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The Newsletter of **INDEPENDENT YOU** Senior Services

SPRING 2022 Vol. 7 Issue 2



Just Diagnosed

From Hearthstone Senior Living

Receiving a diagnosis of Alzheimer's is never easy — it's life changing. It is normal to experience a range of emotions. Acknowledging your feelings can be an empowering first step in coping with the challenges ahead.

Emotions you may have

You noticed symptoms. You made a doctor's appointment. You took tests. And you felt a roller coaster of emotions — fear, hope, despair, denial. Then you received a diagnosis. You may have felt numb, unsure of how to respond or where to turn.

You also may be grieving over the pres-

ent losses you are experiencing, or the expectation of future changes as the disease progresses. It can be helpful to identify and understand some of the emotions you may experience after receiving your diagnosis.

These emotions may include:

Anger. Your life is taking a different course than the one you and your family had planned. You cannot control the course of the disease.

Relief. The changes you were experiencing were cause for concern. A diagnosis validated these concerns by assigning a name to your symptoms.

Denial. The diagnosis seems impossible to believe. You may feel over-

whelmed by how your life will change as a result of Alzheimer's.

Depression. You may feel sad or hopeless about the way your life is changing.

Resentment. You may be asking yourself what you did to deserve your diagnosis or why this is happening to you and not someone else.

Fear. You may be fearful of the future and how your family will be affected.

Isolation. You may feel as if no one understands what you're going through or lose interest in maintaining relationships with others.

Sense of loss. It may be difficult to accept changes in your abilities.

If these feelings linger week after week, you may be dealing with depression or anxiety. Feeling depressed or anxious about your diagnosis is common, but both can be successfully treated.

Taking care of your emotional needs

Coming to terms with your diagnosis and the emotions you are feeling will help you accept your diagnosis, move forward, and discover new ways to live a positive and fulfilling life.

You are the only person who can change how you feel about your diagnosis. So it's important to find healthy ways to deal with your emotions. This can be difficult at the beginning. But once you make the commitment to take care of your emotional needs, you may find that you can rise to the challenge and face your diagnosis. This is a new phase of your life, and you can choose to experience it with sense of connection to your emotional health.

When working through your feelings, try a combination of approaches. The following tips may be helpful:

Write down your thoughts and feelings about your diagnosis in a journal. You may find your friends and family struggling with your diagnosis and their feelings. Learn more about how you can help family and friends.

Share your feelings with close family and friends. Surround yourself with a good support system that includes individuals who are also living in the early stage of the disease and understand what

you're going through. .

Join an early-stage support group.

It can provide you with a safe and supportive environment of peers. To find a support group in your area, check with your local Alzheimer's Association chapter. Talk to your doctor if you or others are concerned about your emotional well-being. Your doctor can determine the most appropriate treatment plan to address your concerns.

Seek help from a counselor or clergy member. He or she can help you to see things in a new way and help you understand more fully what you are feeling. If you are feeling misunderstood or stereotyped because of your diagnosis, learn what you can do to overcome stigma.

Stay engaged. Continue to do the activities you enjoy for as long as you are able. Take the time you need to feel sad, mourn and grieve.

No two people deal with their diagnosis in exactly the same way. There is no right approach. Some days may be more difficult than others, but don't be discouraged.

You are not alone

Whenever facing difficult times, having a good support network you can turn to for advice and encouragement may help you feel socially connected and give you a sense of belonging and purpose. Make sure your network includes other people who are living in the early stage of the disease. Connecting with others like you may help put your own experiences living with the disease in perspective, and provide you with the support and encouragement necessary to move beyond your diagnosis.

Questions for your doctor

After receiving your diagnosis, it's normal to leave your doctor's office unsure of what questions to ask. You just received life-changing news, and you need time to absorb this information and understand what it means for you and your family.

Your doctor is an important member of your care team. Use the opportunity to ask your doctor questions about your diagnosis, all the available options, and the benefits and risks of each choice you make.

