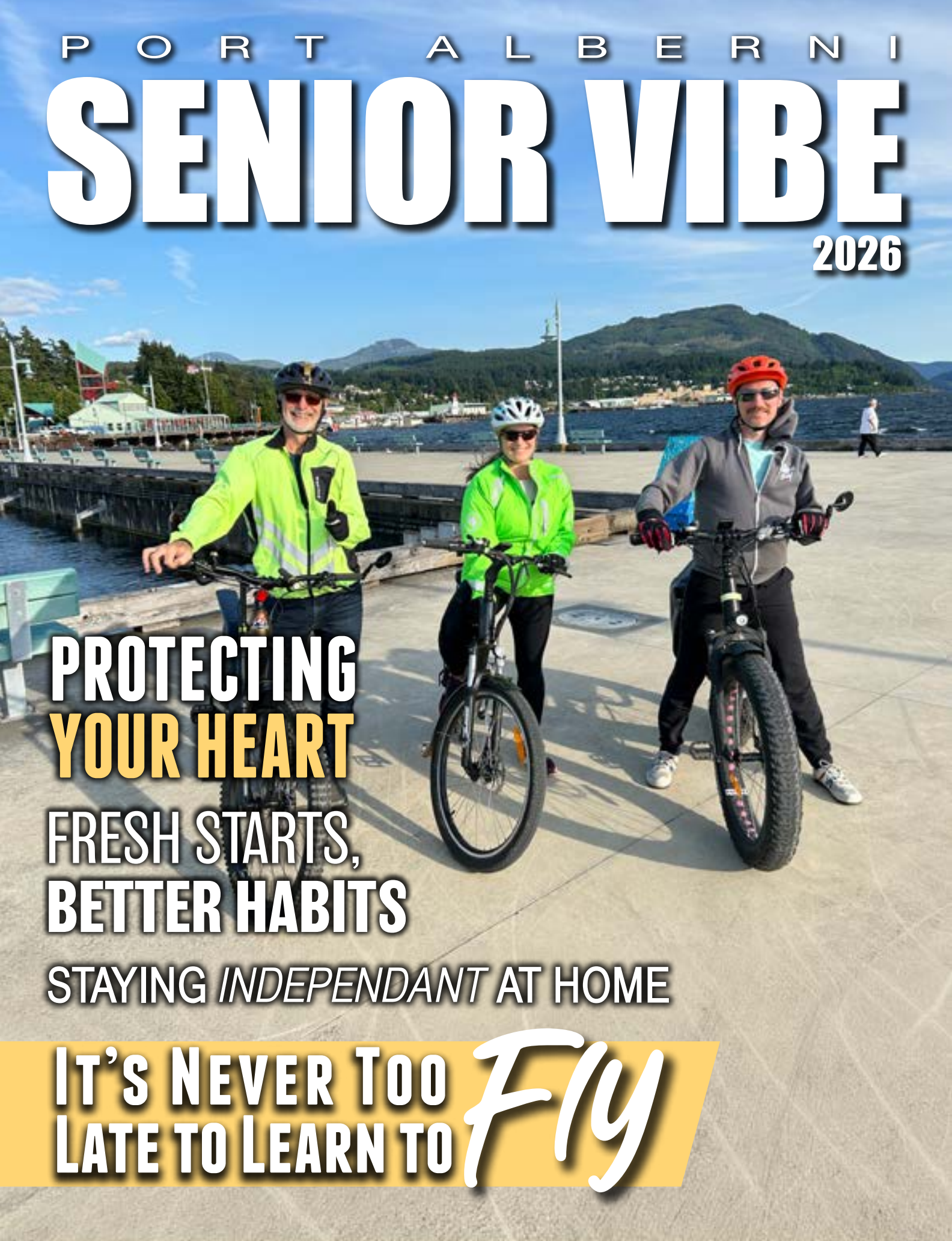


P O R T A L B E R N I

SENIOR VIBE

2026

A photograph of three seniors on bicycles parked on a paved waterfront promenade. The person on the left is a man wearing a bright yellow-green cycling jacket, a black helmet, and sunglasses. The person in the middle is a woman wearing a similar bright yellow-green cycling jacket, a white helmet, and sunglasses. The person on the right is a man wearing a grey zip-up jacket, a red helmet, and sunglasses. They are all smiling at the camera. In the background, there is a body of water, a small harbor with some buildings, and a large forested hill under a clear blue sky.

