

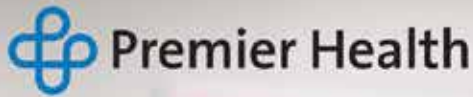
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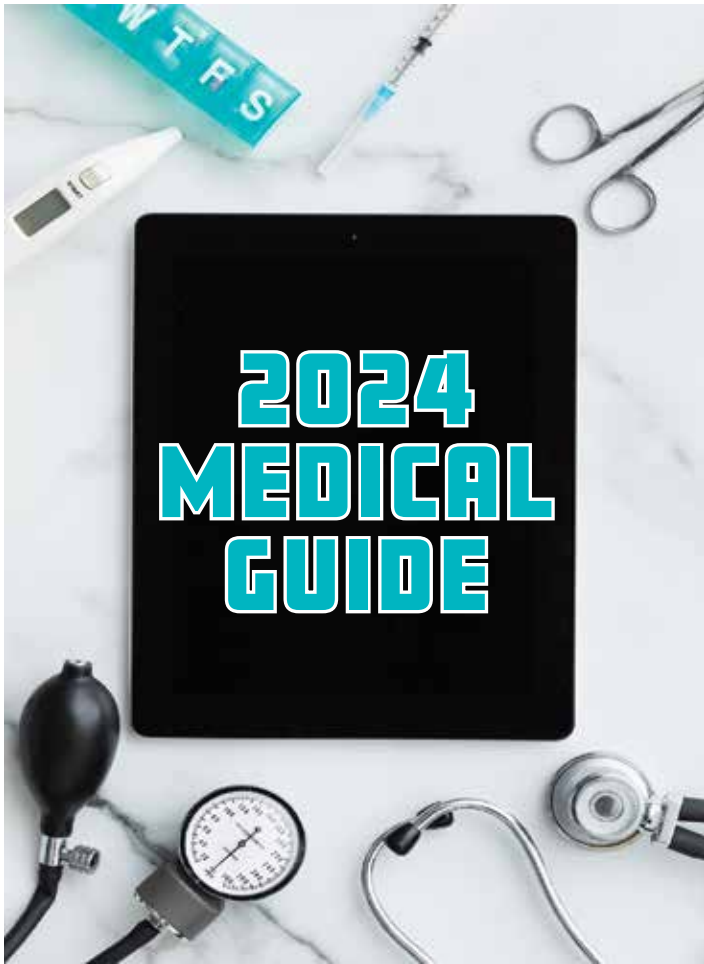


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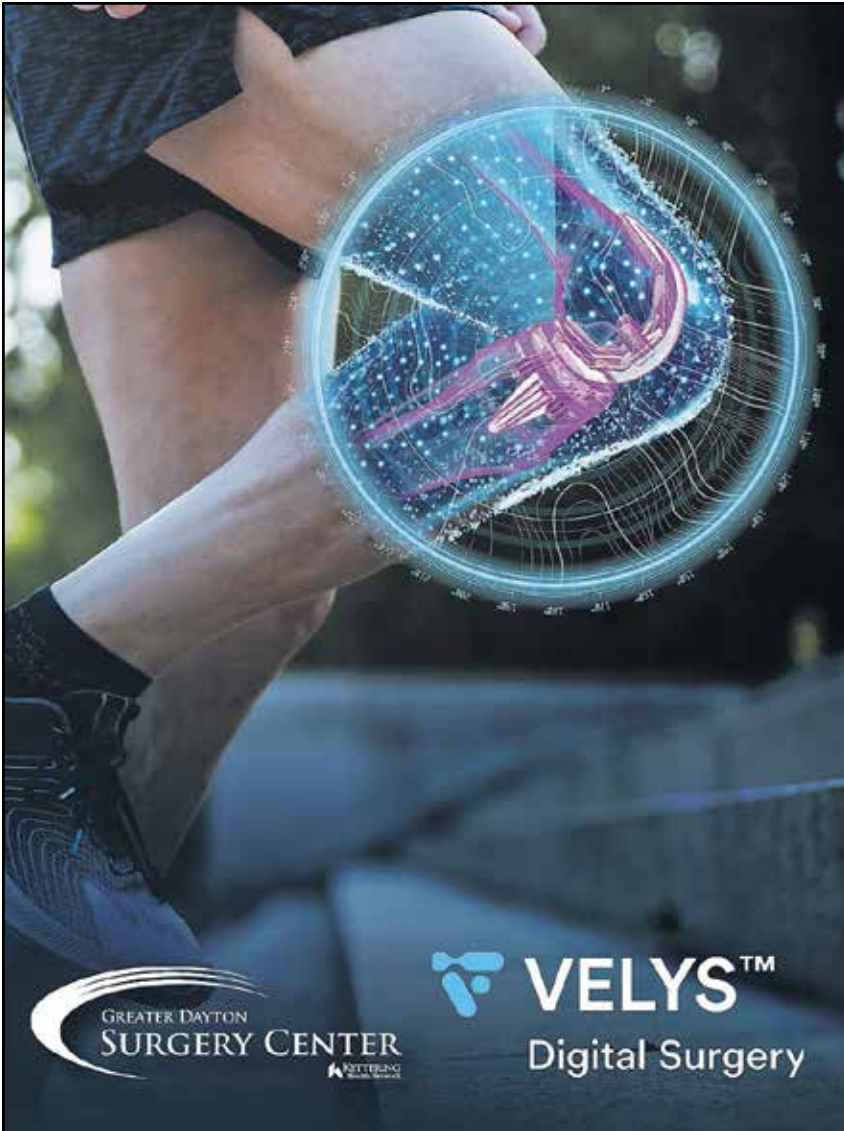
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Strength training for seniors

