

3

Spring Wellness
Tips for Seniors

4

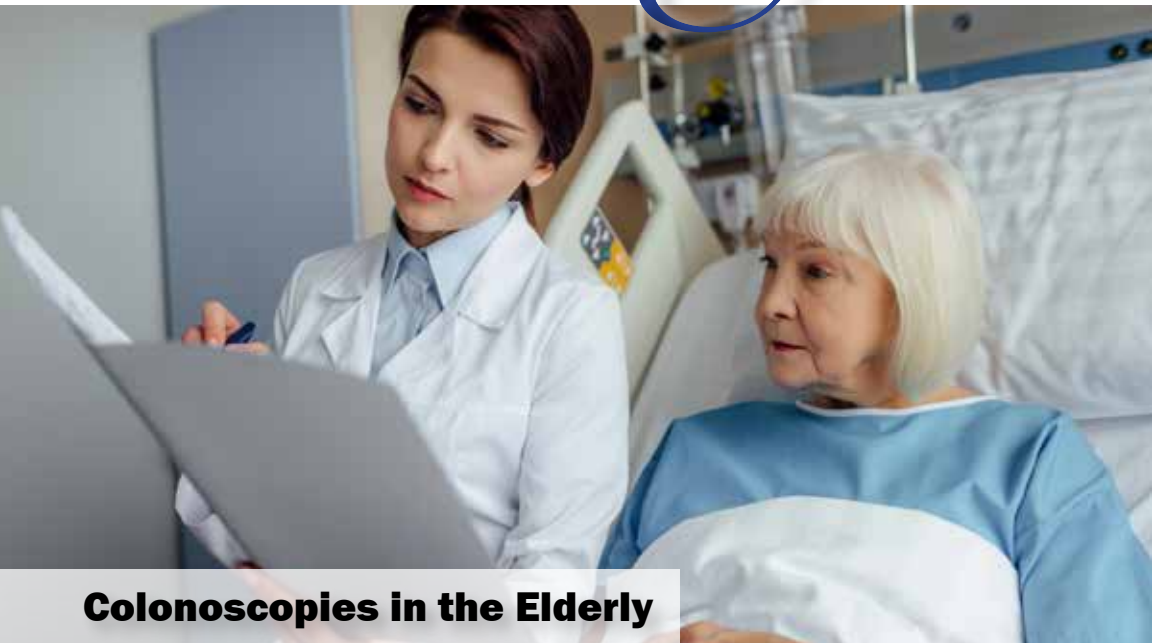
Eat A
Colorful Diet



living INDEPENDENT

The Newsletter of INDEPENDENT YOU Senior Services

Spring 2026 Vol. 10 Issue 2



Colonoscopies in the Elderly

A colonoscopy is a medical procedure where doctors use a camera to inspect the entire colon and rectum. During a colonoscopy screening, the doctor looks for abnormal growths, inflamed tissue, and ulcers. A colonoscopy is usually ordered to detect cancer or other intestinal diseases and to follow up after treatment, like the removal of polyps. However, the colonoscopy procedure has risks in seniors 76+, so doctors often recommend alternatives like the FIT test first.

Colonoscopy guidelines for age and frequency

Doctors with the U.S. Preventive

Services Task Force recommend that adults aged 50 to 75 have a colonoscopy screening, even without symptoms. Colonoscopies in people age 76 to 85 should be limited to a case-by-case basis due to higher risks associated with this procedure in the elderly. This age group should consider alternatives to colonoscopy, like stool sample tests and CT colonography.

The following are the guidelines for the frequency with which these screenings should be performed:

- A colonoscopy should be performed every ten years.
- CT colonography should be performed every 5 years.

- Stool sample tests should be performed every year.

- Vomiting or an inability to keep liquids down

Colonoscopy prep for seniors

The bowel prep kits include laxative and electrolyte formulas used to clear the colon completely of stool before the colonoscopy. The typical laxative formula doctors prescribe in a bowel prep kit will be either a polymer-based formula (PEG) or a saline-based formula (NaP). Of those two formulas, doctors recommend that seniors or individuals with certain conditions use the PEG bowel prep kit due to its reduced risk of disturbing electrolyte balances.

Aside from the bowel prep kit, there are several other steps doctors recommend seniors should do to prepare for a colonoscopy:

- Eat a low-fiber diet starting a few days before a colonoscopy.
- On the last day before a colonoscopy, stick to a clear liquid diet with plenty of electrolytes.
- Keep track of bowel movements to make sure movements are clear before the procedure.
- Don't ingest any dyes like food coloring ingredients that might be mistaken for blood during the colonoscopy.

