:

Install grab bars: Securely bolt grab bars into wall studs near the toilet and inside the shower. Avoid using suction cup bars, as they often fail under pressure.

Add a walk-in shower: Removing the high ledge of a traditional bathtub significantly lowers the risk of tripping.

Use non-slip mats: Place high-traction mats inside the tub and on the floor outside the shower to catch moisture.

Prioritize physical and social activity

Focus on balance: Engage in low-impact exercises such as tai chi or chair yoga. These movements strengthen core muscles and improve stability. The National Institute on Aging suggests that regular exercise helps maintain the bone density necessary for independent living.

Stay connected: Connection is part of being human, and it becomes even more critical as we age. For many seniors, a sense of community brings purpose and joy. Without it, loneliness can take hold, affecting not just emotional well-being but also mental and physical health. Research shows that isolation increases the risk of depression, memory loss, and earlier health decline. Invite neighbors over for coffee, join a local gardening club, or use video chats to stay in touch with grandchildren.

Prep meals for success: Nutritious eating fuels your energy levels. Spend one afternoon a week prepping healthy meals so you can eat well even when you feel tired.

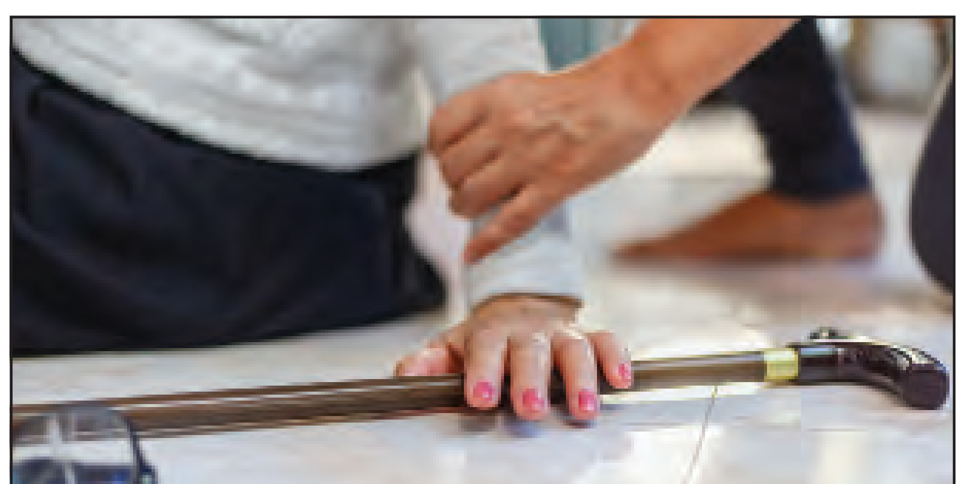
Consider in-home services

Another way to strengthen your independence or support the autonomy of someone you love is with a full range of medical and nonmedical care services tailored to individual needs and delivered right where you call home. Even the slightest bit of support can make a meaningful difference, giving you more time to enjoy what matters most and to get the care you need to feel your best.

Plan for the future today

Home independence rarely happens by accident. It requires honest assessments and small, incremental changes. By addressing safety hazards and embracing helpful technology now, you create a sustainable environment for your future self.

Maintaining your home's functionality preserves your freedom, your dignity, and your peace of mind.



Managing money problems for people with dementia

People with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia often have problems managing their money. Research shows that money problems may be one of the first noticeable signs of the disease.

Early on, a person with dementia may be able to perform basic tasks, such as paying bills, but they are likely to have problems with more complicated tasks, such as balancing a bank account. As the disease gets worse, the person may try to hide financial problems to protect their independence. Or the person may not realize that they are losing the ability to handle money matters.

Signs of money problems

Look for signs of money problems such as trouble counting change, paying for a purchase, calculating a tip, balancing a checkbook, or understanding a bank statement. The person may be afraid or worried when they talk about money. You may also find:

- Unopened and unpaid bills
- Lots of new purchases on a credit card bill
- Unexpected new merchandise in the home
- Money missing from the person's bank account

A family member or legal representative should check bank statements and other financial records each month to see how the person with dementia is doing and step in if there are serious concerns. This can protect the person from becoming a victim of financial abuse or fraud.

Take steps early

Understandably, many older adults will resist allowing someone else to take over their financial affairs. To provide support while also respecting the person's independence, a family member or trusted friend can do several things to help the person with dementia:

Start a conversation about the importance of a monthly budget. Help the person develop a spending plan on paper. If the person is comfortable with computers or a smartphone, share information about secure online budgeting tools, many of which are free.

Set up automated bill payments. Arrange for utilities, mortgage, rent, and other expenses to be paid through automatic deductions from a bank account. This will ensure that bills are paid correctly and on time.

Discuss ways to help manage spending. Consider giving the person small amounts of cash to have on hand, reducing the spending limit on credit cards, and canceling unneeded credit and debit cards. Offer to go grocery shopping or have items delivered to reduce overspending and ensure the person has what they need at home.

To prevent serious money problems as the disease gets worse, you may have to take charge of the person's financial affairs through legal arrangements. It's important to handle the transfer of financial authority with respect and understanding.