A balanced diet and exercise, which includes a combination of aerobic activities and strength training, is necessary to maintain long-term health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do to protect their overall health. Exercise helps to delay or prevent many of the conditions that come with age. Adults ages 65 and older should aim for the recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking, and at least two days of activities that strengthen muscles.

When it comes to muscle strengthening, seniors can fol-

low these safety guidelines as they embark on their strength-training journeys.

- **Speak with a healthcare provider first.** Get the green light to proceed with an exercise regimen before beginning by having a discussion with your general practitioner about your fitness goals. Your doctor can recommend strategies that are safe and point out any exercises that may compromise your overall health.
- **Master basic exercises first.** Anyone new to strength training, which is sometimes known as resistance training, can start out slowly, even using just body weight, to provide resistance. Resistance exercises can include squats, crunches, modified pushups, planks, and lunges.
- **Graduate to resistance bands.** When you're ready to move on to something else, consider resistance bands as an alternative to free weights. The bands can help you develop good form before introducing weight. Good form is key to avoiding injury.
- **Work with a trainer.** Working with a certified personal trainer can help you learn how to use free weights and strength-training machines correctly. A trainer also can create a routine that includes the right number of sets and repetitions to gradually build and maintain muscle mass.

If you decide against hiring a trainer, gym staff members may guide you through equipment and demonstrate proper form.

- **Exercise with a friend.** Strength training with a friend or family member can provide motivation and keep you on target to meet your goals.
- **Build up gradually.** Your first strength session should only last 10 to 15 minutes, according to Tiffany Chag, C.S.C.S., a strength coach at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. This enables you to gauge soreness. Wait until soreness abates before beginning your next session if you are new to strength training.



Variables that could elevate your risk for stroke



The World Stroke Organization notes that more than 12.2 million individuals experience stroke each year across the globe. Perhaps even more telling, the WSO reports that, globally, one in four people over age 25 will have a stroke in their lifetime.

Stroke is indeed a threat to public health. However, despite the prevalence of stroke, individuals are not helpless against it. Various risk factors for stroke are within individuals' control, and it's never too early for adults to prioritize stroke prevention. With that in mind, the following are some of the most common risk factors for stroke, courtesy of the WSO.

- **Elevated systolic blood pressure:** The American Heart Association notes that an elevated systolic blood pressure means the upper number on a blood pressure

reading is between 120 and 129. Systolic blood pressure measures the pressure your blood is pushing against the artery walls each time the heart beats. Individuals diagnosed with elevated systolic blood pressure are urged to discuss the ways to lower that number, as the American Stroke Association notes high blood pressure is the most significant controllable risk factor for stroke.

- **High body mass index:** A 2022 study published in the journal PLOS One found that body mass index was associated with stroke risk among diabetes patients. The study found that the risk of ischemic stroke, which occurs when a blood clot or fatty plaque blocks a blood vessel in the brain, was higher among obese patients

compared to patients who are overweight or normal-weight.

- **Smoking:** The WSO reports that someone who smokes 20 cigarettes a day is six times more likely to have a stroke compared to a non-smoker. One of the links between smoking and stroke risk surrounds carbon monoxide and nicotine. Smoke from cigarettes contains both carbon monoxide, which reduces the amount of oxygen in a smoker's blood, and nicotine, which makes a smoker's heart beat faster. Those variables combine to raise blood pressure, which has already been noted as a significant risk factor for stroke.
- **Alcohol consumption:** A 2022 study published in the journal Neurology examined the link between alcohol consumption and stroke. The study found

that high levels of alcohol consumption are associated with a higher risk for all types of stroke, and even moderate intake, defined as between seven to 14 drinks per week for women and seven to 21 drinks per week for men, was associated with higher risk for all types of stroke.

These are not the only common risk factors for stroke. In fact, the WSO reports high fasting glucose, air pollution, low physical activity, poor diet, high LDL (i.e., "bad") cholesterol, and kidney dysfunction are some additional common risk factors for stroke.

Though stroke affects more than 12 million individuals across the globe each year, many of its more common risk factors are manageable. More information about stroke is available at stroke.org.

