

# Senior Living Guide



# Dehydration Danger

Especially for seniors, it is important to stay hydrated and protect yourself while out in warmer temperatures.

Dehydration occurs when you use or lose more fluid than you take in, and your body doesn't have enough water and other fluids to carry out its normal functions.

Physical exertion in warm temperatures will greatly enhance the chances of becoming dehydrated as you lose sweat and fail to consume enough water.

Mild cases of dehydration can be reversed by consuming fluids, but severe dehydration requires immediate medical treatment.

## WHY SENIORS ARE AT A HEIGHTENED RISK

According to the Journal of the National Medical Association, dehydration is the most common fluid and electrolyte problem among the elderly.

This is due to changes in total body water, thirst perception and lowered renal concentrating ability that comes with age.

Other reasons include:

- People suffering from five or more chronic disease are more apt to become dehydrated;

- Alzheimer's patients have a higher risk of dehydration; and

- Bedridden people and those who take at least five or more medications are also commonly deemed dehydrated.

It can be tempting to get outdoors after the long winter has passed and warm spring air is returning.



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## SUGGESTED WATER INTAKE

Aside from the natural aging process, thirst perception also tends to change due to certain medications necessary to support seniors. Don't be fooled by your lack of thirst. The National Institute on Aging has these great tips to ensure you're get-

ting enough fluid in your diet:

- Take sips of water, milk or juice between bites during meals;
- Drink an entire glass of water when you take a pill;
- Drink fat-free milk or other drinks that don't contain sugars;
- Alcoholic beverages should

be consumed in moderation: one drink per day for women and two for men; and

Always remember to drink plenty of water when heading outside in warm temperatures.

## SIGNS OF DEHYDRATION

When you become dehydrated, the signs usually aren't sub-

tle. Most of the time you will experience less-frequent urination, fatigue, dizziness or confusion. You might even notice dark-colored urine.

The Mayo Clinic recommends consulting your doctor if you have had diarrhea longer than 24 hours or are irritable or disorientated.



# Plant a Garden

**M**aintaining a small garden provides seniors with many health benefits.

And it's extremely rewarding to see those fruits and vegetables thrive. This spring, get outside and create a garden you can tend to and enjoy the results of the hard work you put in.

When planning your garden, it is a good idea to find out which plants will flourish in your area. Talk to other local green thumbs and even your department of agriculture to get a good idea.

It also is wise to consider the wildlife native to your location. You might consider hiring a local professional to install a fence to keep the critters away.

## GROWING FRESH FOODS

The plants you grow will offer awesome nutrition and benefits to your overall health. The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion suggests fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of several chronic diseases in seniors.

These are a few important vitamins you can find in your backyard when you grow the plants that contain them:

**Vitamin A:** Found in orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and pumpkin, Vitamin A also is present in tomatoes and pink grapefruit. This vitamin supports healthy



vision, neurological function and healthy skin.

**Vitamin C:** Found in citrus fruits like kiwi, strawberries and papaya, Vitamin C is necessary for the growth, development and repair of body tissues. It also is found in broccoli, peppers and tomatoes.

**Potassium:** This incredible vitamin that helps provide relief from stroke, blood pres-

sure and heart disorders is found in potatoes, bananas and oranges.

## VITAMIN D

You might be surprised that the act of planting a garden helps you absorb a vitamin that regulates calcium and maintains the phosphorus levels in the blood. Vitamin D supports two key components

in promoting healthy bones.

Human skin creates large amounts of this important vitamin when it is exposed to the sun. The experts at the Vitamin D Council state that you don't need to tan or burn your skin to receive the benefits. Rather, spending about half the time it takes for a burn to develop will be plenty of time to absorb nutrients.

## REMAINING ACTIVE

Preparing a garden is hard work and requires general maintenance for the duration of the season.

If you suffer from heart conditions or other chronic illnesses, be sure to check with your doctor before you participate in the physical exertion required to grow an incredible garden.



# Spring Cleaning Safety

Spring cleaning has become an American tradition. It is a time to declutter your home of the items you acquired throughout the year.

For seniors, there are unique factors to consider in keeping yourself safe during this activity.

A great way to clear your home of objects that go unused is having a community yard sale. It's a great excuse to strengthen the neighborhood bond, clear homes of unneeded objects and even make a couple bucks.

While you're gathering your items to feature in your sale, there are a few other areas to focus on to get the full experience of spring cleaning.