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Alberni-Clayoquot Continuing Care Society

Fir Park - 4411 Wallace St



ECHO VILLAGE

67-Bed Residential Multi-level Care Home

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FIR PARK/ECHO VILLAGE 4411 Wallace St./4200 10th Ave. Port Alberni, BC V9Y 7Y5

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 Director of Programming & Adult Day Services
 724-6541 Extension 253
 Maria Law,
 Adult Day Services Coordinator
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SENIOR VIBE

CONTRIBUTORS



Megan Warrender
Founder / Publisher
megan@vibemediagroup.ca



Jenaya Tutte
Communications
communications@vibemediagroup.ca



Cassie Prouten
Community Engagement / Sales
sales@vibemediagroup.ca



Victoria Barker
Community Engagement / Sales
sales@neighbourhoodwelcome.org



Jay Santarossa
Graphic Design



COVER PHOTO BY: Crystal Salmon

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Protecting Your Heart

Why Blood Sugar and Blood Pressure Matter

Article and photos by Athena A. Ethier RCT, CRDT
Heart To Heart Diagnostics Inc.

As we get older, taking care of our heart becomes more important than ever. Two of the biggest things that affect heart health are blood sugar and blood pressure. The good news? These are things we can monitor and manage.

Let's start with blood sugar.

If you live with diabetes, or even pre-diabetes, your body has trouble keeping sugar levels in a healthy range. When blood sugar stays high over time, it can quietly damage the lining of your blood vessels. This makes it easier for cholesterol to build up in the arteries and increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. In fact, the American Heart Association notes that adults with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop heart disease.

High blood sugar doesn't always make you feel unwell right away. But common symptoms can include increased thirst, frequent urination, fatigue, blurry vision, and slow-healing wounds. That's why regular monitoring and follow-up with your healthcare provider are so important.

Now let's talk about blood pressure.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against your artery walls. When it stays too high for too long, it puts extra strain on your heart.

Here's something important to understand: your heart is a muscle. And like any muscle, when it has to work harder, it grows bigger. But unlike your biceps, that's not a good thing.

When blood pressure is high, the heart has to pump harder to move blood forward. Over time, the heart muscle thickens. As it thickens, the space inside the heart chamber gets smaller. That means the heart can't fill with as much blood, and it can't pump as efficiently. This can eventually lead to heart failure, shortness of breath, and fatigue.

According to the American Heart Association, a healthy blood pressure is generally below 120/80 mmHg. Many older adults, especially those with diabetes or heart disease, may have individualized targets set by their healthcare provider.

The encouraging part is this: small daily habits make a difference at any age.

Here in Port Alberni, we're lucky to be surrounded by beautiful outdoor spaces. A simple walk along the Quay to Quay path, enjoying the harbour views, or taking a gentle stroll on one of our local forest trails can be wonderful ways to stay active. You don't have to power walk or hike mountains: consistent, comfortable movement is what matters. Even 20–30 minutes most days of the week can help lower blood pressure and improve blood sugar control.





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- Take medications exactly as prescribed
- Stay as physically active as your body allows. Walking absolutely counts!
- Choose meals with vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and less processed salt and sugar
- Monitor your blood pressure at home with an upper-arm cuff
- Keep regular appointments with your healthcare team
- You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be consistent.

Managing blood sugar and blood pressure isn't about chasing numbers, it's about protecting your independence, your energy, and your quality of life. Your heart has worked hard for you for many years. Taking care of it now is one of the best investments you can make in your health moving forward. **SV**



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Osteoporosis:

Protecting Your Bones at Any Age

Article by Jane Cruttenden, Registered Physiotherapist BSc

As we get older, taking care of our bones becomes just as important as looking after our heart, muscles, and balance. One condition that often comes up with aging is osteoporosis. While it's very common, it's also commonly misunderstood.