You may be asking: “How do I know what to ask my doctor?”

Here are some example questions:

- What test(s) or tools did you use to determine my diagnosis?
- What are you measuring with the tests you performed?
- How will the disease progress?
- What treatment options are available?
- Which symptoms are being targeted by each medication?
- What clinical trials are available?
- Where can I find published information about clinical treatment studies?
- How familiar are you with Alzheimer’s disease? Will you be responsible for my care going forward?
- What care planning services do you provide?
- What support services and resources are available to help me live well with the disease, for as long as possible?



7 Best Exercises for Seniors

Exercise and nutrition are essential parts of a healthy lifestyle throughout one’s life, and as we age, our requirements are ever changing. A growing body of research illustrates how regular exercise is especially important for seniors, and how more seniors are opting for an active lifestyle instead of a sedentary one. This article will show you the benefits of exercise for older adults, the seven best forms of exercise for seniors.

Our biology changes as we get older, causing seniors to have different reasons for staying in shape than younger generations. Though physical fitness provides

benefits at any age, the health perks physically fit seniors enjoy are more notable. Physicians and researchers say seniors should remain as active as possible, without overexerting one’s self. In older adults, exercise helps you live a longer, healthier, and more joyous life.

More exercise means more independence for seniors: Seniors that exercise regularly are less likely to depend on others. According to Harvard Medical School, regular exercise promotes an older adults ability to walk, bathe, cook, eat, dress, and use the restroom.

Exercise improves balance for older adults: Falling down is a much bigger

deal for older adults than younger ones. Though no two falls are alike, and preventing falls is very complex, regular exercise reduces the likelihood of falling by 23%.

Regular exercise means more energy

Though it seems counter-intuitive, being inactive makes you tired and being active gives you more energy. Any amount of exercise promotes the release of endorphins, which are essential neurotransmitters linked to pain mitigation and a sense of well-being. Endorphins combat stress hormones, promote healthy sleep, and make you feel more lively and energetic, overall.

Heart disease, osteoporosis, depression and diabetes are common diseases among older adults, and are often deadly. Fortunately, adopting a more active lifestyle can contribute to the prevention of these diseases, or reduce the unpleasant symptoms of these diseases if you already have them. If you are at-risk for disease, exercise may be the key to warding off an unpleasant condition.

One of the most remarkable developments in health science is the revelation that the mind and the body are much more closely linked. A healthy body likely means a healthy mind, and seniors that exercise on a regular basis have improved cognitive health, according to research from NCBI. More recently, a study from the Alzheimer's Research & Prevention Foundation, regular exercise has been shown to reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or dementia by nearly 50%.

The Best Exercises for Seniors

Exercise is crucial for older adults, but it can be hard to know where to begin. If you haven't worked out for a while, re-entry into the active world can be daunting. There's also a good chance the exercises you were once accustomed to aren't ideal for older adults.

Before you launch into an exercise regimen, it's important to check with a physician to ensure you're healthy enough for exercise, and to see which exercises are ideal for your current fitness level.

1. Water aerobics—In the past years, water aerobics have become an extremely popular form of exercise among all ages, but in particular to seniors. Exercising in the water is ideal for those living with arthritis and other forms of joint pain, as the buoyancy of the water puts less stress on your joints. Additionally, water brings natural resistance, which eliminates the need for weights in strength training.

2. Chair yoga—Like water aerobics, chair yoga is a low-impact form of exercise that improves muscle strength, mobility, balance and flexibility, all of which are crucial health aspects for seniors. As an added bonus, chair yoga has been shown to improve mental health in older adults. Regular chair yoga participants have better quality sleep, lower instances of depression, and report a general sense of well-being.

3. Resistance band workouts—Resistance bands are stretchy strips of rubber that add resistance to workouts with reduced stress on your body. Resistance band workouts are user-friendly, and accessible for beginners. This form of exercise is growing more popular among seniors because of the relatively cheap upfront costs of materials, which makes resistance band workouts ideal for at-home exercise. Additionally, these exercises are ideal for strengthening your core, which improves posture, mobility, and balance.

