

An Anthology of
Timely Tidbits, Personal Stories, and Fascinating Factoids for

Savvy Jersey Seniors



Advice, Humor, and Miscellaneous Words of "Wisdom"
For & About Seniors

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Welcome!

In this year-end edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for November and December of 2024 we certainly extend our best wishes for a happy, healthy, prosperous, and joy-filled new year!

And we present a call for seniors to consider becoming Election Day poll workers from Haddonfield writer and veteran Camden County poll worker Jen Wilson.



In addition, we have our usual potpourri of information that we feel might make a difference to our senior friends across South Jersey, including some notes on:

- Quitting smoking,
- How to deal with "dry eyes,"
- How changes in speech patterns may help diagnose Alzheimer's, and
- Early signs of hearing loss that you shouldn't ignore.

By the way, please don't forget that we always welcome your ideas for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. As we've noted previously, we're especially interested in the avocations and hobbies of our readers.

In that vein, remember that we especially want to hear about the volunteer efforts that seniors across South Jersey are making on behalf of the literally thousands of non-profit organizations that serve our region. Just drop us a note at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

Worried About Election Day Security...NJ Will Give You \$300 to Make Sure Everything Is Above Board at Your Polling Place.

We're still trying to get you to consider being a poll worker on Election Day. So, if you're worried about Election Day security or if you'd just like to pick up an extra \$300 for a long day of helping your neighbors vote, keep reading.

To apply to be a poll worker on Election Day you must be a citizen of the US and a resident of New Jersey. In addition, you must be a registered voter in your county, at least 16 years of age, and not a candidate in the election in which you would serve as a poll worker.

The day is long...election workers start at 5 AM and finish between 8 and 9 PM. But the stipend is \$300, and mandatory training is provided. Workers are needed for the Primary and General Elections each year. For more information, contact your County Board of Elections.

And if it would help you make up your minds, here are some thoughts from a real, live poll worker, Haddonfield resident Jen Wilson.



Jen Wilson

“Why I Work at the Polls on Election Day”

“Voting is one of the fundamental rights of American citizens and central to civic engagement. But voting doesn’t happen in isolation. It requires people to set up voting equipment, check-in voters, answer questions, ensure voting machines are working properly, and track voter turnout.

“Election day workers are those people. They complete training and work together with a small bipartisan team to ensure voters are able to exercise their right to vote and that elections are fair and safe.

“It’s an all-day commitment that starts at 5 am in New Jersey and doesn’t stop until the polls close at 8 pm and ballots are secured.

WHO CAN APPLY?

YOU CAN APPLY TO SERVE AS A POLL WORKER IN NEW JERSEY IF YOU:

- Are a United States citizen and a resident of New Jersey
- Are a registered voter in the county in which you reside
- Are at least 16 years of age—college and high school students are encouraged to apply
 - Note: Those under 18 years of age will work limited hours per shift and do not have to be registered to vote—contact the County Board of Elections for further information
- Are not running as a candidate in this election

“But most election day workers come back election after election because the rewards of the day far outweigh the long hours and occasional challenges.

“For an everyday citizen like me, the job offers an opportunity unlike any other to connect with my community.

“Assigned to a location in my neighborhood, I get to interact with people I’ve known over the years, and meet new people, too.

“There are first-time voters and long-time voters—each one reaffirming the fundamental principle that every voice matters in shaping our collective future.

“All day long, voters make their way to the polling place. Some bring babies that gaze out of strollers, others bring parents in wheelchairs. Parents give small children their “I voted” stickers. There are pets of all demeanors. Kind neighbors drop by with doughnuts, pizza, and leftover Halloween candy.

"The positive, purposeful energy of the day is contagious, shared freely among voters and fellow election workers. It keeps us going even as the hours grow long and the voters continue to turn up to cast their ballots.

"To anyone considering volunteering as an election worker, I encourage you to take the leap. The experience will give you the chance to help ensure the right to vote and reaffirm your faith in the power of community."

Interested? You can find more information about becoming an election day worker by going to: www.nj.gov/state/elections/pollworker.shtml.

Thoughts to Give You a Light-hearted Head Start on the New Year

SJS reader Jane Conley of Potomac, MD passed along a compendium of thoughts on the glories of aging and we decided to share them with our readers to lighten hearts as we move into another new year. And remember the fact that we ARE moving into a new year is a huge part of the good news. So here is the Conley Compendium of two dozen whimsical perspectives on the glories of advancing age:



Ed Sullivan



Golda Meir



Phyllis Diller

"Old age comes at a bad time." (*Ed Sullivan*)

"Inside every older person is a younger person wondering what happened." (*Stevie Wonder*)

"Old age is like a plane flying through a storm. Once you are aboard, there is nothing you can do about it." (*Golda Meir*)

"The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that never happened." (*Mark Twain*)

"I'm at that age where my back goes out more than I do." (*Phyllis Diller*)

"Nice to be here? At my age, it's nice to be anywhere." (*George Burns*)

"First you forget names, then you forget faces, then you forget to pull your zipper up; then, you forget to pull your zipper down." (*Rob Reiner*)

