

A smiling senior woman with short grey hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and dark leggings, is sitting on a large blue exercise ball. She is leaning forward with her right arm raised and bent, hand near her head. In the background, a smiling senior man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a tan t-shirt and dark shorts, is also sitting on the same blue ball, leaning back with his right arm raised. They are in a bright, modern indoor space with large windows in the background showing a cityscape.

The Complete Guide to — — SENIOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A Senior Lifestyle Resource

The Complete Guide to Senior Health and Wellness

Like anyone, seniors want to live their best possible lives, regardless of age. That “best life” differs by person, of course; it might include a 70-year-old baby boomer who still wants to climb mountains, an 80-year-old veteran who’s writing his first novel, or a 90-year-old great-grandmother who simply wants to comfortably age in the home she’s had for decades.

Different as they may be, all of those seniors benefit from the same advice: Your health in your senior years largely depends on what you do. Your mobility, your immune system, your mental acuity, and wellness can all benefit from better nutrition, appropriate exercise, and social connection with family and friends. Let’s look at some of the most important aspects of senior health and wellness.

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Nutrition for seniors

We know vegetables are better for us than potato chips, lean protein is better than fried food, and sweets and alcohol are best in moderation. Yet, we're still a nation of people struggling with conditions like obesity, heart disease, and diabetes – all of which have a significant dietary component.

Why is this? Because unhealthy food is plentiful, convenient, and often more tempting than healthy food. This chapter will provide you with nutritional considerations and healthy eating tips to help your diet.



Why Do Seniors Have Different Nutritional Needs?

As a senior, your nutritional needs truly are different from those of other age groups. Here are some reasons why:



- **Slower metabolic rate:** As your metabolism slows down, and perhaps you become less active, you don't need as many calories. As your body's food digesting and processing changes, you may notice fluctuations in weight and energy levels.



- **Body changes:** Aging brings distinct changes to your biology and slight differences in organ function (kidneys, heart, etc.) can affect the way hormones associated with nutrition and digestion work.



- **Dental changes:** Dental issues like sensitive teeth or dentures that don't fit well can lead you to avoid eating some foods, especially those that require a strong bite or chewing, such as apples.

- **Chronic digestive issues:** If you have digestive issues such as excess gas, diarrhea, or other digestive discomforts, you may have to avoid foods that contribute to that condition, even if they're good for you.



- **Chronic medical conditions:** Some conditions necessitate a restricted diet – such as low-sodium, low-carbohydrate, or soft diets – which in turn can affect the quality of your nutrition intake.



- **Living alone:** If you live alone, you just may not be motivated to shop, prepare, or regularly eat good food. It's easy to fall into a habit of grabbing what's there – from yogurt to cookies.

Nutrients seniors need

The aging body simply needs more of certain nutrients. [The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#) – the world’s largest organization of food and nutrition professionals – recommends seniors increase consumption of the following:

- Calcium and Vitamin D to enhance bone health
- Vitamin B12 to boost red blood cell development and function
- Potassium to reduce the risk of high blood pressure
- Fiber to lower risk of heart disease, help prevent type 2 diabetes, and maintain regular bowel health

It’s common for seniors to develop deficiencies in these areas. Proper nutrition and supplements can help reverse or prevent this.

Healthy Eating Tips

Don’t feel like you have to accomplish everything at once. It’s better to change a few small things at a time and increase effort as you go, rather than letting yourself get overwhelmed by a radical diet change.



Monitor your calorie intake

Let’s start with what you need to provide your body with enough energy on a daily basis. The dietary guidelines for the United States has a [calorie chart](#) divided by gender, age, and amount of activity (“sedentary,” “moderately active,” or “active”). The table linked above provides a breakdown of how many calories you need, depending on those factors.

For example, a 65-year-old sedentary male needs 2,000 calories a day; a 65-year-old sedentary woman needs 1,600 a day. If those two people are moderately active, the counts increase to 2,400 and 1,800, respectively; if they are active, the counts increase to 2,800 and 1,800, respectively.