Many people believe bone loss is simply an unavoidable part of aging — but the truth is, there are many ways to protect your bone health, whether you're hoping to prevent osteoporosis or already living with a diagnosis.

What Is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a condition where bones gradually lose density and strength, making them thinner and more fragile over time. Healthy bones are dense and strong, but with osteoporosis, bones are more likely to break — sometimes from a small fall or even a simple movement. The most common fracture sites include the hips, spine, and wrists. Osteoporosis is often called a “silent condition” because it usually develops without pain or noticeable symptoms. Many people don't realize they have it until a fracture occurs, which is why learning about bone health and prevention is so important.

The Stages of Bone Loss

Bone health exists on a spectrum, and understanding the stages can help you take action early.

Normal Bone Density: Bones are strong and healthy. While bone density naturally declines with age, staying active and maintaining good nutrition can help slow this process.

Osteopenia: Osteopenia means bone density is lower than normal but not low enough to be diagnosed as osteoporosis. This stage often has no symptoms, making it an important opportunity to focus on prevention and lifestyle changes. These early changes can often be seen on a DEXA scan requested by your physician.

Osteoporosis: At this stage, bones are fragile and more prone to fractures. Spinal fractures can sometimes lead to height loss or changes in posture. While osteoporosis requires more care, it does not mean you need to stop being active.



PHOTO BY PORT ALBERNI PHYSIOTHERAPY

How to Help Prevent Osteoporosis

There are many simple ways to support bone health. **Stay Active with Weight-Bearing Exercise:** Bones stay strong when they are used. Activities like walking, stair climbing, dancing, and hiking help stimulate bone strength. Strength training is especially important, as muscles pulling on bones help keep them dense and resilient.

Improve Balance and Reduce Fall Risk: Falls are the leading cause of fractures in older adults. Exercises that improve balance and posture — such as yoga, Tai Chi, or guided balance training like SAIL (Stay Active and Independent for Life) exercises— can significantly reduce fall risk and build confidence with movement.

Healthy Lifestyle Choices: Avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol intake can help protect bones and slow bone loss over time. Good nutrition, including enough calcium and vitamin D, also plays an important role in bone health.

“Strong bones aren't just about preventing fractures — they support confidence, mobility, and independence as we age.”

Living with an Osteoporosis Diagnosis

An osteoporosis diagnosis can feel overwhelming, but staying active — with proper guidance — is one of the best things you can do. Controlled weight bearing movements help improve strength, balance, posture, and confidence.

It's important to avoid sudden or forceful twisting movements, especially through the spine. Instead, focus on good posture, steady strengthening, and balance exercises. Avoiding activity altogether can actually increase weakness and fall risk, so the goal is guided movement, not rest. This is where guidance from a physiotherapist or physician can help.



PHOTO BY PORT ALBERNI PHYSIOTHERAPY

How Physiotherapy Can Help

Physiotherapy plays an important role in both preventing osteoporosis and supporting people who have been diagnosed. Physiotherapists focus on practical, real-life movement and help people stay active safely.

Physiotherapy Spotlight

Physiotherapy for osteoporosis focuses on building strength, balance, and confidence while protecting vulnerable bones.

- Strength and weight-bearing exercise guidance.
- Posture and spinal protection strategies
- Balance and fall-prevention training
- Education on safe daily movement
- Support to stay active without fear

Physiotherapy Can Help By:

- Improving muscle strength to support bones
- Addressing posture and spinal alignment
- Enhancing balance and coordination to reduce fall risk
- Teaching safe ways to move during daily activities like lifting, reaching, and getting up from the floor

The goal is to help people move with confidence while protecting bone health.

Osteoporosis does not mean giving up the activities you enjoy. With the right information, regular movement, and appropriate support, many people continue to live active, independent lives. 



PHOTO BY RASPOPOVA MARINA

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IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN TO *Fly*

How glider flying in the Alberni Valley is inspiring people to try something new later in life.