"The older I get, the better I used to be." (*Lee Trevino*)

"The years between 55 and 75 are the hardest. You are always being asked to do things, and yet you are not decrepit enough to turn them down." (*T.S Elliot*)

"It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone." (*Andy Rooney*)

"The important thing to remember is that I'm probably going to forget." (*Martin Scorsese*)

"I was thinking about how people seem to read the Bible a lot more as they get older, and then it dawned on me—they're cramming for their final exam." (*George Carlin*)



Milton Berle



Ann Landers



Princess Grace

"We don't grow older, we grow riper." (*Pablo Picasso*)

"You spend 90 percent of your adult life hoping for a long rest and the last 10 percent trying to convince the Lord that you're actually not THAT tired." (*Princess Grace*)

"At age 20, we worry about what others think of us... at age 40, we don't care what they think of us...at age 60, we discover they haven't been thinking of us at all." (*Ann Landers*)

"When I was young, I was called a rugged individualist. When I was in my fifties, I was considered eccentric. Here I am doing and saying the same things I did then, and I'm labeled senile." (*Milton Berle*)

"When your friends begin to flatter you on how young you look, it's a sure sign you're getting old." (*Mark Twain*)

"You know you are getting old when everything either dries up or leaks." (*Dennis Quaid*)

"There's one advantage to being 102, there's no peer pressure." (*Dennis Wolfberg*)

"Grandchildren don't make a man feel old, it's the knowledge that he's married to a grandmother that does." (*Norman Vincent Peale*)

"There are three stages in man's Life: he believes in Santa Claus, he does not believe in Santa Claus, he is Santa Claus." (*Leon Phillips*)



Bob Hope



Elizabeth Taylor



Joan Rivers

"Old people shouldn't eat health foods. They need all the preservatives they can get."
(*Bob Hope*)

"Everything seems to slow down with age, except the time it takes cake and ice cream to reach your hips." (*Elizabeth Taylor*)

"Looking fifty is great—if you're sixty." (*Joan Rivers*)

It's Never Too Late: Quit Smoking and You'll Live Longer

OK, now back to the serious stuff. It's never too late to quit smoking, even if you're old enough to be targeted by this publication, according to a new study.

Dropping the smokes even as late as 75 can meaningfully increase a person's life expectancy, researchers reported recently in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Seniors age 75 will lose on average more than four years of life if they keep smoking, compared to people who never smoked, researchers found.



On the other hand, a 75-year-old smoker who quits has a 14% chance of gaining at least one extra year of life, and a 65-year-old smoker a 23% chance. And about 8% of those who quit at age 75 gain at least four years of life compared to those who keep smoking, researchers found.

Quitting smoking is the single best thing anyone at any age can do to increase their life expectancy, researchers concluded.

"We have seen a remarkable decline in young adult smoking over the past decade. However, rates among older adults who smoke have remained stagnant and, to our knowledge, no research had established the benefits for them of quitting," lead researcher Thuy Le, an assistant research scientist with the University of Michigan School of Public Health.

"We wanted to show that stopping smoking is beneficial at any age and provide an incentive for older people who smoke to quit," Le added.



Now That You've Quit Smoking, Here Are Foods to Avoid for a Healthy Immune System

A healthy immune system protects you from getting infections. But an overactive immune system may result in diseases caused by chronic inflammation, Anne Jacobson, MD, MPH, tells *Good Rx*.

A healthy digestive system supports a healthy immune system. So, the foods you eat make a difference and good nutrition can help prevent infections and diseases that come from chronic inflammation.



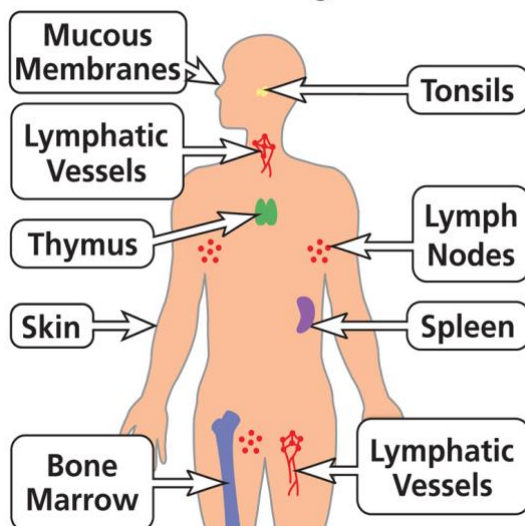
Unfortunately, many foods in a modern diet can put your immune system at risk. But, according to Dr. Jacobson, your immune system is your body's built-in protection.

"When it's working well, it keeps out most of the unwelcome visitors without you even knowing it. But it runs on a complex network of cells, proteins, and chemicals. This means there are many ways your immune system can be stressed.

"Sometimes, your immune system has a hard time keeping up. When it's not performing well, you may get more infections. This may even contribute to some forms of cancer.