You can arrange consent to manage the person's finances via a durable power of attorney for finances, preferably while the person can still understand and approve the arrangement. To get started, consider taking steps to:

Establish consent to manage finances. To prevent serious problems, consider naming a legal representative, called a proxy, to access and manage the person's financial affairs. A lawyer may not be required to establish a legal proxy, but they can provide guidance and advice if needed. Learn more about finding legal resources.

Plan for long-term care costs. Consider options for help at home, such as a personal care assistant or home health care aide. Find out how much they cost and whether Medicare, Medicaid, or long-term care insurance will cover any of the costs. If the person needs more care, they might move to a residential facility, such as an assisted living community or nursing home. Learn more about paying for long-term care.

Gather important papers and discuss financial and estate planning. Gather the person's important records and documents in one place. Basic papers include the person's birth certificate, insurance information, and banking records. These papers should also include the person's will and any health care or financial directives to ensure that their wishes are honored.

Guard against financial abuse and fraud

People with dementia may be targets of financial abuse or fraud. Sometimes, the person behind it is a stranger. But financial abuse and fraud can also be carried out by a "friend" or family member. Telephone, email, or in-person scams can take many forms, such as:

- Identity theft
- Get-rich-quick offers
- Phony offers of prizes or home or auto repairs
- Insurance scams
- Government impersonator scams
- Health scams, such as ads for unproven memory aids
- Threats or intimidation

Look for signs that the person with dementia may be a victim of financial abuse or fraud. For example:

- Signatures on checks or other papers don't look like the person's signature.
- The person's will has been changed without permission.
- The person's home is sold, and they did not agree to sell it.
- The person signed legal papers (such as a will, power of attorney, or joint deed to a house) without knowing what the papers mean.
- Valuable belongings, such as jewelry or electronics, are missing from the home.

To lower the risk of telemarketing schemes, help place the person's phone number on the National Do Not Call Registry. Consider registering the person for fraud alerts through their bank, credit card company, a national credit bureau, or other credit monitoring service.

One reason that scammers target older adults is that they are less likely to report suspected fraud. If you think that someone has been the target of a scam, contact the National Elder Fraud Hotline at 833–372–8311. You can also contact your local police department or the attorney general of your state or territory, and you can report the scam to the Federal Trade Commission.

-National Institute of Aging

What is long-distance caregiving?

Many people live far away from their family or friends who need help. If you don't live nearby, you can still provide support and assistance as a long-distance caregiver. This article provides information and resources if you find yourself in a long-distance caregiving role.

What tasks can a long-distance caregiver help with?

Long-distance caregivers take on different roles. From a distance, you may be able to:

• Assist with finances, money management, insurance claims, or paying bills

• Arrange for care management or in-home care by hiring formal caregivers such as home health aides

• Order medical equipment, medicines, and other supplies the person needs

• Serve as an information coordinator by researching information about relevant health conditions and medicines, navigating changing needs, and overseeing insurance benefits

• Help with advance care planning, such as choosing a health care proxy and preparing a living will

• Help find, organize, and update important paperwork and records

• Research long-term care options, such as an assisted living facility or nursing home

You will probably be coordinating these tasks with family, friends, or other caregivers who live nearby.

Staying connected from far away

When you don't live close by, it may take more effort to find out what's going on and stay up to date with an older person's needs. Here are some strategies and technologies that long-distance caregivers can use to stay connected:

• Create a list of important phone numbers and email addresses. Keep it in a shared document or spreadsheet online and update it regularly.

• Set up a shared calendar online or in a smartphone app to coordinate with other caregivers.

• With permission, attend the person's telehealth visits. Telehealth visits are remote appointments with health care providers often done with videoconferencing.

• Participate remotely in conference calls or video meetings with the assisted living facility team or nursing home staff.

• Help the older person learn about the features of their mobile or smart phone, such as texting and video calls.

• If the older person is comfortable using a computer or tablet, set up an email account for them and teach them how to stay safe online.

Making the most of a short visit with an aging parent or relative

Talk to the person ahead of time and find out what they would like to do during your visit. Also check with the primary caregiver, if appropriate, to learn what they need. You may be able to handle some of their caregiving responsibilities while you are in town. These conversations can help you set clear-cut and realistic goals for the visit. Decide on your top priorities — that may mean reserving other tasks for a future visit.

Because there's a lot to do during a short visit, it's easy to overlook simply spending time with the person and doing things together. Try to make time for activities unrelated to being a caregiver, such as watching a movie, playing a game, enjoying music, or taking a drive. Finding time to enjoy something simple and relaxing together is good for everyone.

Supporting the person doing day-to-day caregiving

In many cases, one person takes on most of the everyday responsibilities of caring for an older person. It tends to be a spouse or the child or sibling who lives closest. If you are not the primary caregiver, you can still play an important role in supporting that person.

Here are some ways you can help, even if you don't live nearby:

• Ask what you can do that would be most helpful.

• Stay in regular contact with the primary caregiver by phone or email. Just listening may not sound like much, but it can mean a lot.

• Travel to stay with the older person for a few days so the primary caregiver can take a vacation or just have some time off.

• Arrange for regular respite care in the form of a volunteer, an in-home aide, or an adult day care program.

In time, the older person may have to move to a residential (live-in) facility, such as assisted living or a nursing home. If that happens, the primary caregiver will need your support. You can work together to select a facility and coordinate the move. The primary caregiver may need extra support while adjusting to the person's absence and to living alone at home.

-National Institute of Aging