Does that mean you should find a calorie counter and obsess over your totals each day? No. But it's good to have a starting place and know how many calories foods contain. Do a few [calorie searches](#) for foods you eat most often, and see how you stack up against your daily recommended intake. If you want to get more involved, try one of these five recommended calorie-counting apps, according to [Healthline](#):

- [MyFitnessPal](#)
- [Lose It!](#)
- [FatSecret](#)
- [Cronometer](#)
- [SparkPeople](#)



Maintain a balanced diet

Once you've checked out calories, work on making yourself more aware of the nutrients in the foods you eat. Tufts University has created a [MyPlate for Older Adults](#) that's an interactive plate divided into appropriately sized food groups. Fruits make up 25 percent of the plate; vegetables, another 25 percent; whole grains, another 25 percent; and the final 25 percent is made up of lean protein and dairy.

In addition, the [National Institute on Aging](#) offers sample menus for 2,000-calorie diets for seniors. Their online page includes links to recipes, a shopping list, and two weeks' worth of possible menus.

Healthy and unhealthy foods

In short, foods you should increase in your diet include:

-  **Fruit** (if you buy canned fruit or bottled juice, be sure that it's not sugar-sweetened),
-  **Vegetables**
-  **Whole-grain breads and pastas**
-  **Lean poultry, fish, and shellfish**
-  **Nuts, beans, and legumes**
-  **Olive oil**
(or another monounsaturated oil to cook with)
-  **Low-fat dairy**

Foods you should limit in your diet include:

-  **Fried foods**
-  **Trans and saturated fats**
-  **Red meat**
-  **High-sugar foods**
-  **Refined bread and pasta products**
-  **Full-fat dairy**

Your emphasis should be to cut out processed foods as much as possible; they tend to contain high amounts of salt and sugar (which masquerades under many names, including high-fructose corn syrup, dextrose, glucose, sucrose, fructose, and more).

Nutrition for Dietary Restrictions

Some of the most common illnesses and chronic conditions among seniors are:

- **Adult-onset diabetes (type 2)**
- **Arthritis**
- **Heart disease**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Kidney and bladder problems**
- **Dementia and Alzheimer's**
- **Lung disease**
- **Depression and/or anxiety**



If you have one of these conditions, your doctor will often recommend a restricted diet with the objective of improving the condition or at the very least, keeping it stable. Sometimes, perhaps after a stroke, a blended diet is recommended. It's common for restricted diets to limit:

- **Sodium (salt)**
- **Fats**
- **Dairy**
- **Wheat (and/or gluten)**
- **Simple carbohydrates (which include sugar and other food products that raise your blood sugar levels)**
- **Overall calories**

Common dietary restrictions

Here are some suggestions for a few of the most common restricted diets:

- **Diabetes:** The best **diet for diabetics** includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and low-fat dairy products. Your protein sources should include heart-healthy fish (those rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, tuna, or sardines), and “good” fats – nuts, avocados, and vegetable-based oils.
- **Hypertension (high blood pressure):** The **DASH eating plan** – short for Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension – suggests limiting red meat, sodium, and sweets. Another important factor in controlling high blood pressure is your weight. Your doctor will probably recommend limiting your sodium. This may be hard at first, but try experimenting with other spices such as basil, oregano, garlic powder, pepper, thyme, or chili powder.
- **Heart disease:** The **American Heart Association** recommends that you know your target weight and calorie count and that aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (or 75 minutes of vigorous activity) per week. Their best-practices diet? It also recommends a diet that includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, poultry (without skin) and fish, nuts and legumes, and healthy oils (vegetable-based and monounsaturated). You also need to limit saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.
- **Arthritis:** There's no official “arthritis diet,” but diets that reduce inflammation can help. The **Arthritis Foundation** encourages those with arthritis to try the Mediterranean diet. Some of the basics include: fish high in omega-3 fatty acids at least twice a week; one and a half ounces of nuts daily; nine or more servings of fruits and/or vegetables daily; two to three tablespoons of olive oil a day; about a cup of beans at least twice a week; and six ounces of whole grains a day. In addition, some experts believe nightshade vegetables – tomatoes, eggplant, red bell peppers, and potatoes – help relieve arthritis pain.