"It turns out, what you eat affects your immune system quite a bit. Your gut contains lots of good bacteria that you need to stay healthy. And 70% to 80% of your immune cells are there, too. So, the quality of what goes into your digestive system affects your immune function, warns Dr. Jacobson.

Immune System



Here are seven kinds of food to avoid to help your immune system work for you.

1. Refined grains

Common foods made with refined grains include cakes and pastries, many breakfast cereals, white rice, corn grits, white bread, bagels, flour tortillas, and foods made with white or all-purpose flour.

2. Ultra-processed foods

Common ultra-processed foods include packaged cakes, cookies, and sweets, chips and snack foods, packaged breakfast bars, rolls, and buns, ready-to-eat, microwavable, and instant foods, most fast foods and many restaurant foods.

If a food's list of ingredients has a lot of chemical names that are hard to pronounce, it's probably heavily processed.

3. Fried foods

Fried foods can stress the immune system in a couple of ways. First, they tend to be high in calories. And things are often fried to make them taste good, which probably means eating a lot of calories all at once. Doing that on a regular basis can lead to extra weight, which isn't good for the immune system. T

The second reason is that the kind of oil that's used in frying may be bad for your immune system. Many oils, even if they're made from plants, are higher in omega-6 fatty acids. We need omega-6 fatty acids in our diet. They help the immune system to fight infections. Many healthy foods contain them.

But consuming more omega-6 than omega-3 fatty acids may increase the risk of inflammatory diseases. If you fry foods at home, olive oil and avocado oil are healthier options. But those oils aren't used in most prepared foods or restaurant foods.



4. Salty foods

Most salt in a typical diet comes from packaged or processed foods. The recommended amount of daily sodium for adults is less than 2,300 mg per day. But the average daily intake in the U.S. is 3,400 mg per day. A high-salt diet has been linked to inflammation. That can make some chronic and autoimmune conditions worse, like eczema and multiple sclerosis. Chronic inflammation is also an important factor in cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, and liver disease.



5. Foods and drinks with added sugar

Eating too much sugar also leads to inflammation. Most sugar in a typical diet is hidden in the foods we eat. And often, it's found in foods you might not think of as being sweet. Many beverages also contain a lot of sugar.

Names of some added sugars you might see on a list of ingredients include corn syrup; high-fructose corn syrup; dextrose, fructose, sucrose, glucose, lactose, or maltose; brown sugar or raw sugar; fruit nectars; honey, maple

syrup, or molasses; and cane juice or malt syrup.

6. Red meat and processed meat

Eating red meat, like beef, pork, and lamb, may increase inflammation in some people. That may occur more if the meat is processed. In fact, any kind of processed or cured meat is more likely to affect the immune system. Processed meats include things like bacon, lunch meat or sandwich meat, hot dogs, sausages, jerky, and canned meat.

7. Alcohol

Drinking alcohol—especially heavy drinking—affects your immune system in some important ways. It can decrease the healthy gut bacteria that your immune system needs to function. Heavy drinking can also affect the number of immune cells your body produces. This can lead to inflammatory conditions. But it also leaves you more vulnerable to infections. This can happen for people who often drink a lot of alcohol. But a night of binge drinking can also put your immune system at risk. If you choose to drink alcohol, it's best to limit your daily intake to:

- For men: 2 drinks or less
- For women: 1 drink or less

"Nutrition, exercise, sleep, and stress management all affect your immune system," says Dr. Jacobson. "Gut health is closely linked to healthy immunity. So the foods you eat make a big difference. Aim for nutritious foods as much as possible. And limit the ones that add extra stress to this already hardworking system."



Changes in Speech Patterns May Help Diagnose Alzheimer's Disease

Early signs of Alzheimer's disease in the brain are linked to nuanced changes in speech patterns, according to an NIA-funded study published in *Alzheimer's & Dementia*. The findings showed that certain speech changes may occur before cognitive decline, suggesting that speech markers could be used to help health care providers diagnose Alzheimer's earlier in the disease progression.



Speech problems, such as repeating questions and having a hard time finding the right words, are among the most common self-reported cognitive concerns in older adults. Previous research has shown that speech changes are a feature of mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's. However, it was unclear whether speech changes may be linked to early signs of Alzheimer's in the brain, even before cognitive symptoms appear. A team of researchers from Stanford University, Boston University, and the University of California, San Francisco examined how changes in speech patterns relate to Alzheimer's in biomarkers in the brain.

Overall, the study shows that subtle changes in speech during a memory test may indicate early Alzheimer's-related changes in the brain. The study findings are limited in that speech patterns during a memory test may not accurately reflect speech patterns in everyday life. Additional studies may address this limitation by examining the link between tau protein and speech patterns in various real-world contexts. Further research may also explore whether early changes in speech are associated with a person's risk for cognitive decline.

Suffering from Dry Eye?

According to Hindu Rao, PharmD, APh, BCACP, a clinical assistant professor of pharmacy practice at Chapman University School of Pharmacy and a clinical pharmacist at Providence Medical Foundation. "over-the-counter (OTC) eye drops, such as artificial tears, and prescription eye drops, such as Restasis (cyclosporine), are effective treatments for dry eye."