4. Pilates—Pilates is a popular low-impact form of exercise that was developed a century ago. In pilates exercises, breathing, alignment, concentration and core strength are emphasized, and typically involves mats, pilates balls, and other inflated accessories to help build strength without the stress of higher-impact exercises.

5. Walking—One of the least stressful and accessible forms of exercise is walking. For some seniors, walking is a bigger challenge than others, so distance and step goals differ from person to person. For the general population, 10,000 steps per day is advised for a healthy lifestyle, but those with difficulty walking or joint pain may settle for a smaller number as a goal. One study found that walking 10,000 steps lowered the ten-

year outlook for mortality by 46%.

6. Body weight workouts—Muscle loss can be devastating and debilitating for older adults. Around a third of seniors live with severe muscle loss, which can lead to hormone problems, a decrease in the ability to metabolize protein, and other problems. Body weight workouts are one of the best ways to counteract the effects of muscle atrophy in older adults.

7. Dumbbell strength training—Strength training has been shown

to alleviate the symptoms of diabetes, osteoporosis, back pain, and depression, while helping you manage your weight. Strength training also contributes to a higher metabolism and enhanced glucose control. Dumbbell exercises are some of the best ways for seniors to strength train, if they are performed with the proper precautions. Dumbbells allow seniors to isolate muscle groups to strengthen, while improving balance and flexibility.



Pros and Cons of Aging in Place

From Acts Retirement Life Communities

Where you choose to spend your retirement years is an important decision. Retirement can be great, and aging in place in your own home can be a wonderful experience spent relaxing in your garden or on your front porch. But spending your retirement years in the same big, and now empty, house you raised your family might not always be the best decision.

When a House is a Home

Staying right where you are once you punch that time clock for the last time often feels like the easy choice for retirees. Many decide to age in place because of the emotional attachment to a beloved family home. You've built a life for yourself, and you've worked hard to make it the best home for you. It's been there for you for decades — why pull up tent stakes

now, when you've finally gotten the time to truly enjoy yourself?

It's this emotional component that often compels people to stay where they are. Staying in a place where you're already happy is a major motivator, and rightly so. And for good reason, considering it's familiar, both inside and out. You know your house like the back of your hand. Not only that, but you know the neighborhood, thanks to living there for years. When your house is a home, and not just a place to keep your stuff, the argument for aging in place becomes strong.

Besides the emotional component, there are other circumstances when staying right where you are for retirement can be a good idea. For one example, if family members live nearby, that can be a major advantage to aging in place. Being able to see children, grandchildren, and other

relatives whenever you want is a serious benefit.

Other excellent reasons for sticking around include the convenience of access to other relationships you've already established. One of the best examples would be medical care. If your house is close to an excellent doctor, one that knows you and your specific medical needs because you've been seeing them for years, relocating and having to start all over someplace else can be stressful and inconvenient.

Cons of Aging in Place: It Can Be Costly

While there are plenty of advantages to aging in place, sometimes staying in your family home can be more trouble than it's worth, especially when it comes to the financial burdens of maintaining that home. When you combine those burdens with the fact that you're most likely now

on a fixed retirement income, the costs that come with owning your own home can quickly become a major burden.

Maintenance costs can add up to more than you might realize. Even houses in good condition require upkeep, and having to pay for heating, electricity, trash removal, landscaping, and other utilities like cable television add up in a hurry.

Even if you own your home, you still need to pay property taxes, which can be a drain on your resources. That money could be better spent somewhere else, and financial constraints are one of the biggest reasons that retirees move out of their old homes.

In fact, many retirees choose to move out of their long-time home specifically to be closer to family, in order to preserve those all-important bonds and to enjoy their golden years surrounded by the love they deserve.