The Importance of a Healthy Nutrition Routine

Every person who's fortunate enough to live a long life will have a few health concerns, but if you knew you could limit those going forward, wouldn't it be worth it? That's why a nutrition routine is important – it can not only ease some of the medical issues you have now, but it can also improve your health in the years ahead.

Here are some tips to help you create and stick to a nutrition routine that supports your health goals:

- Create a master shopping list
- Shop for a week at a time
- Shop on the same day every week, and pick a day that's easiest for you
- Wash and prep your groceries before putting them away.
- Consider buying a vegetable steamer to make veggie cooking more convenient
- Exercise (more on this in the next section!)



“Healthy aging is a hot topic,” writes the [Mayo Clinic](#). “Whether you’re concerned about weight gain, sex drive or chronic diseases, the key to healthy aging is a healthy lifestyle. Eating a variety of nutritious foods, practicing portion control and including physical activity in your daily routine can go a long way toward promoting healthy aging.”



Exercise and Fitness in Your Golden Years

We know exercise and fitness are important, but those things seem much easier when we're young. Once you enter your golden years, you may become increasingly conscious of daily aches and pains – and very aware of the feeling that you used to do so much more.

If this is the case for you, it's understandable. It's hard to feel like you used to have more strength, stamina, or physical ability. But here's a positive: Exercise is natural medicine.

Why Is Exercise Important for Seniors?

Everyone, no matter the age, can benefit from exercise. But it can be especially important for seniors.

Starting in their 40s, a person can lose three to five percent of his or her muscle mass every decade. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the [United States Surgeon General](#) note that by age 65, walking and gardening are the most common physical activities. By age 75, nearly a third of men and nearly half of women engage in no physical activity at all. Worldwide, around [3.2 million deaths](#) annually can be attributed in some way to inactivity.

Health benefits

Physical activity doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial, and you don't have to do a ton of it. Remember, the guidelines are for 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week or 75 minutes of vigorous activity a week. Experts say that even a moderate amount of daily activity can have significant health benefits, helping to:

-  **Maintain strong bones, muscles, and joints**
-  **Improve stamina and general level of energy**
-  **Reduce arthritis-related swelling and pain**
-  **Improve circulation and reduce blood pressure**
-  **Improve mobility and balance, reducing the risk of falls**
-  **Reduce the risk of death from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and colon cancer**



Best Exercises for Seniors

Exercising as a senior means you may need to adapt your activities. Perhaps you loved high-impact aerobics or running in the past; now, those might need to change to similar low-impact activities.

Walking

The best thing about walking? It's right outside your front door. You can walk for five minutes or for an hour, depending on your stamina and mobility. And in the winter, malls typically allow the public to walk before opening hours.



Yoga

If you've never tried yoga, this is the perfect time. It's easy to start, you can work at your own pace and it doesn't require special equipment (though you may want to buy an inexpensive yoga mat; they cost about \$10-\$12). Yoga can help you become more flexible, strengthen muscles and bones, enhance your mobility and balance, and relieve stress or anxiety. Additionally, [chair yoga](#) offers an even lower-impact workout for seniors.



Senior-specific classes

Silver Sneakers, a national organization dedicated to senior fitness, offers fitness classes designed for seniors and led by instructors who understand their needs. If Silver Sneakers isn't available to you, you might check around your local gyms and fitness centers for classes targeted to seniors – such as pool aerobics or chair exercise classes. Many insurance plans (and Medicare plans) cover all or part of gym and community center costs for people 65 and older.

Weight training

In some ways, weight training doesn't seem like a senior activity, does it? But weight training provides resistance, improves your strength, and helps keep your bones strong. As with other kinds of exercise programs, you may need some direction at first and will want to start small. The CDC, in conjunction with Tufts University, has an [online booklet](#), "Growing Stronger: Strength Training for Older Adults," with printable pages including exercises for getting started (from warm-up to cool-down) and a 12-week workbook/log sheet to track your progress.