Article and photos by Warwick Patterson

Have you ever cast your eyes skyward as a flash of sunshine glints off the white wings of a glider above the Beaufort Range? Or remember watching Steve McQueen fly a sporty yellow glider across the screen in *The Thomas Crown Affair*? Perhaps you once had a dream of learning how to fly. But then, life happened. Careers to pursue, families to raise, bills to pay, and the big dreams moved to the back burner. Maybe now is the time?

A glider, or sailplane, is an aircraft with no engine. A small tow plane pulls it to altitude, releases it, and from there pilots harness the power of Mother Nature and

climb in columns of warm air - called thermals - to stay aloft. It is quiet, graceful, and nothing like what most people picture when they think of flying. There are no roaring engines. No complicated instrument panels. Just you, the sky, and perhaps the most beautiful view of our valley you will ever see.

Far from being an extreme sport, gliding is methodical, meditative, and deeply satisfying. Gliding suits the kind of person who has lived a little. It rewards patience and calm thinking far more than quick reflexes or physical strength. If you spent thirty years on a job site, raised a family, or managed anything more complicated than

breakfast, you already have more of the “right stuff” than you think.

When we learn something new and challenging - one that asks us to absorb new knowledge, problem solve in real time, and improve through practice - we are doing something remarkable for our brains. Meaningful learning later in life is linked to sharper memory and better long-term cognitive health. Gliding is an exceptionally rich and rewarding mental workout. Navigation, weather reading, aerodynamics, in-the-moment judgment — your brain is fully engaged from the moment you strap in. It’s often called “Chess in the Air”. And then there is



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the social dimension: gliding clubs are warm, welcoming communities full of people who share a passion.

As we get a little older and wiser, the things we once worked so hard to acquire - the new truck, the bigger television, the stuff that filled the garage - start to matter a lot less. Experiences bring more lasting joy than possessions. We want to live a full life. A morning spent soaring above the mountains, reading the wind, feeling genuinely alive, becomes another exciting chapter in our life's story.

Glider flying has always been one of the most accessible forms of aviation, and it's been a part of the Alberni Valley since the 1970's. There is no upper age limit and medical requirements are straightforward and far less demanding than for powered aircraft. Plenty of people learn to fly gliders in their sixties, seventies, and beyond...including many of the local club members.

So...where to start? The Vancouver Island Soaring Centre operates right here in the valley, close to home. For prospective students, intro flights are available with an experienced instructor to get a feel for the glider.

If you wish to pursue it further, flights build gradually with your instructor alongside you every step of the way until you are ready to go solo. Ground school is practical and paced for real people, not aerospace engineers. The cost is far more reasonable than most people expect too. The Soaring Centre also offers scenic flights which make for great bucket-list experiences or gifts.

The Alberni Valley is a remarkable place to fly. The mountains, the inlet, and the forests stretching out in every direction. From high above, it is something else entirely. And it is not reserved for someone younger, wealthier, or more adventurous than you. Choose an afternoon, book an experience flight, and see what it's all about. You might just wonder what took you so long.

More information can be found at www.gogliding.ca or call 250-730-7627. **SV**



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TYPES OF LEGACY GIFTS





Fresh Starts, Better Habits:

Written by Sandra Gentleman, RD

Co-host podcast "My Wife the Dietitian" www.mywifethedietitian.com

How Small Daily Choices Shape Lifelong Health

Taking time to reflect on our health can inspire us to make positive changes. While big goals can feel motivating, lasting change rarely comes from grand resolutions — it comes from the small, everyday habits that quietly shape our long-term health.

Too often, we move through our days on autopilot. From the moment we wake up, we react to our surroundings, rushing from task to task without much thought. While this rhythm may feel efficient, it can work against us when we're trying to build intentional, health-supportive routines. Our daily behaviours either nourish our long-term well-being or slowly chip away at it.

Start With a Plan

One of the most common pitfalls is beginning the day without a plan — or without breakfast. Many people dash out the door with only a coffee in hand, hoping caffeine will carry them through the morning. But as Benjamin Franklin famously said, "By failing to plan, you are planning to fail."