Writing for *GoodRx*, she notes that home remedies for dry eye include avoiding wind and smoke, using a humidifier, and applying eyelid scrubs or warm compresses.

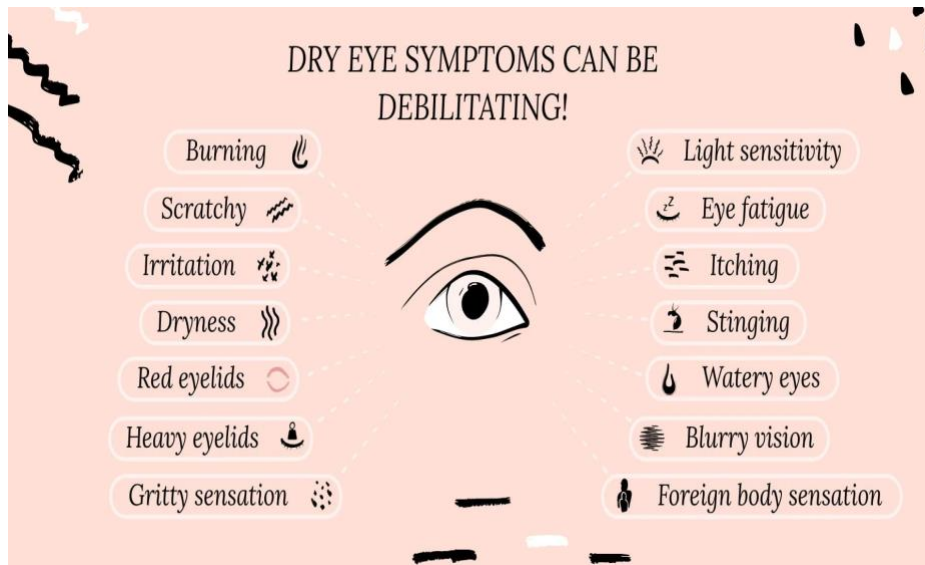
"They're helpful on their own and as supplements to medication," she adds, but "you should contact your healthcare professional if you have severe dry eye symptoms or if your dry eye doesn't improve after a few weeks of self-treatment."



"Dry eye is a common complaint for many people. People over the age of 65, especially women, frequently encounter this problem. Dry eye is no fun, either. You might have a gritty or burning sensation in your eyes, excessive tears, and even blurry vision."

"Dry eye has several possible causes. Top reasons include:

1. Fewer tears are made: Decreased tear production is usually related to a problem in the tear (lacrimal) gland. Sjögren's disease is a medical condition that directly reduces tear production, but older age, diabetes, and contact lens use can also cause fewer tears.



2. More tears are lost: Increased tear loss means excessive water loss from the eye surface without any issues involving your tear duct. Decreased blinking, allergies involving the eyes, and chronic contact lens use can all contribute to tear loss. Increased tear evaporation is most commonly caused by a condition called posterior blepharitis (swollen eyelids).

Other factors that can put you at risk for dry eye include:

- Age: You make less tears as you get older. It's common for the tear duct—which brings tears from the tear gland to the eye surface—to become blocked with time. For women undergoing menopause, dry eye is even more common because hormone changes affect tear production.
- Medical conditions: Autoimmune conditions, COVID-19, and more can all cause dry eye.
- Medications: Some medications can cause you to make less tears. Examples are allergy and blood pressure medications.
- Environment: People who live in windy or dry climates or who spend long periods of time looking at electronic screens are more likely to develop dry eye.

No matter the cause of your dry eye, there are several treatments to consider. You can choose the OTC or prescription treatment for dry eye that you feel most comfortable with.

OTC eye drops, such as artificial tears, are a first-choice treatment for dry eye. They come in many brands and forms (e.g., liquid, gel, ointment) without a prescription.

Preservative-free artificial tears tend to be more expensive. But they're often recommended if you're sensitive to preservatives or if you'll be using them for a while. One drop four times a day is the place to start, and you may feel relief in a few days. Also, remember that gels and ointments are thicker than liquid drops and can blur vision. Applying them before bedtime is ideal.

It's possible that you could have itchy eyes along with dry eye symptoms. In these cases, other OTC eye drops offer benefits. Antihistamine eye drops, such as olopatadine (Pataday) and ketotifen (Alaway, Zaditor), block histamine in the eyes to relieve itchiness. And redness-reliever eye drops, such as Clear Eyes Redness Relief (naphazoline / glycerin) and Lumify Redness Reliever (brimonidine), treat temporary eye redness.