Swimming

If you have access to a swimming pool, you have access to one of the best exercises for seniors. There's no impact, like there can be in other aerobics or fitness classes. Plus, the water provides its own resistance (i.e. weight training without the weights!), and you reap the same benefits as other exercises in terms of heart health, flexibility, muscle and bone health, and stress relief.

How to Choose the Best Fitness Program for You

What factors should you consider when choosing a fitness program? Here are some important considerations:

- Your current level of activity and fitness
- Any medical or health conditions you have
- The kinds of exercise that appeal to you; a person who loves the outdoors may not enjoy using a treadmill at the gym
- Whether you have any schedule limitations
- Whether you have physical limitations – which may mean you need a personal trainer or instructor to help you devise workarounds



Effective Fitness Programming

Are you a member of a senior living community, such as assisted living or long-term care? Many of these facilities design programs for senior fitness, which benefit residents' mental health and enhanced social connections.



Activities of Daily Living

It's always hard to know for sure when living independently has become too much for a senior. Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) are basic tasks we should be able to do without help. Judging how a senior handles these activities can give you an objective way to gauge how capable you or a loved one may be.



What Are Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)?

The basic ADLs, and signs that they may be declining, include:



Mobility

Sign of decline: Falls, or needing to excessively lean on furniture and walls to get around



Eating

Sign of decline: Spills show up on clothing; food left out or eaten past expiration date



Dressing and grooming

Sign of decline: Inappropriate clothing for the season or occasion; personal care seems to be less and less regular



Personal care

Sign of decline: Accidents, unawareness, and trouble cleaning oneself



Transferring

Sign of decline: Inability to move from place to place, such as from a chair to a bed or sitting to standing, without help

CDC [statistics](#) note that, as you'd expect, limitations in individuals' abilities to accomplish the ADLs are greater the older they get. About two percent of those between the ages of 45-64 struggle with ADLs; that increases to about four percent between the ages of 65-74, and about 11 percent in those over 75.



Activities of Daily Living Checklist

If you're trying to determine how you or a loved one is managing ADLs and IADLs, mark the appropriate columns on the following checklist. This will give you a snapshot of what you're doing well and what you could use help with.

ACTIVITY	DOES WELL	SOMETIMES STRUGGLES	NEEDS HELP
Basic ADLs			
Mobility			
Eating			
Dressing			
Personal care			
Transferring/ strength			
Instrumental ADLs			
Transportation			
Errands			
Money management			
Meal preparation			
Home maintenance			
Housekeeping			
Communication skills			
Medication Management			

What are instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)?

There's a higher category of ADLs called Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs). These activities require more thought, planning, and organization than the basic ADLs. IADLs include:

- **Transportation and errands**
Sign of decline: Getting lost, having accidents, not accomplishing tasks
- **Money management**
Sign of decline: Spills show up on clothing; food left out or eaten past expiration date
- **Meal preparation**
Sign of decline: Inappropriate clothing for the season or occasion; personal care seems to be less and less regular
- **Home maintenance and housekeeping**
Sign of decline: Accidents, unawareness, and trouble cleaning oneself
- **Communication skills**
Sign of decline: Inability to move from place to place, such as from a chair to a bed or sitting to standing, without help
- **Managing medications**
Sign of decline: Skipping doses, taking incorrect amounts, forgetting to renew or pick up medication from the pharmacy