Skipping breakfast sets off a cascade of challenges: low energy, brain fog (or foggy thinking), and intense hunger later in the day. Ironically, while we'd never send our children to school without a proper meal, adults routinely deprive themselves of the same basic fuel. When midday hunger hits, convenience foods like muffins, donuts, or packaged snacks become almost irresistible, derailing even the best intentions.

Your Body Keeps Score

Food is as essential as air — your body notices when it hasn't received enough nourishment. If you under-eat early in the day, your body will push you to compensate later, often with cravings for quick, high-calorie foods. Without a plan, the abundance of easy, ultra-processed options makes it far too simple to grab whatever is closest and accessible.

Balanced Meals Don't Need to Be Complicated

Meal planning often feels overwhelming because people imagine they need to map out every meal of the week. But a simpler approach works beautifully: start by planning just two wholesome, homemade meals each week. These anchor meals create leftovers and momentum, making the rest of the week easier to navigate.

A balanced plate is surprisingly straightforward:

- 1/2 vegetables &/or fruit
- 1/4 protein
- 1/4 whole-grain starch or carbohydrate

This ratio provides the nutrients, fibre, and energy your body needs to function smoothly. It also helps prevent the late-day crash that leads to fast-food runs or frozen pizza dinners when decision fatigue sets in.

Stock Your Kitchen for Success

Your environment shapes your habits. If your pantry is filled with prepackaged snacks, those will be the foods you reach for when hunger strikes. Since roughly a quarter of daily calories often come from snacks, choosing whole-food options can make a meaningful difference.

Balanced snack ideas include:

- Yogurt with berries
- Trail mix
- Hummus with vegetables
- Cheese with high-fibre crackers

These combinations offer protein, healthy fats, and fibre from veggies & fruit — the trio that keeps you satisfied and energized.





Rewriting Your Relationship With Food

If food is like air, there’s no moral judgement about ‘deserving’ to breathe. But, many people think they don’t deserve that indulgent dessert or like the slogan states the cookies are ‘sinfully delicious’.

Diet culture often frames foods as “good,” “bad,” or “sinful,” creating guilt and confusion around eating.

We all need to eat, we all need to have food in our days, we all need nutrition for our bodies to run optimally and we need to have a positive relationship with food, as we have to eat for the rest of our lives.

If we’ve been on ‘yo yo’ diets, or on the diet rollercoaster for a lot of our adult life, the cycle of food restriction, elimination diets and avoiding certain foods or food groups can have a negative lasting impact on the way we view food and our relationship to food and eating. This can distort our relationship with food, making it harder to trust our hunger cues or enjoy eating without judgement.

Intermittent fasting and avoiding breakfast is a diet that can lead to unleashed hunger and unrestricted eating later in the day when cravings set in, as inhibitions are low and our best efforts are behind us, as we feel we need to treat ourselves for the busy day we’ve had. As mentioned earlier, food is as essential to our bodies as air — and when it comes to nutrition, the body keeps the score.

Small Shifts, Big Impact

Starting your day with a balanced meal is one of the simplest ways to support your future health. What you eat today influences not only your physical well-being but also your cognitive health as you age. Nourishing your brain is just as important as nourishing your body. Change doesn’t need to be dramatic. In fact, the most sustainable improvements come from gentle, gradual shifts. Try adding one new habit every few weeks — a planned breakfast, a balanced snack, and/or a weekly homemade meal. Each small win builds confidence and momentum.

And above all, aim for consistency: three meals and two snacks each day provide steady energy, balanced nutrition, and a foundation for long-term well-being. 