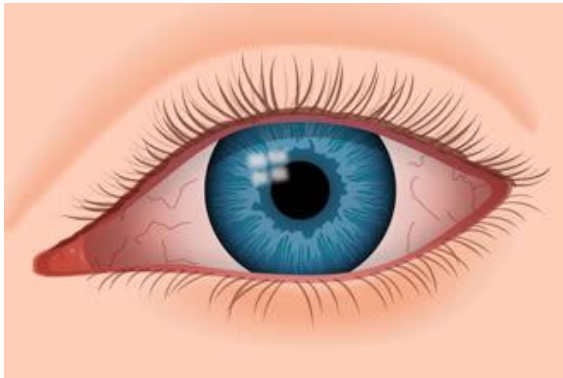
If your dry eye symptoms are more severe, you may need to use prescription eye drops. Available options include:

- Restasis, Cequa, and Vevye: These are different brand-name formulations of the immunosuppressant drug cyclosporine. They're all FDA approved to treat dry eye, but they contain different amounts of active ingredient per drop. Each product should be applied twice daily in order to reduce the inflammation related to dry eye. A generic version of Restasis is also available.
- Xiidra (lifitegrast): This is a brand-name eye drop that was approved in 2016. It's not completely understood how Xiidra works to help with dry eyes, but it seems to affect proteins in the eyes to lower inflammation. Xiidra is also applied twice per day.



- Miebo (perfluorohexyloctane): Approved in May 2023, Miebo is the first in a new class of medications called semifluorinated alkane medications. It works on your eye's surface to reduce natural tear evaporation. The typical dosage is one drop applied four times per day.
- Eysuvis (loteprednol): This is a corticosteroid eye drop that reduces inflammation related to dry eye. It should be applied 4 times per day for a maximum of 2 weeks. Eysuvis is only approved for short-term use.
- Tyrvaya (varenicline): Tyrvaya is actually not an eye drop, but a nasal spray for dry eye. It boosts tear production when sprayed into each nostril twice per day.

Depending on the severity of your dry eye symptoms, you may not need eye drops, Rao notes. "Making changes to your routine or home environment may clear up your symptoms on their



own. But, when needed, dry eye home remedies can also be used alongside OTC and prescription eye drops."

Dry eye home remedies include:

- Changing your environment: Minimizing exposure to air conditioning or heating and adding a humidifier to your home may help. You can also take screen breaks, avoid smoke, and point fans away from your face to reduce dry eye symptoms.

Eye care techniques, such as taking out contacts for sleeping, doing eyelid scrubs, and applying a warm

compress, can also help.

- Taking omega-3 fatty acids: A few studies have shown that omega-3 fatty acid supplements may improve symptoms of dry eye. In a small study of Sjögren's disease, a daily 1,200 mg TheraTears Eye Nutrition Omega-3 Supplement was found to improve dry eye symptoms.
- Getting acupuncture: It's interesting to note that small studies have shown some improvement in dry eye symptoms following acupuncture therapy.

Rao also notes that "the FDA indicates that OTC eye drops should be used temporarily. They recommend that you should only use OTC dry eye drops on your own for a maximum of 3 days. If symptoms continue or worsen after that, they recommend checking in with a healthcare professional. A clinician can help you avoid risks with long-term use, such as eye damage or masking underlying eye problems. By comparison, prescription eye drops for dry eye are often prescribed for daily use."

Men Living Alone Often Reluctant to Ask for Help

In some ways, older men living alone are disadvantaged compared with older women in similar circumstances. Research shows that men tend to have fewer friends than women and be less inclined to make new friends. Often, they're reluctant to ask for help.

"Men have a harder time being connected and reaching out," said Robert Waldinger, a psychiatrist who directs the Harvard Study of Adult Development.

The men in the study who fared the worst, Waldinger says, “didn’t have friendships and things they were interested in — and couldn’t find them.” He recommends men invest in their “social fitness” in addition to their physical fitness to ensure they have satisfying social interactions.

Slightly more than 1 in every 5 men ages 65 to 74 live alone, according to 2022 Census Bureau data. That rises to nearly 1 in 4 for those 75 or older. Nearly 40% of these men are divorced, 31% are widowed, and 21% never married.



That’s a significant change from 2000, when only 1 in 6 older men lived by themselves. Longer life spans for men and rising divorce rates are contributing to the trend. It’s difficult to find information about this group—which is dwarfed by the number of women who live alone—



because it hasn’t been studied in depth. But psychologists and psychiatrists say these older men can be quite vulnerable.

When men are widowed, their health and well-being tend to decline more than women’s.

“Older men have a tendency to ruminate, to get into our heads with worries and fears and to feel lonelier and isolated,” says Jed Diamond, 80, a therapist and the author of *Surviving Male Menopause and The Irritable Male Syndrome*.

Add in the decline of civic institutions where men used to congregate—think of the Elks or the Shriners—and older men’s reduced ability to participate in athletic activities, and the result is a lack of stimulation and the loss of a sense of belonging.

Depression can ensue, fueling excessive alcohol use, accidents, or, in the most extreme cases, suicide. Of all age groups in the United States, men over age 75 have the highest suicide rate, by far.

Less Sitting Can Reduce Back Pain...Even an Hour a Day Can Help

In the United States, back pain is a widespread problem. Your risk for back pain can increase if you are overweight, older, or have stress-related conditions.

Experts want to understand what lifestyle interventions could be most effective for people with back pain.

A recent study explored how reducing sedentary behavior for simply an hour a day could help with back pain.