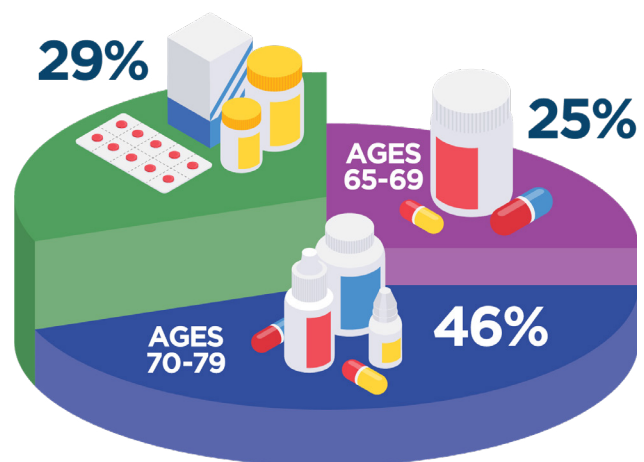
Medication Management

Seniors tend to have more medical conditions than any other age group, and therefore take more prescription medicines. In fact, a [20-year study](#) of nearly 14,000 people estimated that 25 percent of those between the ages of 65-69 take at least five prescription drugs. Between ages 70-79, that number increases to 46 percent.

As you take more prescription medications, it becomes more challenging to manage. Medication management is an area where small errors can have disastrous effects. Problems can occur from overdosing, underdosing, not taking medicines at the right time, or forgetting to take them altogether.

However, not all issues are caused by

improperly taking medications. Sometimes, certain drugs cause disproportionate effects in seniors. Other times, a combination of medicines – often prescribed by different doctors treating different conditions – can cause adverse side effects. Medication management hinges on developing systems to help you consistently take your medications each day.



**20 YEAR STUDY
14K PEOPLE**

How to Safely Manage Multiple Medications

Here are some tips on safely managing multiple prescription medicines, from [Johns Hopkins](#):

- Carry a list of your prescription medicines with you, so that you can share it with each doctor you visit. Give a copy of the list to a loved one in case of emergency. Update it when things change.
- Use one pharmacy, especially if you have multiple doctors. Not only will it simplify your life, it allows the pharmacist to check medications for negative interactions.
- Find a pill box or dispenser that works for you. These come in multiple sizes to accommodate varying dosage needs. If you or a loved one often forgets to take your medications, you can buy pill dispensers that flash a light or sound an alarm when it's time to take the next dose.
- Try a pill-delivery service. PillPack, for instance, is an online pharmacy that sorts your medicines by date and time, sealing each dose inside a small plastic packet. This way, you simply pull out the next packet and take the pills at the time printed on the label.
- Get a “brown-bag” review at your annual physical. Bringing all your prescriptions and supplements to your doctor is a great way to get their review and ask any questions you may have about your medications.



Tips for Remembering to Take Your Medication

If you find yourself forgetting to take your medication at the proper times, there are things you can do to help. In addition to getting a pill organizer that has an alarm, you can also use a smartphone or watch to set multiple alarm reminders throughout the day. Or, you can sprinkle reminders throughout your home using sticky notes. For instance, you can place one next to your coffee maker as a reminder to take morning medicines and another by your nightstand as a reminder to take evening medicines.





Mental Health and Wellness

Mental health is defined as “psychological and emotional well-being,” and it’s particularly important for seniors. Many seniors grew up in an era where there was a stigma attached to mental illness of any kind, even depression or anxiety. Over the past decades, society has become much more open to mental health discussions and accepting of wellness practices. Prioritizing your mental health is just as important as prioritizing your physical well being.

Why is Mental Health and Wellness Important?

Many seniors struggle with mental health and wellness. According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), 15 percent of adults aged 60 and over have at least one mental disorder. The [National Council on Aging](#) (NCOA) uses an even higher estimate: 25 percent of older adults experience mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and dementia. What’s even more problematic is that two-thirds – 66 percent – don’t get the treatment they need.

Common Mental Health Issues Seniors Face

The reasons senior citizens experience more mental health issues are complex. They may have suffered the loss of spouses or other family members, be physically compromised, or feel pessimistic about the future. Regardless, learning about common mental health issues can help you improve your mental wellness or perhaps take the first step toward seeking help from a doctor or mental health professional. The most common mental health conditions seniors face are anxiety, depression, and cognitive impairment.



Anxiety

Anxiety is prevalent among seniors for all the previously stated reasons: loss, loneliness, uncertainty about the future, and physical deterioration. If you've experienced anxiety and panic attacks – which have physical symptoms like chest pain, a racing heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, and fear – it's possible you didn't understand why. Anxiety is rooted in fear, but it's not always logical. The onset of anxiety also can be traced to an event, such as a fall or loss of a loved one. If you're experiencing anxiety, know that you're not alone and it's okay. In some cases, therapy and/ or medication can help.