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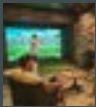
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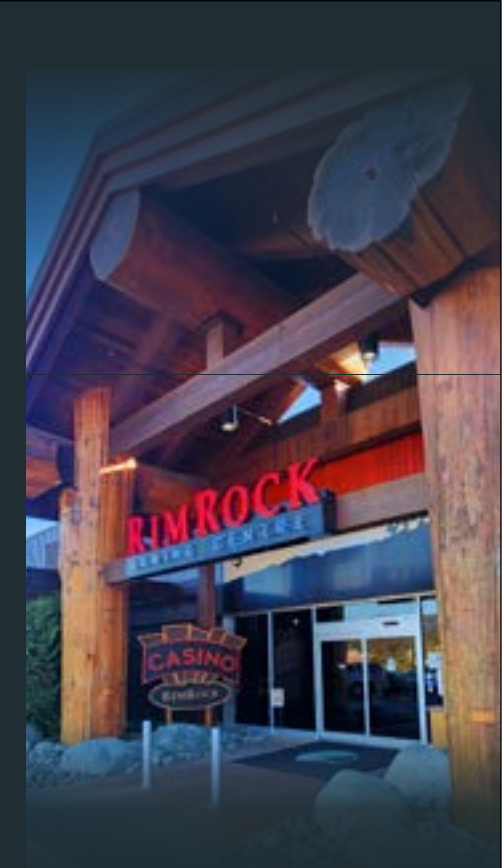
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“Independence isn’t about doing everything perfectly — it’s about staying strong enough to keep doing what matters to you.”

Staying Independent at Home

Article by Jane Cruttenden,
Registered Physiotherapist BSc

PHOTO BY SVEN MIEKE



PHOTO BY CENTRE FOR AGEING BETTER

For many older adults, staying independent at home is a top priority. Home is where life feels familiar and comfortable, and independence isn’t just about luck — it’s about having the strength and balance to move safely and confidently.

Everyday movements like getting out of bed, standing from a chair, climbing stairs, or getting on and off the floor are called Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), and they form the foundation of independent living.

While muscle naturally weakens with age if it isn’t used, the good news is that strength can be maintained — and even improved — at any age with simple, regular exercise.

Why Everyday Strength Matters

Standing up from a chair may seem simple — until it becomes difficult. Weak leg muscles, poor balance, and reduced core strength can make everyday tasks feel harder over time.

Maintaining strength helps you:

- Reduce your risk of falls
- Move confidently around your home
- Maintain independence longer
- Protect your joints
- Improve overall quality of life

Exercise doesn’t need to be intense. It just needs to be consistent.

The SAIL Program: Exercise for Independence

One excellent example of a senior-focused exercise approach is the SAIL Program (Stay Active and Independent for Life). Designed specifically for older adults, SAIL focuses on strength, balance, and mobility — the exact skills needed for everyday activities.

The program offers three levels, making it accessible no matter where you're starting.

SAIL Level 1 – Getting Started

Ideal for individuals who: Use a walker or chair for support, feel unsteady standing for long periods, or are new to exercise.

Exercises are mostly seated or supported.

Examples include:

- Seated leg extensions
- Seated marching
- Supported sit-to-stand

These movements help maintain the ability to get out of bed and rise from a chair safe



SAIL Level 2 – Building Strength & Balance

Ideal for individuals who: Stand independently, walk short distances without assistance, or want to improve strength and balance.

Exercises focus on functional, standing movements.

Examples include:

- Sit-to-stands without using hands
- Standing heel raises
- Side leg lifts at the counter

These exercises directly support getting on and off the toilet and navigating stairs safely.



SAIL Level 3 – Staying Strong & Confident

Ideal for individuals who: Are already fairly active or want to maintain strength and prevent falls.

Exercises are slightly more challenging while remaining safe.

Examples include:

- Step-ups
- Single-leg balance
- Supported squats or lunges

These movements help maintain mobility, confidence, and independence.



Prevention First

The best time to work on strength is before daily activities become difficult. Even if you're managing well right now, maintaining muscle strength and balance helps protect your independence in the years ahead.

Regular exercise helps:

Maintain muscle mass

Improve coordination

Support joint health

Reduce fall risk

Think of it as investing in your future self.



Equipment can help?

If certain tasks are already challenging, supportive equipment can make your home safer. Raised toilet seats, bed rails, grab bars, and walkers can reduce strain and improve stability.

The Canadian Red Cross offers equipment rentals that can be helpful during recovery or periods of increased difficulty.