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7 signs a pet could be in pain

Pets and even wild animals can convey sentiments in various ways. It's human nature to want to assume that the passing glances of a puppy are looks of deep love — and they very well may be. Animals may convey various emotions through their behavior, but when it comes to being in pain, they may not show it readily. In the wild, animals hide pain as a survival instinct. Pain can give the perception that an animal is weaker and therefore an easier target for predators. Since pets can conceal pain well, pet owners should familiarize themselves with reading the subtle indicators that suggest something is amiss. PetMD, Sears Veterinary Hospital and VetsNow note the following are seven signs pets could be in pain.

1. **Grumpy temperament:** Does your typically amiable pet suddenly want nothing to do with you? Is he or she more aggressive or shying away from your touch? Pain can turn a happy-go-lucky pet into one that is much more moody and resistant to human interaction.
2. **Excessive behaviors:** A pet in pain may lick or scratch a specific area. Cats may howl or meow frequently.
3. **Accidents:** Pets who are in pain could forget some of their hovertraining. Cats may urinate outside of the

litter box, while dogs may have accidents indoors.

4. **Reduced appetite:** Being in pain or ill may reduce the desire to eat or drink in some pets. Pets who have dental issues may be even more reluctant to eat because chewing triggers the pain.
5. **Difficulties lying down or standing up:** Pain that originates from injuries or arthritis can make it challenging for pets to sit, stand or lie down easily. Limping or having trouble walking are some additional indicators of injury or arthritis.
6. **Changes in body posture:** Most pet owners have a good idea of what their animals look like when they are relaxed and in good health. A pet who is hunched or especially rigid, or one hanging his or her head, could be masking pain.
7. **Agitation or restlessness:** Some pets cannot get settled when they're in pain. They may pace the house or not lie down long enough to get adequate rest.
Pet owners who spend enough time with their pets should be able to recognize a few signs that something is amiss and potentially indicative of an animal in pain. When such indicators present, schedule a visit with a veterinarian promptly to get to the root of the problem.



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Find the right doctor for your condition

The medical field is comprised of many professionals working in concert to keep patients healthy, which involves treating any conditions that arise. Individuals may be treated by various types of doctors in their lifetime, and each is an expert in his or her field. According to Medical News Today, most physicians are categorized as primary care or specialty care.

Navigating the health care system can be confusing. Recognition of the specialties of various types of doctors can make it easier to make it through that system.

- **General practitioner:** Also known as a family physician, or primary care doctor, these are the doctors patients are likely to encounter most often. They care for patients during routine checkups and screening tests; provide immunizations; and manage ongoing medical conditions. GPs also may be internists, treating both common and complex illnesses.
- **Pediatrician:** Pediatricians specialize in the care of children from birth and up. Although there is no set age when patients will transition from a pediatrician

to an adult doctor, Kids Health says the switch is typically made between the ages of 18 and 21.

- **Geriatric medicine specialists:** These doctors focus on treating elderly patients and the medical conditions that can develop as a person ages. Geriatric doctors work in private offices, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, hospitals, and some even make house calls.
- **Endocrinologists:** An endocrinologist is an expert in the study of the body's hormones, says the Cleveland Clinic. They diagnose and treat many different conditions that affect the endocrine system, including diabetes, reproductive issues and thyroid conditions.
- **Dermatologist:** Skin, hair and nail conditions are handled by a dermatologist. Dermatologists routinely treat conditions like acne, moles, scarring, rashes, and more.
- **Nephrologists:** Individuals with kidney diseases as well as high blood pressure and fluid and mineral imbalances will likely see a nephrologist.

- **Ophthalmologist:** Although many conditions of the eye can be diagnosed and treated by optometrists, ophthalmologists are medical doctors who can treat every kind of eye condition. They also can operate on the eyes, according to WebMD.
- **Oncologist:** Oncologists specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. They have subspecialties in specific types of cancer, and also may serve as radiation oncologists, who provide radiation cancer treatments.
- **Otolaryngologists:** Commonly referred to as ear, nose and throat doctors, these professionals treat diseases in these areas of the body. They also treat conditions that affect the neck and respiratory system.
- **Pulmonologists:** Those with conditions related to breathing issues, such as pneumonia, asthma, emphysema, and lung cancer, can seek out pulmonologists. These are just some of the many different types of doctors people may visit in their lifetimes.

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The nutritional value of seafood

Certain types of cuisine tend to inspire a little extra devotion, and seafood is one such food. Seafood is an umbrella term that refers to fish such as salmon and tuna as well as shellfish like shrimp, crab and oysters. That's a wide range of foods, which underscores the versatility of seafood.

Versatility is one notable attribute of seafood, and diners can keep that in mind as they plan nights out on the town. Another worthy quality of seafood is its nutritional value, which is perhaps more significant than even the most devoted fish and shellfish lovers recognize.

- **Fish is low in saturated fat.**

The American Heart Association notes that fish is

not high in saturated fats. In fact, the AHA recommends eating two servings of fish, particularly fatty fish like salmon, each week. Additional types of fatty fish include bluefin tuna, oysters, mussels, herring, mackerel, and anchovies.