Over six months, participants who, on average, increased their moderate to vigorous activity by 20 minutes a day and decreased their sedentary behavior by 40 minutes a day saw less increase in back pain than the control group who continued their sedentary behavior.

The results highlight how simple changes in daily activities could likely help people who experience back pain.

Back pain remains a challenging problem that doctors and specialists address. The results point to how a simple intervention could improve outcomes in clinical practice and individuals' lives.

Medhat Mikhael, MD, a pain management specialist, says, "Back pain is very common, about 80-90% of people in the United States will have back pain at some point during their life.

"Pain tends to increase with age. That is because of the progress of the degenerative disease, lack of exercise, and physical activity plus developments of chronic diseases."

Canes Can Help With Mobility Issues

A lot of seniors have mobility issues that keep them from seamlessly getting to 10,000 steps daily, which is recommended by The American Heart Association to help people live more active lifestyles.



5 Simple Exercises for Lower Back Pain

Take care of your lower back with these low-impact rehabilitation movements

- 1 Plank**
Get in a push up position, with your forearms on the ground, shoulder-width apart. Keep your back straight and core tight.
- 2 Back Arch**
Lay on your back, lift your hips, keep your back straight. Hold for 5 seconds, then repeat.
- 3 Swimming**
This aerobic exercise is low-impact and gets blood flowing to your lower back muscles. Losing weight can also help reduce back pain.
- 4 Bird Dog**
Start on your hands and knees. Extend one leg; hold for 5 seconds. For a more advanced option, extend your opposite arm.
- 5 Table and Child's Poses**
Start on your hands and knees in the table pose with a straight back. Then, bend your knees and hips so your glutes are on your heels and your hands are extended forward.

Does that mean we should just shrug it off and head back to bed? Unfortunately, that's how many people respond. It leads to a gradual decline that robs you of your mobility and independence.

The key to keeping your independent lifestyle for as long as possible is to get the mobility aid or mobility aids that you need. Recent advances in mobility aids like improved canes have allowed seniors to be more active and independent.

If instability is holding you back, a cane can provide increased support so you can conquer your 10,000 steps.

Some rely on a cane for every step, and if you haven't walked regularly in a while, you may want one at all times. However, you may find as you start walking more that you'll need it less and less.

Folding canes give you better stability on demand. Keeping one handy reduces your risk of falling and gives you more autonomy. An all-terrain cane can go anywhere to give you even better peace of mind.

You may see an improvement in your flexibility, balance, mood and overall fitness by moving from the sedentary range of 5,000 or fewer steps a day to the active range of 10,000+ steps most days of the week.

You actually start to feel better physically and emotionally by increasing your activity throughout the day. Getting those 10,000 steps can lead to a sunnier outlook and fewer of the symptoms we associate with depression (e.g., lethargy and lack of motivation). On top of that, getting more active can put you in step with your local social scene and keep you more connected to your friends, family and neighbors.

Be Savvy When Shopping for Funeral Services

When a loved one dies, grieving family members and friends are often confronted with dozens of decisions about the funeral—all of which must be made quickly.

Each year people grapple with a multitude of questions as they spend billions of dollars arranging funerals for family members and friends.

Many funeral providers offer various packages of goods and services for different kinds of funerals. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) reminds people who are arranging a funeral that they have the right to goods and services separately. You do not have to accept a package that includes items you do not want.

Here are some tips to help you shop for funeral services:

- Compare prices from at least two funeral homes. Remember that you can supply your own casket or urn.

- Ask for a price list. The law requires funeral homes to give you written price lists for products and services.

- Resist pressure to buy goods and services you don't really want or need.

- Avoid emotional overspending. It's not necessary to have the fanciest casket or the most elaborate funeral to properly honor a loved one.



- Recognize your rights. Laws regarding funerals and burials vary from state to state. It's a smart move to know which goods or services the law requires you to purchase and which are optional.
- Apply the same smart shopping techniques you use for major purchases. You can cut costs by limiting the viewing to one day or one hour before the funeral, and by dressing your loved one in a favorite outfit instead of costly burial clothing.
- Shop in advance. It allows you to comparison shop without time constraints, create an opportunity for family discussion and lifts some of the burden from your family.

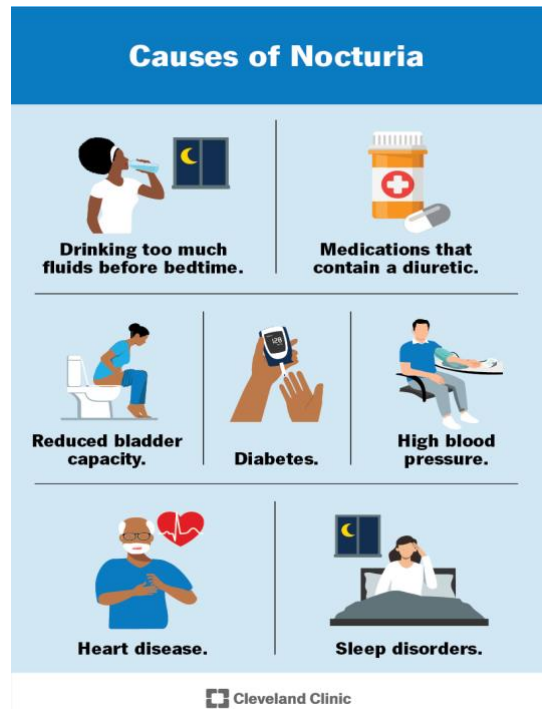
Tips to Cut Down on Nightly Bathroom Trips

One in three Americans over 30 wake up at least twice each night to use the restroom, studies show. These frequent interruptions can wreak havoc on your sleep, but there are some practical ways to manage them.