Make sure to contact the doctor if colonoscopy prep is not going as expected, like in the following cases:

- Forgetting to begin the bowel prep kit on time
- Feeling ill
- Not having bowel movements as expected from the bowel prep kit
- Having severe abdominal pain

Risks for colonoscopies in the elderly

In most age groups, colonoscopies are generally considered safe, but there are risks when performed on seniors aged 76+. According to recent studies, seniors are more prone to post-colonoscopy complications due to their underlying conditions (comorbidities) and sensitivities.

Complications can be caused by any or all of the following stages of the procedure:

- Side effects from laxatives during bowel prep

Side effects, like cardiovascular events, from the sedation medication used during the procedure

- Damage to tissue caused by the camera during the procedure

Keep in mind that seniors with comorbidities like

chronic constipation, kidney disease, diabetes, a high body mass index (or BMI), and those who use narcotics or antidepressants are more at risk from complications from colonoscopies. Close case management from a senior's doctor is important to avoid complications with colonoscopies both in the short and long term.

Alternatives to a colonoscopy for the elderly

One often-recommended alternative to colonoscopy is a fecal immunochemical test or a FIT, which tests for blood in a stool sample. This is recommended for people without a personal or family history of colon cancer. If this test runs positive for

Key Takeaways

- Doctors only recommend colonoscopies for seniors aged 76 to 85 on a case-by-case basis, due to the higher risks involved for seniors.
- If a colonoscopy is needed, seniors should properly prep for the procedure to ensure a safe and successful screening.
- Colonoscopy prep involves taking laxatives and fasting a day before, making sure to include plenty of liquids and electrolytes.
- Alternatives to a colonoscopy include stool tests or CT scans, for less risk of bowel perforation or sedative side effects.

blood, a colonoscopy is then recommended.

This test can be sent to you at home, where you would provide a stool sample then send the test back through the mail in a specialized, pre-paid mailer. This test can identify blood in the stool to see if a follow-up screening is necessary. There is also a DNA test that can be performed alongside the FIT test, using the same stool sample. This DNA screening tests the sample for alterations in DNA or mutations that might signal cancer or disease.

The stool test is not the only alternative screening available, though it's the only alternative that doesn't require bowel prep. Thanks to new computer programs, a non-invasive virtual colonoscopy is now possible. After the bowels are cleared with bowel prep, the doctor takes a CT scan of your intestines, runs it through the com-

puter, and a 3D image of your colon is produced. Though bowel prep has risks for the elderly due to electrolyte disruption, it's less strenuous to recover from than sedatives or bowel perforation.

This form of CT screening is seen as less risky to seniors than traditional colonoscopies using sedatives and cameras.

Luckily, medical technologies are evolving to offer alternatives to colonoscopies and their risks. Many health insurance providers cover these alternatives due to their effective screening abilities and safety. Be sure to advocate for yourself or your loved one if you're concerned about any pre-existing health conditions that might adversely affect the test prep or test results.

by Marlena Gates



Spring Wellness Tips for Seniors

Spring is a season of renewal, making it a great time for seniors to focus on health, safety, and overall well-being. Small changes in daily routines can help improve energy, prevent illness, and support independence at home.

Stay Active Safely

Regular movement is important for maintaining strength, balance, and flexibility. Seniors can benefit from light activities such as walking, stretching, or chair exercises. Even a few minutes of movement each day can improve circulation and reduce

stiffness. Be sure to wear supportive shoes and avoid uneven surfaces when walking outdoors.

Eat Fresh, Nutrient-Rich Foods

Spring brings a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are rich in vitamins and minerals. Foods like spinach, strawberries, carrots, and peas can support immune health and digestion. Staying hydrated is equally important—aim to drink water regularly throughout the day.

Reduce Fall Risks at Home

Spring cleaning is a good opportunity to make the home safer. Remove clutter from walkways, secure loose rugs, and ensure frequently used items are easy to reach. Proper lighting, especially in hallways and bathrooms, can also help prevent falls.

Manage Seasonal Allergies

Pollen levels tend to rise in the spring, which can trigger allergy symptoms such as sneezing, watery eyes, and congestion. Keeping windows closed on high-pollen days, using air filters, and following healthcare provider recommendations can help manage symptoms.

Protect Your Skin

As time outdoors increases, it's important to protect your skin from sun exposure. Wearing sunscreen, a hat, and lightweight long sleeves can help reduce the risk of sunburn and skin damage.