## DISCARD EXPIRED MEDICINE

Spring is a great time to go through your medicine cabinet and make sure you are storing all medication properly. Leaving behind prescribed pills that have already expired can pose serious dangers to everyone in the home.

If you notice a prescription passed its expiration date, it is important to dispose of it properly. The United States Food and Drug Administration recommends following the disposal instructions on the bottle or taking them to an autho-



rized collector.

Check your area for a National Prescription Drug Take-Back Event sponsored by the FDA.

If there are no medicine take-back programs or instructions, the organization suggests these steps as a safe disposal method:

- Mix medicines with a substance such as dirt, kitty litter or coffee grounds.
- Place the mixture in a con-

tainer such as a sealed plastic bag.

- Throw the container in your household trash.
- Be sure to cover all personal information on the prescription labels featured on bottles.

## EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE

When spring cleaning, don't forget to check that smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are performing properly.

The United States Fire Administration recommends periodic testing of smoke alarms and replacement every 10 years. The expiration date is prominently displayed on the back of the model.

The Administration also suggests that every bedroom should have a working smoke alarm, as half of fire deaths happen between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., when most people are asleep.

## CLEAR WALKWAYS OF TRIPPING HAZARDS

The National Institute on Aging reports that one in three people age 65 years or older falls each year. These falls can lead to broken bones, which can lead to serious problems, such as complete disability.

While spring cleaning this year, make sure your paths in hallways, sidewalks and even steps are clear of hazards that may cause a fall.

# Spring Exercise Ideas

**W**arm weather can be all the motivation you need to take control of your exercise regimen. Celebrate spring by committing to becoming more active and taking your physical health seriously.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, older adults — both males and females — can benefit from regular activity. The exercise does not necessarily have to be strenuous. Even a brisk walk can have great cardiovascular advantages.

## HOW DIFFERENT EXERCISES BENEFIT SENIORS

The United States National Library of Medicine suggests mixing in different workouts to target weak points that typically affect seniors. Consider these different exercises when building your workout plan.

- Endurance or aerobic activities increase your breathing and heart rate. Achieve this by taking brisk walks, jogging, dancing, swimming or biking on even paths.
- To strengthen your muscles, incorporate weightlifting



or training with a resistance band.

- Working on your flexibility helps heal sore muscles and maintains limberness throughout your body.
- Use a household item to perform exercises that boost your balance. The National Institute on Aging states one in every American adult 65 and older falls each year, sometimes leading to serious injuries.

## LITTLE CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

A suggestion to remember from the National Library of Medicine is to start slow if you have not been active for a while. Making these small changes during your everyday life can help prepare your body and heart rate for more extensive exercising.

When grocery shopping or attending church, attempt to find the furthest parking spot

from the door. This helps you push a little further than you're used to and build endurance.

If you are able, avoid elevators and take the stairs. Try not to overdo it. It's OK to walk a few floors then use assistance to arrive at your destination.

Buy an affordable pedometer and set a goal for the number of steps you want to walk each day. Tracking your ability and planning how to exceed it

is a fun way to monitor your progress.

## JOIN A WALKING GROUP

There are few better ways to commit to an exercise program than finding a group of like-minded people with whom to get in shape. Reach out to groups in your community or begin your own walking group. Spring is a wonderful time to get outdoors with friends and enjoy the weather.



# Spending Time with Grandkids

**D**uring the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it can be hard to schedule fun activities with precious grandchildren. Take advantage of spring break by creating memories. Mom and dad will thank you for the break.

The bond between grandchild and grandparent is not easily replicated. Grandparents typically enjoy adoring and spoiling their grandchildren. What child doesn't enjoy that?

Grandparents serve as role models, mentors, nurturers and best friends. Spend some time this spring by solidifying your role in your grandchildren's lives. The more people a child feels they can turn to in times of need, the better.

## VISIT A LIBRARY

For most seniors, reading was a great source of entertainment while growing up. There weren't tablets, computer screens or cell phones to waste free time.

Take your grandchild to a public library and show them the magic of getting lost in a good story and how it boosts imagination.

Don't forget to support your community's library all year.



These important institutes assist in helping children develop and learn. Consider making donations whether it is currency or giving them books you have read and feel would make a difference to a reader.