Dr. Hana Patel, resident sleep expert at Mattress Online, who is based in London, provides the following tips to cut down on nightly bathroom trips to improve your rest:

- *Train your bladder with Kegel exercises.* Dr. Patel recommends doing Kegel exercises—also known as pelvic floor muscle training—as a means of strengthening the muscles that support the bladder. "When done right, Kegels can strengthen pelvic muscles, cutting down on the urge to go at night," she says.

- *Say no to triggering beverages.* Cutting back on certain drinks can help reduce the need for nighttime bathroom trips. "Caffeine, alcohol, artificially sweetened and fizzy drinks are diuretics, meaning they'll increase urine production, so I advise avoiding them where you can," Dr. Patel says. To reduce nighttime disruptions, she recommends either enjoying these beverages earlier in the day or switching to less irritating alternatives, like decaffeinated or non-alcoholic drinks.



- *Ease up on evening salt and protein.* Adjusting your meal timing and composition can help reduce the need to visit the bathroom overnight, "Salty and protein-rich meals can boost urine production, especially close to bedtime," she says.

Eating these types of meals earlier in the evening or at lunch instead of dinner can prevent increased nighttime trips to the bathroom without having to give up those foods entirely.

- *Limit the TV and keep your feet up.* A recent study found that adults who spend five or

more hours a day watching TV or videos are 48% more likely to experience nocturia (frequent urination at night) compared to those with less than an hour of screen time.

"While the exact cause is unclear, one idea suggests that sitting for long periods causes fluid retention in your legs, and increased beverage intake may also play a role," says Patel.

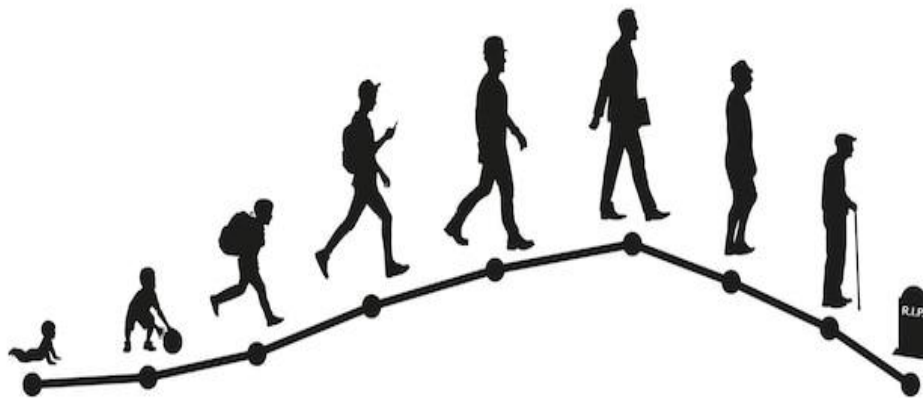
- *Drink up early and skip fluids late.* Maintaining proper hydration during the day while avoiding fluid intake in the evening can help to reduce the urge to use the bathroom at night.

Dr. Patel recommends drinking between 48 and 64 ounces of hydrating fluids in the morning and afternoon to avoid dehydration in the evening. "If you need to drink later, try to do so at least two hours before bedtime to minimize interruptions during sleep," she says.

Has Life Expectancy Been Pushed to the Max?

Human life expectancy has potentially been pushed to the max, new research suggests. The recent increase in people's longevity appears to be slowing down despite new developments in medicine, according to a study published in the journal *Nature Aging*.

During the 20th century, human life expectancy at birth rose by about 30 years in high-income nations, the study noted, driven by advancements in public health.



Researchers from the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) analyzed the national vital statistics of the longest-living populations in Australia, France, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as Hong Kong and the United States, from 1990 to 2019.

Since 1990, the average life span has only risen 6½ years in the countries in the study, which casts doubt on expectations that human life expectancy would exceed 100 years in people born today. The researchers concluded that overall life expectancy improvements have slowed down, and that radical human life extension is "implausible in this century" unless the biological aging process can be "markedly slowed."

Study co-author S. Jay Olshansky, PhD, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at UIC, shared his reaction in a conversation with Fox News Digital. "The power of medicine to extend human life is extraordinary. We're demonstrating what actually happened in all of these populations in the last three decades. The decline in improvement was particularly pronounced in the United States."



"As long as aging is unchanged, life extension through disease reduction must yield diminishing gains — that's the overall conclusion in this paper."