Stay Socially Connected

Maintaining social connections is essential for mental and emotional health. Seniors can benefit from regular interaction with family, friends, or community groups. Even simple activities like phone calls or outdoor visits can improve mood and reduce feelings of isolation.

Keep Up with Health Care Needs

Routine check-ups, medication management, and preventive screenings remain important year-round. Spring is a great time to review medications and ensure all health appointments are up to date.

Focusing on these simple steps can help seniors stay healthy, safe, and active throughout the spring season. If additional support is needed, home health professionals can provide personalized care and assistance right at home.

Eat A Colorful Diet

Tips for adding color — and nutrition — to your meals

If you're looking for a way to make your meals more vibrant, look no further than your grocery store's produce aisle. There, you'll find a rainbow of fruits and vegetables — from the palest white to the brightest orange to the deepest purple.

Fruits and vegetables get their coloration from phytochemicals, natural

bioactive compounds which, in addition to giving many fruits and veggies their eye-catching hues, also promote good health.

In fact, the most vibrantly colored fruits and vegetables are the richest in vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants.

Get your daily dose of fruits and vegetables

According to the food pyramid, you should be eating up to nine servings of vegetables and fruits each day.

Clinical dietitian Jennifer Ventrelle, MS, RD, LDN, recommends filling at least three-quarters of your plates at lunch and dinner with vegetables.

And instead of rich, sugary treats after your meals or for between-meal snacks, use whole fresh fruits to satisfy your sweet tooth.

What do the colors mean?

But which veggies and fruits you eat is as important as how often you eat them. That's because different colors have different health benefits:

Red fruits and vegetables, such as tomatoes, strawberries and red beans, are packed with vitamin C, vitamin A, potassium and antioxidants.

Yellow/orange fruits and vegetables, including carrots, peaches, squash and pineapple, are also loaded with vitamin C, vitamin A and potassium. They can also boost the immune system and enhance vision.

Mushrooms, bananas, onions and other **white** fruits and vegetables are good for the heart and help to control cholesterol levels.

Green means lots of heart-protective potassium and vitamin K, which aids the blood clotting process. Green fruits and veggies also help to maintain vision health and strong bones and teeth. Dark green, leafy vegetables have the highest concentration of antioxidants and fiber.

Blue/purple fruits and vegetables,

including such favorites as cranberries, purple grapes, raisins and eggplant, boost urinary tract health and memory function and promote healthy aging.

“As often as possible, choose fruits and vegetables that are high in fiber,” says Ventrelle. “They will fill you up

more, leaving less room for foods that are high in calories and fat.”

An added benefit: High-fiber diets have been associated with decreased risk and recurrence of cancer.

Ventrelle also recommends eating fruits and vegetables that are highest in

antioxidants, which boost the body's immune system, protect blood cells from free radicals, promote the growth of healthy cells and may help to lower the risk of stroke.

Fruit and veggie do's and don'ts

Here are a few other things to keep in mind when planning your menu:

Although fruits and vegetables are healthy, they aren't necessarily low in calories. “Avocado is a good type of fat,” Ventrelle says, “but one-fourth of an avocado has 100 calories.” Raisins and cherries are other examples of fruits that, while healthful, are high in calories. Eat higher-calorie fruits and veggies in moderation.

Go light on the starchy vegetables.

American Heart Association
Healthy for Good

5 REASONS TO ADD COLOR

Colorful, delicious and nutritious foods can keep our bodies and minds healthier for longer.

- 1. Bountiful Benefits**
Fruits and vegetables provide many important nutrients, vitamins and minerals. Include a variety of colorful choices at meals and snacks for a nutritional power boost.
- 2. Naturally Nourishing**
Fruits and vegetables are typically free of trans fat, saturated fat and sodium. Filling at least half your plate with produce is a great first step toward creating a balanced meal.
- 3. First-class Fuel**
Whole fruits and vegetables help keep you feeling satisfied for longer, thanks to their high fiber and water content. They also play essential roles in your everyday wellness, such as supporting digestive health.
- 4. Very Versatile**
All forms of fruits and vegetables — fresh, frozen, canned and dried — can be part of a healthy diet. They are among the most adaptable and convenient foods you can eat. Choose those with little or no added sodium or added sugar.
- 5. Whole-body Wellness**
A healthy eating plan full of fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk of many serious and chronic health conditions, including heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes and some types of cancer.

© Copyright 2015 American Heart Association, Inc. • 5875(1) not for profit. All rights reserved. Healthy for Good is a trademark of the AHA. Unattributed content provided. 01/16/15 12:25

heart.org/HealthyForGood

If you choose sweet potatoes as a side dish, use that as your starch even though it's technically a vegetable. Don't have sweet potatoes and corn, which is also a starch. Pick some other veggie that's higher in fiber.