Support resources:

If you think you or a loved one may be struggling with anxiety, here are some resources that can help:

- **Anxiety Symptoms in Older Adults** - [Anxiety and Depression Association of America \(ADAA\)](#)
- **Anxiety in Older Adults** - [Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#)
- **Anxiety and Depression Support Group** - [Health Unlocked](#)



Depression

The roots of depression can be the same as anxiety: isolation, loss, uncertainty, and physical struggles. However, it's important to understand that depression is a condition, just as diabetes and hearing loss are conditions. This means you can't simply "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," and that's okay.

Depression dampens your enjoyment of and participation in things that used to make you happy. It can come up situationally, such as after the loss of a loved one, but it may become chronic and stay with you for a long period of time.

Support resources:

If you think you or a loved one might be experiencing depression, here are some resources that can help:

- **Depression in Older Adults: Signs, Symptoms, Treatment** - [HelpGuide](#)
- **Older Adults and Depression** - [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)
- **Find a Therapist** - [Psychology Today](#)



Dementia

Dementia is a condition in which a decline in mental ability – memory, organization, reasoning – interferes with a person’s ability to independently live their daily life. Alzheimer’s is the most common kind of dementia, but not every dementia case is Alzheimer’s. Dementia symptoms include constant short-term memory problems such as misplacing things like a purse or keys (or putting them in odd places), mismanaging money, forgetting to pay bills, struggling to plan and prepare meals,

forgetting errands or appointments, or getting disoriented in places that used to be familiar. Dementia can not only be difficult for the person suffering from it but also for that person’s caregivers, who are constantly faced with decisions about what the person can and cannot do on their own.



Support resources:

If you think you or a loved one has dementia, start by talking with your doctor. You can also explore some of the Alzheimer’s Association support resources here:

- [Alzheimer’s & Dementia page](#)
- [Help & Support page](#)
- [Community Resource Finder](#)

Prioritizing Your Mental Health and Wellness

No one is immune to mental health struggles – they can happen to anyone at any time of life. Here are some things that can help your mental health and wellness on a daily basis:



Exercise: Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, affecting the parts of the brain that control mood, motivation, fear, and memory formation. Aerobic exercise, even regular walking, has proved to **reduce anxiety, depression, and stress.**



Nutrition: Harvard Medical School notes that your brain depends on food as its fuel. If you put poor fuel in, you'll get inadequate performance. Your body needs vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants; it doesn't need excess sugar. In fact, multiple studies have shown that refined sugar actually makes symptoms of depression worse.



Meditation: Also according to Harvard Medical School, meditation has been shown to help you better sleep, cope with stress, handle depression and anxiety, and even improve pain and some cognitive ability. If you're wondering how to start a meditation practice, check out Mindful's "**How to Meditate**" guide.



Moderation: If you feel you've become even somewhat dependent on using alcohol or drugs to alleviate stress or emotional needs, it may be the first sign of a problem. Drugs and alcohol affect your brain, memory, mood, and stress levels. Try taking a break from mind-altering substances to see if your mood improves.



The importance of social and emotional support

Another important factor in mental health is maintaining strong connections with others. Research proves that having a social support system – friends, family, coworkers, people in your faith – is a major player in the wellness game. Having social and emotional support helps you fight against feelings of isolation and despair.



Social programming

For some seniors, community living is a huge contributor to their social support network, providing opportunity for interaction, camaraderie, and scheduled activities that they wouldn't have living at home. Some activities offered in senior living communities include happy hours, fitness classes, music programs, pet therapy sessions, chauffeured trips to the movie theater, and group meetings of people who share the same hobbies. Social programming can help you fight feelings of isolation and loneliness.



Chronic Diseases and Conditions

When a person is fortunate enough to live a long life, it's typical that they'll develop one or more chronic conditions – 80 percent of people 65 and over have at least one. Learning about these conditions and how to manage them can make a big difference in a senior's life.