## OUTDOOR SCAVENGER HUNT

Spring weather brings out furry animals, beautiful flowers

and the return of leaves to bushes and trees. Before your grandchildren come to spend the day at your house, spend some time analyzing common things you see around the yard.

Compile these items and animals into a list to create your own scavenger hunt. You will enjoy a wholesome afternoon watching your grandchild-

dren scurry around trying to point out everything on the list.

For younger children, you can easily make this a learning game by introducing them to the different animals and species of flowers.

## OLD PHOTOS

Did you ever break out the photo albums in hopes of

embarrassing your children when dates or friends were brought to your home? Good news: You can still show off your offspring to the children who call them mom and dad.

When kids connect the fact that their parents were once children themselves, it can spark a connection and a common bond, resulting in a heightened respect.



# Maintaining Mental Health

**F**or a lot of seniors, aging brings up many serious health issues. These problems go far beyond physical ailments and illnesses. Mental health is a major concern for older Americans. This spring, be honest with yourself about your mental state of mind and seek help if you feel concerned.

According to the American Psychological Association, this grave issue is often underutilized because of inadequate funding for mental health services. It also can be hard for someone to accept that they require attention for a mental illness.

This can be dangerous, as the APA suggests seniors sometimes turn to self-medicating their symptoms with alcohol abuse. It is one of the eight leading causes of death in older populations.

## ROLE OF A GEROPSYCHOLOGIST

Mental illness experts offer assistance to seniors in coping with the psychological and emotional consequences of illness, loss of loved ones and even the need for assisted-living care. Their role in supporting seniors through their mental illness is imperative, as they can suggest the steps to take for treatment. These specialty psychologists even work with families to maintain the well-being and quality of life of their loved ones.

If you believe you require special treatment, don't hesitate to ask your general practitioner for a reference.

## COMMON CONDITIONS IN SENIORS

Mental illness is a vast epidemic facing seniors. It goes far beyond being depressed. The APA reports these other common conditions to be just as serious in the battle for mental health:

**Alzheimer's Disease:** Defined as the irreversible deterioration of intellectual ability, often accompanied by emotional disturbances, Alzheimer's



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affects 7 percent of Americans ages over 65 and 30 percent of those over 85.

**Dementia:** This serious illness impacts between 2.6 to 4.5 million Americans aged over 65. Symptoms usually include paranoia and anxiety. Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 to

80 percent of dementia cases, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

## WHEN TO SEEK HELP

At the instant you feel you are suffering from depression or another illness caused by mental illness, it's time to talk to your doctor. Don't take

symptoms lightly, as they can quickly spiral out of control, leaving seniors with a sense of confusion or sadness.

If your symptoms ever get severe enough to consider suicide, call 800-273-8255. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day.



# Volunteer Your Time

**W**hen you volunteer your time toward a cause you believe in, you're not only gaining high-impact physical and mental health benefits, you are also benefiting those in need. Find a cause you want to get behind and find out how you can help.

Volunteering is a great way to get outside your comfort zone of only engaging with people your own age. In fact, when you show your concern for charities that involve younger generations, you can do your part in bridging the gap. Demonstrating the skills and traits you learned over your lifetime can be inspiring and motivating to the youth of America.

## BENEFITS TO YOU

The National Institute on Aging states that participating in social leisure activities and meaningful, productive activities such as volunteering may lower the risk of health problems in seniors, including dementia. Remaining active is a great way to make new friends. When you commit your time to a worthy cause, you will find yourself becoming an active member of your community.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, those who volunteer experience greater life satisfaction, a sense of purpose and accomplishment and stress resilience.

Don't be surprised if you find yourself rushing around recruiting and raising funds for your cause. The physical demands of volunteering can offer benefits that enhance



your overall health.

## UNIQUE SENIOR CAUSES

Being a senior gives you the advantage of making a difference with certain organizations that are age specific. Take a look at some of these awesome causes looking for

seniors to make a difference!

**Foster Grandparents:** This incredible program helps organizations that offer tutoring, mentoring and caring for youth with special needs or disadvantages. By becoming a role model in these young lives, you can leave a positive

impression that might not have been present otherwise.

**Seniors Helping Seniors:** A service that is offered through phone calls and emails, you can provide education and support to other seniors, their families and even caregivers.

**Road Scholar Service**

**Learning:** Are you interested in traveling the world? If so, joining this organization gives seniors the opportunity of building villages and trails to locations around the entire planet. You also will be asked to teach skills and assist with preservation projects.