Veggie preparation matters. "Fresh is best, but if you do cook vegetables, use a lighter preparation," Ventrelle says. "Don't use a lot of oil, or fry or sauté them. Steaming or grilling is better." And be aware that if you boil vegetables, you lose a lot of the health benefits. The nutrients leach out. So when you pour out the water, you're also pouring out the nutrients.

Don't drown fruits and veggies in heavy sauces, dips or toppings, especially if you're watching your weight. Try sprinkling apple slices with cinnamon instead of smothering them with peanut butter or caramel. And dunk those carrot sticks in fat-free yogurt instead of ranch dip. If you must have sauces or dips, look for lighter recipes or limit the amount you eat to a few tablespoons.

Eat with the seasons. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables that are "in season" to ensure you're eating a good variety of colors throughout the year.

For instance, add squashes, root vegetables and different types of apples to your fall menu.

If you can't get fresh fruits and veggies, frozen is fine. Avoid eating a lot of canned vegetables, because they tend to have more sodium. And choose canned fruit that's packed in water or natural juice, not sugary syrup.

If you like dried fruits, eat them in moderation. They tend to have a higher concentration of calories and sugar than their fresh counterparts. A serving size of dried fruit should be no more than one-fourth of a cup.

If you're counting calories, buy smaller pieces of fruit. Large bananas can be almost 200 calories, so pick smaller ones. Apples, nectarines, peaches and other round fruits should be roughly the size of a tennis ball. For bite-sized fruits, such as grapes and cherries, one serving equals approximately 17 pieces.

With so many vegetables and fruits to choose from, and with so many ways to enjoy them, you'll find it's easy to create a "colorful" diet that's satisfying, nutritious and delicious.

Walking Exercise for Seniors

As we get older, staying active becomes more important than ever. Did you know that walking could be the easiest and most enjoyable way to keep moving as a senior? Walking is a simple yet powerful exercise that can help you maintain your health, mobility, and overall well-being.

In this blog, we're going to dive into the benefits of walking exercises for seniors, how to start, and some tips to make walking a part of your daily routine. Ready to get moving?

Walking is a low-impact exercise that involves moving at a moderate pace, and it's great for seniors of all fitness levels. The best part? It's easy on your joints, so it's perfect for those dealing with arthritis or mobility issues. Plus, it's proven to be one of the best ways to prevent chronic diseases and keep your heart healthy!

According to the CDC, regular physical activity, like walking, helps reduce the risk of falls and chronic illnesses, plus it supports mental well-being. So, why not lace up your shoes and head out for a walk?



What Are the Benefits of Walking for Seniors?

Walking isn't just good for your body—it's great for your mind too! Here are some of the amazing benefits you can expect when you make walking a regular part of your life:

Better Heart Health: Did you know that walking can improve circulation and lower your blood pressure? Just a 30-minute walk a day can reduce your risk of heart disease.

Stronger Bones and Joints: Walking is a weight-bearing exercise that helps strengthen bones, keeping them healthy and reducing the risk of osteoporosis.

Improved Mental Health: Walking releases endorphins, which are natural mood boosters. Feeling stressed or anxious? A walk might be just what you need to clear your head.

Weight Management: Walking can help you burn calories and maintain a healthy weight. Who doesn't want to feel good and stay fit?

Better Balance and Coordination: As we age, balance can become a challenge. Walking strengthens leg muscles, improving stability and reducing the risk of falls.

Now that you know how awesome walking is, how do you get started? Don't worry—it's easy! Here are some simple steps to help you begin your walking routine:

Talk to Your Doctor: Before starting any exercise program, it's always a good idea to check in with your healthcare provider. Have any health conditions? Make sure it's safe for you to walk regularly.

Wear Comfortable Shoes: Having the right footwear is essential! Make sure your shoes are supportive and comfortable to avoid any unnecessary aches and pains.

Start Slow: Don't feel pressured to walk for miles right away. Start with short walks, then gradually increase the time and distance as you feel more comfortable.

Drink Water: Stay hydrated before and after your walk to keep your energy levels up.

Pick Safe Routes: Choose walking paths that are smooth, well-lit, and free of obstacles to avoid any risks of tripping.

by Marlon J Lima



703-999-3006 or visit us online at
www.independentyouseniorservices.com

*Providing
personalized,
senior care
and care
management
services for
seniors who
wish to remain
independent*



9489 A silver king court
fairfax, va. 22031