Common Chronic Diseases

High blood pressure

The [NCOA](#) says that 58 percent of people over age 65 have high blood pressure (hypertension), and many don't understand what it is. Simply put, it's when the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels is too high, making your heart and blood vessels work harder than they should. Hypertension can be a [contributing factor](#) in stroke, vision loss, heart failure/heart attacks, kidney disease/failure, and sexual dysfunction. It's treated with prescription medication, a heart-healthy diet, regular exercise, and losing weight if need be.



Heart disease

Heart disease is the most frequent condition and number one cause of death in older adults, according to the [American College of Cardiology](#). After age 75, high blood pressure is the most frequent condition. Heart disease occurs when excess plaque – a substance that consists of cholesterol, fatty molecules, and minerals – develops in a person's arteries and blood vessels over time. The plaque blocks arteries and blood vessels, slowing down the rate that nutrients and oxygen reach your heart. Risk factors include obesity, diabetes or insulin resistance, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, a family history of heart disease, inactivity, smoking, and poor diet. It's [treated](#) with medication, lifestyle changes, and, when necessary, surgery.



Diabetes

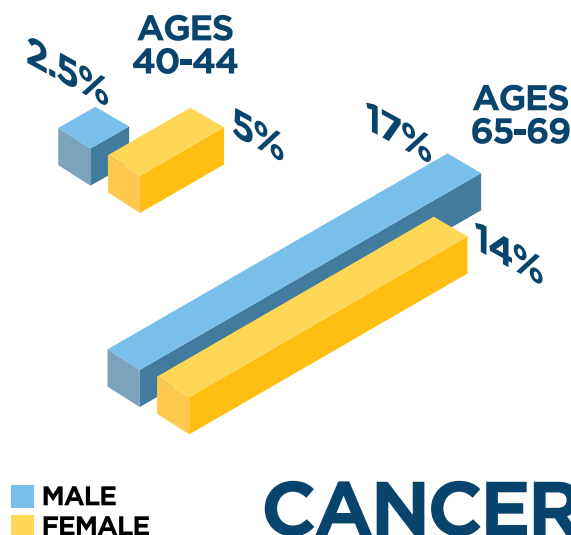
More than a quarter of all older adults deal with type 2 diabetes, which can contribute to vision and hearing problems, mobility issues, and cognitive impairment. Prolonged high blood sugar can cause damage to many areas of the body, and the Mayo Clinic says half of all diabetics

develop neuropathy – nerve damage – in their feet. Risk factors involve obesity, inactivity, high blood pressure, family history of diabetes, age, and ethnicity. It's [treated](#) with weight loss, medication, monitoring of blood sugar, exercise, and a healthy diet.

Cancer

The incidence of most cancers increases with age, according to the [American Cancer Society](#). At age 40, both men and women experience relatively low rates of cancer. But as their ages increase, so does risk.

Men between the ages of 40-44 make up only 2.5 percent of all cases; women in that age group make up about five percent of cases. By the age of 65-69, however, men make up 17 percent of all cases, and women make up about 14 percent of all cases.





Can Chronic Disease Be Prevented?

Chronic disease can't always be prevented. Some chronic conditions have genetic components; others are caused by habits, such as poor eating or inactivity, established earlier in our lives.

But, if you're a healthy individual and start taking steps to improve your health, you can help forestall and even prevent future medical conditions from developing. The CDC established that seven of the 10 leading causes of death are chronic diseases, all of which are affected by diet, fitness, tobacco use and alcohol use. Committing to your nutrition, level of activity, and overall health – both physical and mental – can potentially prevent chronic disease in your senior years.

Need Help with Nutrition and Wellness?

Do you find yourself struggling with your nutrition, activity level, and general wellness? Are you affected by depression, anxiety, or isolation? Consider whether you could benefit by connecting with a Senior Lifestyle community near you; they may be able to easily make all these good habits part of your daily life: <https://www.seniorlifestyle.com/find-community/>