- **Certain types of fish and seafood can help lower triglyceride levels.** Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) are two types of fatty acids found in fish such as mackerel and salmon that are associated with heart health. The Cleveland Clinic notes that EPA and DHA help to lower triglyceride levels, which is beneficial for a va-

riety of reasons. According to the Mayo Clinic, high triglycerides may contribute to a hardening of the arteries or a thickening of arterial walls, a condition known as arteriosclerosis. Arteriosclerosis is a known risk factor for stroke, heart attack and heart disease.

- **Shellfish are high in protein and low in calories.** WebMD reports that shellfish are a great source of lean protein. That's a notable benefit, as lean protein is easily digestible and vital for muscle growth and repair. Lean protein sources also can help people feel fuller for longer periods of time, potentially reducing the likelihood that people will

overeat. WebMD notes that a single, three-ounce serving of clams contains 22 grams of protein, which is more than 40 percent of the daily recommended intake for people adhering to a 2,000 calorie diet. That same three-ounce serving also contains just 126 calories.

Many people mistakenly believe that dining out will compromise their diets. However, individuals who make wise choices when dining out can enjoy delicious foods without the guilt. Various dishes that fall under the umbrella of seafood provide a delicious and healthy option when diners want to hit the town without compromising their overall health.

How to keep an eye on calories at popular ethnic restaurants

Restaurants that specialize in specific ethnic cuisines present wonderful opportunities to experience the culture of distant lands without venturing too far from home. Whether it's a beloved dish at a nearby Italian restaurant specializing in foods from southern Italy or a local Indian establishment boasting a menu filled with dishes enjoyed across northern India, there's no shortage of flavorful options to tempt diners in many towns and cities.

It's easy to overindulge in delicious food when visiting an ethnic restaurant, and that can pose a problem for individuals hoping to adhere to healthy eating plans. Thankfully, there are plenty of ways diners can stay the course with their diets and still enjoy their favorite ethnic cuisines.

Italian

Dieters and individuals watching their calories may think pasta-laden Italian dishes are off limits when dining out. But that's a misconception. When visiting an Italian restaurant, forgo the customary and complementary bread basket offered before order-

ing. In addition, resist asking the waiter to pile on the Parmesan cheese, which can add flavor but also calories. When choosing a pasta dish, request whole grain pasta in lieu of its more popular but processed alternative. Finally, avoid dishes with creamy sauces, such as Alfredo. Though such sauces are undeniably flavorful, they're also heavier than tomato-based options.

Indian

Many Indian restaurants offer plenty of vegetarian fare, which can make it easy to stay the dietary course when visiting such establishments. Diners who enjoy vegetarian foods, even if they eat meat, can opt for dishes without chicken or lamb when visiting Indian restaurants. Tikka and tandoori options also are prepared without frying and oil, which can make them healthier choices than other dishes on the menu. And while naan is a perfect complement to many Indian dishes, this beloved bread can increase the calorie count of a meal, which makes it something to avoid for individuals who want to adhere to their diet while out and about.

Mexican

Mexican cuisine is wildly popular, and for good reason. Mexican restaurants prepare delicious foods and serve them up in ample portions, giving diners great value. But those hefty portions can bust belts if not budgets. Much like passing on the complementary bread at an Italian restaurant, diners can pass on the free bowl of tortilla chips when visiting their favorite Mexican restaurant. When choosing the main course, request whole grain soft shells and tortillas if you plan to order tacos and burritos. And while cheese can make any Mexican dish more flavorful, it also can increase the total calorie count of a meal, so request dishes without "queso." Protein sources that are described as grilled on the menu also make for healthier options than fried alternatives.

Dining out at ethnic restaurants and dieting can go hand in hand. Diners who recognize the various ways to make ethnic meals more diet-friendly can still enjoy their favorite local hotspots.



How families can share caregiving responsibilities

Family caregivers are unsung heroes. Such individuals typically provide vital services to their loved ones who cannot fully care for themselves, and they often do so without compensation.

Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates the prevalence of family caregivers across the country. According to the BLS, 14 percent of the population, which equates to roughly 37 million people, provide unpaid eldercare across the nation. Unpaid caregivers also provide vital services in Canada, where the Canadian Institute for Health Information reports such individuals provide an average of 17 hours of unpaid care each week (26 hours for those who care for seniors with dementia). Caregiving for a family member can take a toll that affects caregivers' physical and mental health. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, caregivers are at increased risk for developing multiple chronic diseases since many neglect their own health needs while caring for others. In addition, roughly 15 percent of caregivers who participated in a CDC survey reported experiencing 14 or more mentally unhealthy days in the past month.

The physical and mental toll of caregiving underscores how important it can be for families to find ways to share

caregiving duties. Though each situation is unique, the National Institute on Aging offers the following advice to families as they seek to share the responsibility of caring for a loved one in need.

