



A GUIDE TO SENIOR CARE



JP HEALTHCARE SOLUTIONS

Life expectancy is increasing for Americans. The fastest growing segment of the population age group are those 85 years and older. Staying healthy and feeling your best is important at any age.

As we grow older, we often experience an increasing number of major life changes; our children leave home, we change from having a career to making adjustments to retirement, experiencing loss of loved ones and changes in our physical health or well-being.

Despite advances in health care, as we age, we are likely to develop chronic or incurable diseases. We could require the need of assistance with the activities of daily living. Caregivers help to fulfill the physical, emotional, psychological and social needs of those in their care.

STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL HEALTHY AGING

There are many reasons why we tend to slow down and become more sedentary as we age. Some reasons may include health problems, concerns with aches and pains, or the fear of falling. However, as we grow older, having an active lifestyle becomes important to our health. Regardless of your age or physical condition, there are simple enjoyable ways to become more active.

Here are some suggestions and tips to consider to help you achieve your goals towards healthy aging.

BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

- Helps to maintain strength
- Improves flexibility
- Improves balance
- Improves sleep
- Increases energy level
- Improves the immune system
- Improves mind, mood and memory
- Helps diminish chronic pain
- Helps maintain independence
- Improves overall health and well-being



TIPS TO CONSIDER BEFORE EXERCISING

Check with your doctor. Before beginning any exercise program talk with your healthcare provider to determine which activities will be safe for you.

- **Find an activity you enjoy.** When you are doing something you enjoy, you tend to stick with it.
- **Start Slow.** Begin exercising a few minutes a day to avoid injury and gradually increase your time and intensity.
- **Walking.** Walking is a great way to stay fit and is not strenuous on your joints.
- **Exercise with a friend or family member.** This will help you both stay motivated and on track with your fitness goals.

CLASSIFICATIONS OF SENIOR EXERCISE

Strength Exercises

Are considered low impact and can be accomplished by using hand or ankle weights or resistance bands. Soup cans or bottles of water can also be used as weights.

Flexibility Exercises

As you age, you lose flexibility in your muscles and joints. Stretching is important to your health and maintaining independence. Dancing, water aerobics or senior stretching classes may be something to consider.

Balance Exercises

Reduces the risk of falling and can improve your mobility. Dancing, bouncing on an exercise ball, water aerobics or chair aerobics can help in improving your balance.

HEALTHY AGING TIPS FOR HEALTHY EATING

As we age, maintaining healthy eating habits are important to our overall quality of life. Poor nutrition leads to weight loss or weakened immune system, causing us seniors to be more susceptible to illness and infections. This can make it more difficult to recuperate from injury.

Similar to our activity levels, as we age, our metabolism tends to slow down. This can lead to a change in appetite because the body now needs fewer calories. However, when seniors skip a meal or make poor food choices, their nutrition and overall health can begin to suffer.

HERE ARE A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR MEAL PLANNING

- Plan meals and snacks ahead of time. This will help you stay on track and less likely to make unhealthy selections when hungry.
- Start your day with a healthy breakfast and a healthy lunch to keep your body going throughout the day.
- Don't skip meals.

The more active and social you are, the more you sharpen your brain. Keeping your brain active can help prevent cognitive decline and memory loss.



HEALTHY AGING TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR MIND SHARP

- Crossword puzzles stimulate problem-solving skills. They help recall memory and stimulate word association. Word based board games, such as scrabble also stimulate this skill.
- Reading a variety of books, newspapers and magazines are the best way to encourage your imagination and expand your ability to make decisions.
- Social Activities allows people to stay connected and stimulates the learning centers of our brain. This encourages feel-good hormones which allows the brain to develop long-term memories.
- Games that include counting, spelling, and decision making are best. They increase fun, relaxation and mental abilities.

STAYING SAFE AT HOME

Staying safe at home becomes increasingly important and more difficult to do as you age. Slips and falls are common due to loss of balance and health related issues.

STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL AGING: TIPS FOR HOME SAFELY KEEP EMERGENCY NUMBERS AT HAND

- 911 for emergencies
- Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222
- A family member or friend's number, in case of an emergency
- Your healthcare provider's office

HEALTHY AGING TIPS ON HOW TO PREVENT FALLS FROM OCCURRING

- Enroll in an exercise program to increase strength, flexibility and balance which is important when it comes to preventing falls.
- If you have fallen in the past, consider buying a special alarm you can wear as a necklace or bracelet, in case you fall again and can't reach the phone. This device will alert the police at the touch of a button.
- Many people have experience falls while trying to answer the phone. Carry a cell or cordless phone, or allow the answering machine pick up.
- If you use a cane or a walker, be sure to use it at all times, rather than holding onto walls or furniture.
- When you walk on smooth floors, wear non-slip footwear, like thin-soled shoes that fit well, or slippers with a rubber bottom.



HEALTHY AGING TIPS IN KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE

- Tape all area rugs to the floor to keep them from sliding.
- Remove scatter rugs to prevent slips and falls.
- Use banisters and rails going up and down the stairs, and never place scatter rugs at the top or bottom of a staircase.
- Place rubber mats in your bathtub to prevent slipping.
- Installed grab bars near the toilet and in the shower to make getting around easier.

HEALTHY AGING TIPS ON HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST ABUSE

- Never allow a stranger inside when you are at home alone.
- Don't allow yourself to be pressured into signing contracts, making purchases or making donations. Wait and discuss your plans with a friend or family member.

HEALTHY AGING TIPS ON AVOIDING PROBLEMS WITH MEDICATION

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, 55% of seniors are “non-compliant”. Meaning they're not taking their medication according to the doctor's orders. There are a number of reasons why seniors might not take their medicines as prescribed. Here are some causes of medication mistakes that are common, and what to do to address them.

- Vision problems. Seniors who have vision problems may misunderstand the small print on labels or may not be able to distinguish between pills. If this is the case, ask your pharmacist for large print labels.
- Problems swallowing tablets or capsules. Seniors who have difficulty swallowing a tablet or capsule may crush, chew, break or mix the capsule or tablet in food or drink. This can be problematic because some medicines will make the person sick, and may not work properly, or they are long acting medicines that will be released too fast.
- Ask the doctor or pharmacist if the medication is available in a liquid.
- Never crush pills, break or mix the tablet in fluid unless the doctor or pharmacist says it is OK to do this. The pharmacist can provide you with suggestions on how the medications prescribed for your loved one can be taken.
- As we age, hearing problems loss can impact the ability to hear instructions given by the doctor, if necessary, obtain the instructions in writing. If your loved one has a hearing aid utilize hearing device available, it may be beneficial for them to wear it during their appointment so they can be an active participant in the conversation regarding their care.



ADVICE FOR CAREGIVERS

Bringing a parent into your home can present many challenges. If you are considering this, your parents are likely showing signs of aging and may need extra care. You probably are thinking about the hurdles both of you might face as you transition to a different way of living.