Nutrition for Older Adults

NIH National Institute on Aging

Nutrition is about eating a healthy and balanced diet so your body gets the nutrients that it needs. Nutrients are substances in foods that our bodies need so they can function and grow. They include carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water.

Good nutrition is important, no matter what your age. It gives you energy and can help you control your weight. It may also help prevent some diseases, such as osteoporosis, high blood pressure, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers.

But as you age, your body and life change, and so does what you need to stay healthy. For example, you may need

fewer calories, but you still need to get enough nutrients. Some older adults need more protein.

What can make it harder for me to eat healthy as I age?

Some changes that can happen as you age can make it harder for you to eat healthy. These include changes in your:

- Home life, such as suddenly living alone or having trouble getting around
- Health, which can make it harder for you to cook or feed yourself
- Medicines, which can change how food tastes, make your mouth dry, or take away your appetite
- Income, which means that you may not have as much money for food
- Sense of smell and taste
- Problems chewing or swallowing your food

How can I eat healthy as I age?

To stay healthy as you age, you should eat foods that give you lots of nutrients without a lot of extra calories, such as

Many older Americans also find that it's inconvenient to live in a large house, needing to climb stairs, needing to mow the lawn or shovel snow. The older you get, the less your body will want to do any of that, and the more confined your house suddenly becomes, paying for upkeep and taxes on a house you only use a portion of.

The Alternatives to Aging in Place

After reviewing the aging in place pros and cons, we know what you're going to say: well if I'm not going live at home, where will I go? There are a number of answers to that question, all of which are excellent options depending on your circumstances. The first is to have family move back home, as this provides you with companionship as well as help around the house.

If your home isn't really appropriate for your circumstances anymore, though,

fruits and vegetables.

- Whole grains, like oatmeal, whole-wheat bread, and brown rice
- Fat-free or low-fat milk and cheese, or soy or rice milk that has added vitamin D and calcium
- Seafood, lean meats, poultry, and eggs
- Beans, nuts, and seeds

Avoid empty calories. These are foods with lots of calories but few nutrients, such as chips, candy, baked goods, soda, and alcohol.

Pick foods that are low in cholesterol and fat. You especially want to try to avoid saturated and trans fats. Saturated fats are usually fats that come from animals. Trans fats are processed fats in stick margarine and vegetable shortening. You may find them in some store-bought baked goods and fried foods at some fast-food restaurants.

Drink enough liquids, so you don't get dehydrated. Some people lose their sense of thirst as they age. And certain medicines might make it even more important to have plenty of fluids.

Be physically active. If you have started losing your appetite, exercising may help you to feel hungrier.

you can conversely leave your home and move in with family instead, though this requires there to be available space for you to do so.

Because these alternatives aren't always feasible, moving to a retirement community is a timelessly popular option. Many retirees will downsize and move by putting their old home up for sale and using the proceeds, plus their retirement income, to pay for an apartment, cottage, or semi-detached home in a retirement community.

Doing so makes your dollar stretch much further, as you are no longer responsible for paying upkeep and maintenance on a big, expensive house like you were before. It surrounds you with similar people to your situation, and comes with added perks like clubs and activities, pools and fitness centers, restaurant-style dining options, and other benefits.

What can I do if I am having trouble eating healthy?

Sometimes health issues or other problems can make it hard to eat healthy. Here are some tips that might help.

If you are tired of eating alone, try organizing some potluck meals or cooking with a friend. You can also look into having some meals at a nearby senior center, community center, or religious facility.

If you are having trouble chewing, see your dentist to check for problems. If you are having trouble swallowing, try drinking plenty of liquids with your meal. If that does not help, check with your health care provider. A health condition or medicine could be causing the problem.

If you're having trouble smelling and tasting your food, try adding color and texture to make your food more interesting. If you aren't eating enough, add some healthy snacks throughout the day to help you get more nutrients and calories. If an illness is making it harder for you to cook or feed yourself, check with your health care provider. He or she may recommend an occupational therapist, who can help you find ways to make it easier.



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