- **Identify the care required.**

The NIA recommends families discuss caregiving needs as early as possible and ideally before an emergency situation arises. If possible, the person in need can participate in this conversation and help to calmly discuss which services are wanted and needed. If a loved one is diagnosed with a condition in its early stages, such as dementia, families can then work together to identify the level of care required in the immediate future and potentially down the road should the condition worsen.

- **Choose a primary caregiver.**

The primary caregiver will be the individual who accepts the bulk of the daily responsibilities of caregiving. Identifying this person early, ideally before a primary caregiver is even needed, can limit confusion should the day come when the individual needs daily care.

- **Determine each caregiver's contribution.** The caregiving team can discuss each person's skills and how they can be used to take care of the individual in need. This



can be particularly useful when assigning specific tasks. For example, a caregiver who works in the medical field may be most qualified to speak to medical staff about their loved one's condition, while another who works in the financial sector may be tasked with managing a loved one's bank accounts and ensuring bills are paid on time.

- **Recognize everyone has limits.** A caregiving team is just that: a team. As noted, caregiving can take both a physical and emotional toll, so it's important that everyone, and particularly the individual chosen as the primary caregiver, receive routine breaks to ensure everyone can take care of themselves. It's important that a caregiving team maintain a degree of flexibility to account for the physical and mental challenges caregivers may encounter as they tend to a loved one in need.





Tips to find a home health aide

A desire to live independently seems to be part of human nature. Though that desire may continue to burn as individuals approach retirement age, unforeseen circumstances like medical issues or the death of a partner may result in a need to work with a professional caregiver.

Home health aides (HHAs) can help aging individuals or those with certain physical or cognitive limitations live full lives without requiring them to move into assisted living facilities or seek alternative housing arrangements. HHAs provide a host of services, and individuals living in well-populated areas may have no shortage of options as they seek to hire a professional to help themselves or a loved one with the tasks of daily life. Individuals or families beginning their search for a home health aide can keep these tips in mind.

- **Identify the services required.** The Family Caregiver Alliance® notes there are several main areas to assess when identifying which services individuals may need help with. Personal care consists of bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, and

grooming. Household care involves cooking, cleaning, laundry, and shopping. HHAs who provide medical care may help clients manage medications, provide physical therapy and help clients get to their doctor's appointments. Companionship is a component of emotional care, which also may entail engaging clients in meaningful activities and conversation. Identifying the services required can help individuals and their families zero in on the professionals who can help them.

- **Seek recommendations from trusted doctors and confidantes.** An individual who needs daily assistance at home can ask his or her physician for recommendations (family members can ask as well). Physicians undoubtedly have had previous patients who have benefited from the services of HHAs, so they can likely recommend local professionals. Trusted confidantes, such as neighbors, relatives and friends, who have been in similar situations, or have family members who have required HHAs, also can be an invaluable resource.

- **Contact a local agency.** The FCA notes that contacting a local Home Care Agency is a formal way to find an HHA for yourself or a loved one. Various agencies are likely in operation within a reasonable distance of a person's home, though the FCA notes far fewer agencies serve rural areas. Contacting a local Home Care Agency can put individuals and their families in contact with professionals who can help match people with particular needs with HHAs who specialize in such care or have extensive experience providing a range of home care services.

- **Look into a direct-hire group.** AARP® notes that direct-hire agencies maintain networks of independent caregivers and facilitate connections between those professionals and individuals and families seeking help. When working with a direct-hire group, inquire about their fees and ask if they can share any information regarding how to pay independent contractors who can be found through their agencies. It's also important to ask if direct-hire groups formally vet professionals that can be found through them or if individuals and families must conduct their own background checks.



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How is RSV transmitted?

The American Lung Association notes that respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, is a common respiratory virus that produces cold-like symptoms in adults and children. Though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that most cases of RSV go away within two weeks without intervention, the virus can be unpredictable. In fact, the ALA reports that RSV is the leading cause of hospitalization in all infants. In addition, most children have been infected with the virus by the time they are two years old. Such high infection rates understandably leads to questions about transmission of the virus, which the CDC reports can spread in the following ways.

- Individuals get virus droplets from a cough or sneeze in their eyes, nose, or mouth
- Individuals come into direct contact with the virus, like kissing the face of a child with RSV
- Individuals touch a surface that has the virus on it, like a doorknob, and then touch their face prior to washing their hands

Such methods of transmission explain why so many children are infected with RSV prior to their second birthday, as curious youngsters often hug and grab other children at daycare facilities and frequently touch their faces without washing their hands. Though RSV infection in infants is often overcome, parents can speak with their child's pediatrician to determine if there is any way to lower their child's risk of infection.

- An infected person coughs or sneezes



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What to know about RSV



Winter is synonymous with the holidays, snow and, of course, the common cold. Though colds are not exclusive to winter, they tend to be more common in the colder months of the year, when people typically spend more time indoors, making it easier for cold viruses to spread from one person to another.