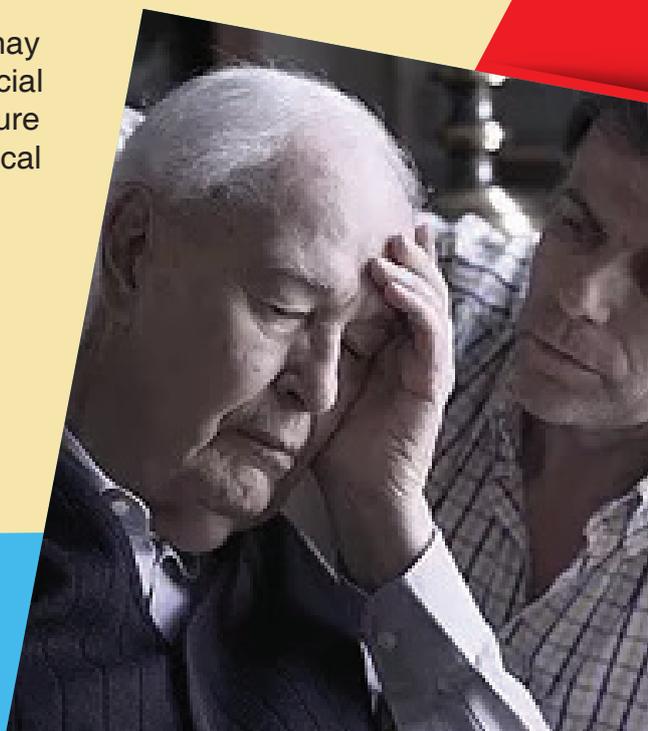
- Install any safety modifications specific to your parent's needs. This might include well-lit stairways and night-lights. Install grab railings, especially along the stairways and in the bathrooms. You may need to consider a shower chair, or install a ramp.
- When you are taking care of your parents in your home, you want them to feel as if they are at home. Incorporate your parent's belongings into your house, like books, furniture and photos to allow them to feel comfortable.
- Be sure to make them part of the conversation so that this change is not happening "to" them, but instead, is happening with them, something you are doing together.
- Just like you want your parents to bring their physical home with them, you want them to bring along the best parts of their social environment – their friends, favorite social activities, and doctors from their past living situation if feasible. Keep things unchanged and stable whenever possible to help relieve anxiety.
- Encourage them to invite friends over and take phone calls if friends can't travel.
- During meal time, if it is possible, make room at the table for your loved one, few people like to eat alone.
- Become involved in your parents' financial world. If it is not overwhelming, and the time is right, sit down and discuss finances. Can they pay their own bills? Are they at any risk of abuse or fraud? If your parents are showing signs of confusion, discuss with them the possibility of managing their finances with them, or for them.

FAMILY MEETING

To avoid crisis situations before they arise, hold family meetings with your spouse, children, siblings and parents regularly so that everyone can share their feelings and help decide the best way to proceed. One good topic of conversation is finances. Finances play an important role in long-term care, so an honest discussion about resources should be discussed.

If this meeting is likely to be problematic, introduce an outside facilitator such as a religious leader, social worker, or other resources can be helpful.

As your parent ages, their care needs may be altered, and may become more challenging. Consult with a knowledgeable social worker or other resources as you think about current and future needs. With time, changes in your parent's cognitive or medical condition may mean that changes in living arrangements will be in order.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS:

- Does your parent require help throughout the day? Who is available to provide this?
- Which activities of daily living (like bathing, food preparation, toileting) can your parents do on their own?
- Think about your own health, family and job demands, and physical abilities to help you decide if you're able to provide help for your parent.
- What services, like adult day services, in-home care or transportation are available to assist your parent?

MANAGING A HOUSE MOVE

Moving out of a house, and packing, is a chore for anybody, including an older adult who has many years' worth of possessions and memories. Moving can also be a serious emotional challenge as well. In most families the adult child will play an important role in this task.

Your parent will require time to adjust to their new role in your family and a new living environment. Patience, support and open communication will allow this transition to be as smooth as possible.

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS TO TAKE CARE OF THEMSELVES

Caregivers face different challenges, and there is no perfect care-giving situation. However, keep these tips in mind to help you along your way:

1. **Set Boundaries:** Begin your journey by realizing what you can and can't do. If you need to, write it down. If you find yourself overstepping these boundaries constantly, it could make life a little more stressful. Re-consider your role. Caring for a parent or loved one takes teamwork. If you have siblings ask them to share the responsibilities if possible. If you have the financial resources, consider hiring a home health aide.
2. Sometimes having a few hours a day or a few hours during the week of personal time can help to refresh, restore and renew your mind, body and spirit.
3. **Communicate with your Loved One:** Speak to your parents about your role as caregiver. You will be a team, and as teammates you will do a better job regularly communicating. These discussions are often hard, but important. Recognize that as your parent ages and becomes more delicate, your relationship might evolve in unexpected ways.
4. If it does, keep the conversation going, and if you have to, don't be afraid to say "I don't think I can do that."

Aging can be a challenging transition. With a little strategy and planning it doesn't have to be. Take care of yourself, no matter if you are a senior or a caregiver, and never lose hope. This can be a great opportunity to watch your relationships with loved ones evolve into something even more beautiful.