However, equipment works best when paired with regular strengthening exercises whenever possible

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Physiotherapy Spotlight

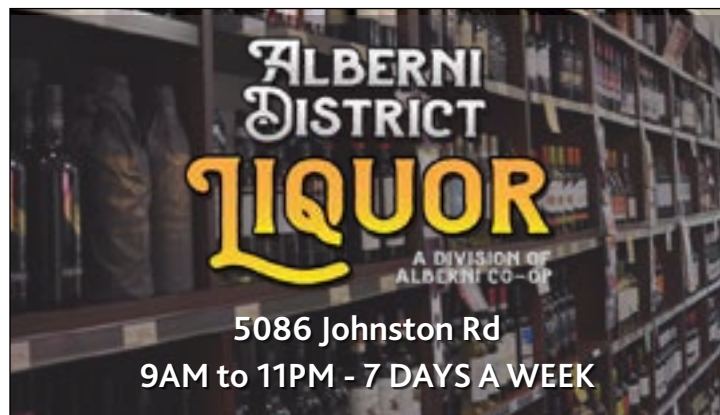
Physiotherapy focuses on practical, real-life movement. A physiotherapist can:

- Assess strength and balance
- Identify challenges with daily tasks
- Create a personalized home exercise plan
- Teach safe strategies for getting up, down, and around the home

The goal isn't just exercise — it's confidence, safety, and long-term independence.

Being able to move safely in your own home brings confidence, dignity, and freedom. With simple exercises, early prevention, and the right support, many older adults can remain independent longer and continue enjoying daily life on their terms.

Staying strong today helps protect your independence tomorrow.



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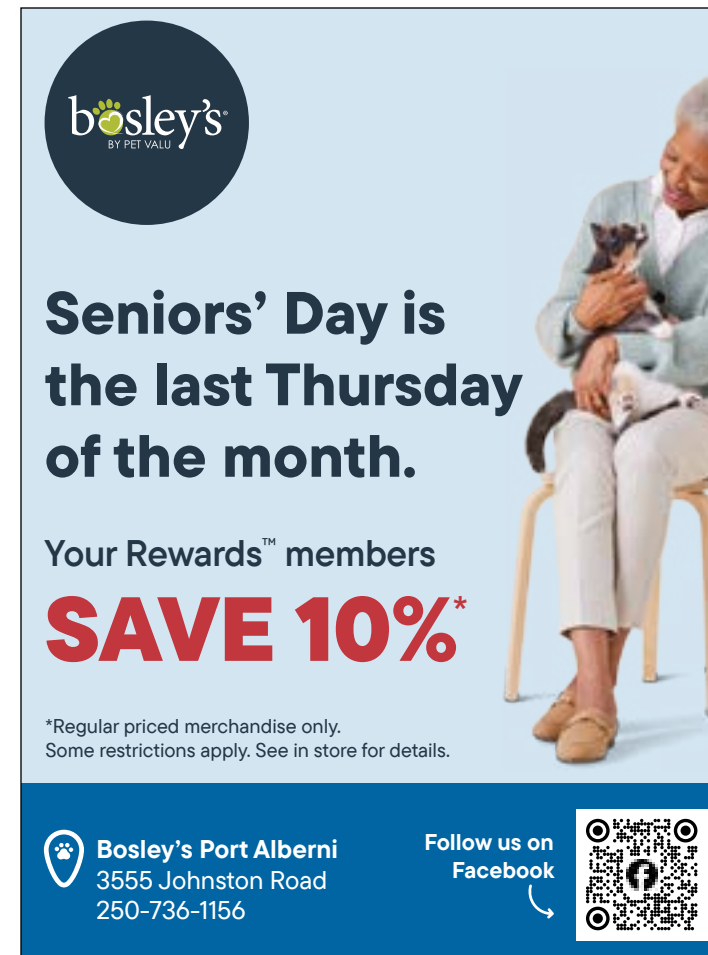
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How to CLEAN YOUR OWN TILE AND GROUT AS A HOMEOWNER

Article and photos by Ken Bentkowski at Sani-Tech

Tile is one of the most durable and practical surfaces in any home, but it doesn't take long for grout lines to lose their original color. Dirt, moisture, and everyday use can turn bright grout into something dull or stained. Fortunately, with the right approach, most homeowners can restore and maintain their tile and grout without specialized equipment.