As cold season hits full swing, it's important to recognize that the common cold is not always behind those uncomfortable coughs and sniffles. Respiratory syncytial virus, often referred to as RSV, is a serious respiratory virus that produces symptoms similar to those associated with the common cold. Some basic knowledge of RSV can ensure people seek the treatment they need to overcome it.

What is RSV?

The Mayo Clinic reports that RSV is a virus that infects the lungs and respiratory tract. Though RSV may not be as familiar as the common cold, perhaps it's more familiar than many people realize, as the Mayo Clinic indicates most children have been infected with the virus by the time they're two years old. The American Lung Association® reports that RSV is so common among children because they so frequently come into physical contact with other kids.

When is RSV most likely to occur?

According to the ALA, the peak season for RSV is fall through spring. However, the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment notes that RSV infections rose sharply in summer 2021. Though that spike was likely due to a relaxation of coronavirus restrictions, it underscores that RSV can strike in summer, even if it's less likely to spread during times of year when people tend to spend more time outdoors.

What are the symptoms of RSV?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that people infected with RSV typically exhibit symptoms within four to six days of infection. Such symptoms, which usually appear in stages and not all at once, may include:

- Runny nose
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Wheezing

Young infants with RSV may be irritable, less active and experience breathing difficulties. The ALA notes that RSV is the leading cause of hospitalization in all infants, so symptoms should be taken seriously and brought to the attention of a child's pediatrician immediately. The ALA

also notes that symptoms like difficulty breathing, not drinking enough, decreased activity, nasal flaring, and bluish lips and fingernails require urgent care.

How is RSV managed?

The CDC notes that antiviral medication is not typically part of a treatment for RSV, as most infections go away within a week or two without intervention. Symptoms such as fever and pain can be managed with over-the-counter fever reducers and pain relievers like acetaminophen or ibuprofen (the CDC notes that aspirin should never be given to children). Drinking plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and speaking with a physician prior to taking something or giving a child something to treat RSV is recommended.

Is there an RSV vaccination?

The CDC recommends immunization for those most at risk of serious illness from RSV. High-risk groups include infants, toddlers and adults age 60 and older. Parents and older adults are urged to speak to their child's doctors and their own physicians about RSV vaccination.

RSV symptoms mirror those of the common cold, but the virus can be more serious than that. More information is available at [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) and [lung.org](https://www.lung.org).



Activities that can promote cardiovascular health

Resolving to be physically active is an important step towards heart health and overall well-being. Exercise is one of the most effective tools for strengthening the heart and avoiding various illnesses, including high cholesterol, that can affect cardiovascular health, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Although any exercise can be beneficial, there is a fitness recipe designed to be the most effective for strengthening the heart and helping it to work to its full potential. Here are the guidelines recommended by the American Heart Association and Johns Hopkins Medicine.

- Get 150 minutes per week or more of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of both. These activities can include running, cycling, swimming, and others that will get the heart pumping.
- Incorporate moderate- to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least two days a week.
- Strength training should be designed to work the entire body. It doesn't have to be traditional weightlifting, either. Body weight exercises, yoga, Pilates, and even tai chi can build strength and offer additional benefits like improving balance.
- Consider HIIT exercises. HIIT stands for high-intensity interval training, which involves exercising as hard as one can for a short period, and then resting briefly before exercising hard again for a short period. While there are many different HIIT programs, UT Southwestern Medical Center says a popular one involves exercising hard for four minutes, followed by three minutes of recovery time, for four cycles total.
- While stretching, flexibility and balance exercises do not directly affect heart health,

they do help one stay flexible and free from joint pain and other issues that can sideline a person from exercise. Doing what one can to protect against falls and reduce risk of being sedentary will benefit the heart in the long run.

- Don't discount everyday activities in relation to how they can enhance heart health. Walking, gardening, playing with children, or tossing a ball to a family pet are beneficial aerobic activities.

Heart health is something to take seriously, and exercise plays a key role in strengthening the heart.



What's a good heart rate for your age?



A resting heart rate can be a good indicator of health. According to the Mayo Clinic, generally speaking, a lower heart rate at rest implies more efficient heart function and better cardiovascular fitness. Athletes tend to have lower normal resting heart rates than non-athletes. Conversely, an unusually high resting heart rate may signify an increased risk of heart disease or another medical condition, advises Harvard Health.

While the official stance on resting heart rate for adults indicates it should range from 60 to 100 beats per minute (bpm), most healthy adults fall between 55 and 85 bpm. However, certain people may fall outside of this range and still be healthy. Penn Medicine says resting heart rate generally should not be too fast or too slow, and should not fluctuate all that often.

Men and women differ slightly in resting heart rate. The National Institutes of Health says the average adult male heart rate is between 70 and 72 bpm, while the average for adult women is between 78 and 82 bpm. This is due in large part to the fact that men have larger hearts than women. This occurs even after accounting for age and physical fitness.

There are ways to lower resting heart rate. Exercise, quitting smoking and relaxing to reduce stress and anxiety can promote a low resting heart rate.

What qualifies as a healthy resting heart rate changes as one ages. In fact, heart rates for children are much different from adults.

- ♥ Newborn babies: 100 to 205 bpm
- ♥ Infants under 1 year: 100 to 180 bpm
- ♥ 1 to 2 years: 98 to 140 bpm
- ♥ 3 to 5 years: 80 to 120 bpm
- ♥ 6 to 7 years: 75 to 118 bpm
- ♥ Older children and teens: 60 to 100 bpm
- ♥ Adults: 60 to 100 bpm

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Cardiovascular fitness and Alzheimer's disease

Dementia is a general term for various brain disorders that can affect behavior, thinking and memory. Among the conditions that qualify as dementia, Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common.

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, AD is an irreversible condition that destroys memory, thinking and the ability to carry out daily activities. Although initial AD symptoms may be mild, the disease worsens over time and eventually people with AD will need full-time care. Many people are interested in any ways they can reduce the severity of AD or stave off its progression. Cardiovascular fitness could be an important tool in that fight.

Cardiovascular activity may help lessen the impact of dementia and AD in particular. According to a 2018 study published in the journal

Neurology, a population-based sample of 1,462 Swedish women between the ages of 38 and 60 was examined in 1968, and then followed up with in various intervals until 2009. Researchers found that women who partook in high fitness regimens saw their age of dementia onset delayed by 9.5 years. Time to dementia onset was delayed by five years compared to medium fitness participants.

Another study from 2020 published in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroscience* looked at exercise for those who already have AD as a method of slowing the decline in activities of daily living (ADL). The study found that ADL decline was slower among individuals who engaged in an hour of aerobic exercise training twice a week compared to those in the non-active group. However, there was no effect on behav-

ioral symptoms, depression or nutritional scores.

Aerobic exercise programs aimed at improving cardiovascular fitness seem to have moderate effects on cognitive function among healthy older persons. But data from current randomized control trials are insufficient to show that these improvements are due exclusively to improved cardiovascular fitness. Still, incorporating cardiovascular exercise in all stages of life is important. Here are a few notable ways exercise could affect AD outcomes.

- **Improved blood flow:** Regular cardiovascular exercise facilitates blood circulation to the brain. Better blood flow delivers adequate oxygen and nutrients to the brain, which is important for maintaining cognitive function.
- **Risk factor reduction:** Cardio helps manage several risk factors associated with

AD, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. By lowering these risk factors, individuals may reduce their likelihood of developing forms of dementia.

- **Reduced inflammation and oxidative stress:** Physical activity can reduce inflammation and oxidative stress in the body, each of which are linked to neurodegenerative diseases. The American Brain Foundation says high levels of inflammation of the brain may accelerate brain aging and contribute to the progression of neurodegenerative diseases like AD, Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia.
- **Improved sleep:** Regular exercise can help promote more regular sleep patterns, which improves mood and cognitive health. Although cardiovascular exercise cannot prevent dementia, it may help delay its onset.

What to know about exercise and dementia risk



Three seconds go by in a flash, but that's enough time for another person to join the masses already diagnosed with dementia. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, every three seconds someone in the world develops dementia, a condition that more than 55 million people were living with in 2020.

The World Health Organization notes that various diseases and injuries that affect the brain can contribute to dementia. As menacing a threat as dementia presents, individuals are not helpless against it. In fact, exercise, which can help lower risk for heart disease, stroke and various other conditions, can be a valuable ally against dementia as well.

What is the link between exercise and dementia?

Dementia remains something of a mystery, but the Alzheimer's Society notes that evidence is now strong enough to support the assertion that lack of physical exercise increases a person's risk of developing dementia. The Alzheimer's Society also notes that researchers have discovered

improvements in thinking and memory and reduced rates of dementia among middle-aged and older adults who exercised compared to those that did not.

Is cardio the most effective exercise at lowering dementia risk?

Speaking with CNBC, Silky Singh Pahlajani, a clinical professor of behavioral neurology and neuropsychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine, noted that cardiovascular exercise, often referred to as cardio, can provide the biggest benefit for brain health of any form of exercise. Cardiovascular exercise can increase heart rate, which helps deliver oxygen cells to the brain. The National Institutes of Health notes that oxygen shortages prevent the brain from working as well as it should, and a 2023 study published in the journal *Redox Biology* found that oxygen abnormality plays a crucial role in the occurrence and progression of Alzheimer's disease.

How should aging adults approach exercise if they have been largely sedentary?

Middle-aged and older adults who have

not been physically active throughout their adult life but want to begin incorporating exercise into their daily routines are urged to speak with their physicians prior to beginning a fitness regimen. Preexisting conditions may make it difficult, if not impossible, to engage in certain forms of exercise. A personal physician can consider a patient's unique medical history and then recommend certain exercises that won't put him or her in jeopardy of suffering an injury or illness. A gradual approach to exercising is typically best for individuals who have lived a sedentary lifestyle. Starting off slowly with a short walk or light physical activity like gardening can help the body acclimate to physical activity at a safe pace. As adults bodies' become more accustomed to exercise, men and women can then gradually increase the intensity of their workouts, switching from walking to jogging on a treadmill when possible.