The first step is understanding what you're cleaning. Ceramic and porcelain tile are very durable and can handle most household cleaners, making them relatively easy to maintain. Natural stone surfaces—such as marble, travertine, slate, limestone, and granite—require more caution. These materials are sensitive to acidic products like vinegar or lemon, which can permanently etch and damage the surface. Grout also varies: sanded grout, commonly found on floors, is more textured and tends to trap dirt, while unsanded grout is smoother but still porous and prone to staining.

When in doubt, it's always safest to use a gentle, pH-neutral cleaner.

Consistent maintenance plays a major role in keeping tile looking its best. Dry sweeping or vacuuming hard surfaces several times a week removes grit that can settle into grout lines. In bathrooms, a quick wipe-down or squeegee after shower use can significantly reduce soap scum and mildew buildup. A weekly mop using a mild cleaning solution helps prevent grime from accumulating, especially in kitchens where grease can settle onto backsplashes and floors. Avoid oil-based soaps, which leave behind residue, and be cautious with harsh chemicals or steam mops, particularly on unsealed grout or natural stone.

Even with regular care, there comes a point when tile and grout need a deeper clean. When grout lines start to look gray or discolored, a more thorough process can

make a noticeable difference. Start by clearing the area and removing loose dirt and debris. Applying a suitable cleaner—either a pH-neutral solution or a stronger alkaline cleaner for tougher grime—allows it to break down embedded dirt. Letting the cleaner sit for several minutes is key, as it reduces the amount of scrubbing required.

Scrubbing is where much of the transformation happens. Using a stiff nylon brush, focus on grout lines where dirt is most visible. Working in small sections makes the job more manageable and effective. The tile surface itself should also be gently agitated with a mop or non-scratch pad to lift any film or buildup. One of the most overlooked steps is rinsing. Without a thorough rinse, leftover cleaning solution can leave the floor looking dull or streaky. Using clean water—often more than once—ensures that both tile and grout are free of residue.

Drying the area afterward is just as important. Removing excess moisture helps prevent new dirt from sticking and reduces the risk of mildew, especially in bathrooms.



ALBERNI VALLEY SENIOR CITIZENS HOMES SOCIETY PRESENTS 50/50 Raffle - Food for Seniors



The Alberni Valley Senior Citizens Homes Society, a local charitable organization, is proud to announce the launch of a Food Security for Seniors Program — a community-based initiative aimed at helping seniors in financial need access nutritious food. We know that many seniors are struggling to make ends meet, and grocery costs continue to rise. This program is about dignity and support — ensuring local seniors can access the food they need without having to choose between essentials.

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Before



After

Simple steps like towel drying or allowing proper airflow can make a difference in how long the results last.

Some situations require a bit more attention. Mildew in showers may need a specialized cleaner and good ventilation during use. Kitchen grease often responds best to alkaline degreasers. However, not all stains can be completely removed. Over time, grout can become permanently discolored as stains penetrate deep below the surface.

This is where sealing becomes especially valuable. Because grout is naturally porous, applying a penetrating sealer helps slow down how quickly it absorbs dirt and moisture. Properly sealed grout is easier to clean and maintains its appearance longer. Most sealers need to be reapplied every one to three years, depending on usage and cleaning habits.

Despite best efforts, there are times when do-it-yourself cleaning simply isn't enough. Severely stained grout, heavy mineral buildup, or damaged grout lines may

require professional attention. Specialized equipment and commercial-grade products can often restore surfaces far beyond what standard household methods can achieve. In some cases, professionals can also repair or recolor grout, extending the life of the tiled area.

With consistent care and the occasional deep clean, tile and grout can remain a long-lasting and attractive feature in your home. Knowing how to maintain it properly not only improves appearance but also helps protect your investment over time. **SV**

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