There is no cure for dementia, but adults are not helpless against the various forms of the condition. Researchers have discovered that preventive measures like routine exercise can be an effective way to reduce dementia risk.

Lesser known risk factors for diabetes



The International Diabetes Federation reports that roughly 10.5 percent of the adult population across the globe has diabetes. Given that prevalence, it stands to reason that millions more individuals are aware of the risk factors for the disease, particularly type 2 diabetes. The IDF notes more than 90 percent of people diagnosed with diabetes have type 2 diabetes, which can be attributable to lifestyle factors like poor diet, lack of physical activity and overweight or obesity.

The most common risk factors for diabetes are widely known, but lesser known variables also can increase the chances a person is diagnosed with the disease.

- **High uric acid levels:** The buildup or uric acid in the blood is a hallmark of a type of arthritis known as gout. Though gout and diabetes

are different, WebMD notes that a person's risk for one condition increases when they have the other. The medical term for high uric acid levels is hyperuricemia, which the Cleveland Clinic reports is a very common condition that affects roughly one in five people. Consuming foods and beverages that are high in purines can cause uric acid levels to increase over time. Such foods and beverages include red meat, organ meats like liver, seafood (particularly salmon, shrimp, lobster, and sardines), and alcohol (especially beer and even included nonalcoholic beer).

- **Housing insecurity:** A 2022 study published in the journal BMC Health Services Research found that 38 percent of adults with diabetes reported housing insecurity. Authors of the study defined

housing insecurity as how often respondents reported being worried or stressed about having enough money to pay rent or a mortgage. The study noted that individuals who experience housing insecurity were less likely to visit a physician and have an A1C test, which the National Institutes of Health note offers information about blood glucose levels and can be used to diagnose type 2 diabetes and prediabetes. Individuals with housing insecurity were also less likely to have an eye exam. The American Diabetes Association notes eye exams are important in relation to diabetes because the disease is the leading cause of vision loss in people between the ages of 18 and 64.

- **Mental health:** A research team led by Professor Inga

Prokopenko of the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom found that depression increases a person's risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The 2023 study traced the link to shared genes that play a role in insulin production and in inflammation in various areas of the body, including the brain. Researchers noted the link between depression and diabetes is indirect, but concluded that both depression and type 2 diabetes can be contributing factors to the development of each condition.

Physical activity levels and diet are widely recognized risk factors for diabetes. But individuals should know that additional variables also have been linked to an elevated risk for a disease that affects a considerable percentage of the adult population across the globe.

The link between sleep and healthy aging

A good night's rest can be just what the body needs to feel revitalized and ready to tackle a new day. Indeed, rest is important for people of all ages, including seniors.

The National Council on Aging notes the brain needs sleep to regulate the body, restore energy and repair damage. Recognition of that is vital for aging men and women, some of whom may be more vulnerable to sleeping problems than they realize. In addition to being more vulnerable to age-related health problems that can interrupt their sleep, thus affecting its quality, aging men and women may find their sleep routines change over time. For example, a 2019 study published in the journal BMC Geriatrics found that active elderly people reported it took them longer to fall asleep as they got older.

The NCOA says it's a misconception that older adults need more sleep than younger people, noting adults of all ages require the same amount of nightly rest. However, things may change for seniors in regard to how much time they need to spend in bed. The NCOA notes this

is because adults may be more likely to experience poor sleep quality and continuity. When that occurs, adults still need the recommended minimum of seven hours of nightly sleep, but they may need to spend more time in bed since it's taking them longer to fall asleep.

It's important that aging adults recognize that they can spend too much time sleeping as well. A 2019 study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society found that too much sleep is linked to the same health problems as too little sleep, issues that include an elevated risk for heart disease and falls.

Sleep issues affecting older adults also may be a byproduct of various contributing factors. The NCOA notes that frequent contributors to sleep concerns include:

- Pain that affects the back, neck, or joints
- Mental health issues, including anxiety and depression
- Neurodegenerative disorders that are more frequent among aging populations, such as dementia and Alzheimer's

- Sleep apnea or disordered breathing at night
- Restless leg syndrome, a condition that tends to worsen with age and is characterized by an urge to move limbs often
- Nocturia, a condition marked by a need to urinate at night
- Stimulating medications or medication interactions
- Decreased exposure to sunlight
- Sedentary lifestyle

Aging men and women who are experiencing difficulty sleeping should know that such issues are treatable and not something that needs to be accepted as a normal part of growing older. For example, individuals whose sleep is routinely interrupted by a need to urinate can avoid certain beverages, including alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

Sleep and healthy aging go hand in hand. Aging adults experiencing difficulty sleeping can consult their physicians and visit ncoa.org to learn more about overcoming sleep-related issues.

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