Four Early Signs of Hearing Loss You Don't Want to Ignore

According to Dr. Caroline Amin, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Connecticut, age-related hearing loss affects 1 in 3 adults over 65 years old. But hearing changes can start in your mid-40s.

"Early signs of age-related hearing loss can be easy to miss, Dr. Amin says. "Feeling tired, stressed, or like you can't keep up during conversations are common signs of early hearing loss. But hearing aids can help you hear better and get you back to your usual social and work routines.

"It's normal to develop trouble hearing as you get older. In fact, about 1 in 3 adults over 65 years old have trouble hearing. But people can start developing hearing changes as early as their mid-40s.

"Age-related hearing loss, or presbycusis, can affect your daily life in many ways. People with hearing loss may struggle to keep up at work.

"They might also avoid social situations because of trouble hearing. In addition, untreated hearing loss can increase your risk for developing dementia and put you at risk for accidents and injuries.



Writing for *GoodRx*, Dr. Amin says "Luckily, there are safe and effective treatments for age-related hearing loss. But in order to start these treatments, you need to know that you have trouble hearing in the first place. And early signs of hearing loss can be easy to miss.

Here are four signs that Dr. Amin says may indicate you could be developing age-related hearing loss:

1. You're having trouble keeping up

If you have hearing loss, you may find it hard to keep up with conversations. You might lose the thread of a conversation easily, because you're missing parts of what's being said. This tends to be more of a problem in group situations, when two or more people are talking at the same time. The different pitches of people's voices can make it hard to understand what one person is saying over another. Also, surrounding conversations create background noise. And this makes it even harder to hear when you have mild hearing loss.

You may notice that you have the most trouble listening to multiple people in a noisy environment, like a restaurant or other busy public place. This can make it hard for you to participate in a conversation. At work, this can lead to less engagement and contribution, which can impact your job performance. Some people may avoid social situations completely, which can lead to isolation and loneliness.

2. Conversations tire you out

At first, you may not notice that you're having trouble hearing people speak. Instead, you might notice that it takes more effort and "brain power" to listen to or understand a conversation. The increased effort could make you feel more fatigued. And engaging in work or social activities could take more mental effort. This can be draining when it happens regularly. Research also suggests that this higher mental effort can affect your memory and ability to concentrate. You may find yourself avoiding situations that require a lot of active listening.

You may also find it hard to complete work assigned during meetings because you didn't hear the directions. The increased effort can also strain social relationships too. You may find yourself asking people to repeat themselves often. This may give the impression that you're not paying attention when, in reality, it's because you can't hear what they're saying.

(((Six Signs of Hearing Loss)))

About one-third of older adults have hearing loss, and the chance of developing it increases with age.

- Trouble understanding people over the phone
- Finding it hard to follow conversations when two or more people are talking
- Often asking people to repeat themselves
- Needing to turn up the TV volume higher than other people do
- Trouble understanding others because of background noise
- Thinking that others seem to mumble

To learn more about hearing loss, visit www.nia.nih.gov/hearing-loss.

NIH National Institute on Aging

3. You avoid using the phone

Audio-only conversations are particularly challenging for people with hearing loss. Face-to-face and video conversations can offer visual cues that help you follow along in a conversation. For example, you may not be able to clearly make out what someone is saying, but you can see when they stop talking. This prompts you to start speaking. These cues aren't there when you're talking with someone on the phone. This can lead to awkward silences and jagged conversations. Also, certain sounds become harder to hear with hearing loss.

People with higher-pitched voices, especially children, can be difficult to understand, even with mild hearing loss. If you find yourself avoiding phone calls, or have a hard time hearing children on video chat, it could be a sign that you have early hearing loss.

4. *You're always turning up the volume*

Increasing the volume on the television and other electronic devices is a natural way to compensate for hearing loss. But that rise in volume progresses slowly. At first, you may only turn the volume up one or two clicks. But over time, you may find yourself turning it up even more. You might not notice how loud your phone or TV is until someone else points it out to you. Make a note if a family member or friend comments on the volume of your devices. This can be the first sign that you're developing early hearing loss.

If you're exposed to one or more of these things, your age-related hearing loss may progress faster.

"The good news," says Dr. Amin, "is that treatment can slow down hearing loss. A full hearing evaluation—also known as an audiology exam or audiometry—can show if you have any hearing loss. If you do have hearing loss, treatment options include, like:

- Hearing aids,
- Phone amplification devices, and
- Closed-loop devices

"Your audiology team can also help you address any other hearing concerns," adds Dr. Amin. "For example, they can provide you with hearing protection devices to use at work if you're regularly exposed to loud noises.



"It's important to get care for your hearing loss as soon as possible. People usually wait too long before asking for help. On average, people wait seven years before seeking treatment. During that time, hearing loss can take a toll on your job performance, relationships, health, and safety.

"So get help if you think you're having trouble hearing. Don't wait until your symptoms get worse. Getting treatment can help you return to your normal life and keep you safe and healthy," Dr. Amin advises.



RSV Vaccines Highly Recommended for Older Adults

Since their introduction last year, researchers have been monitoring the real-world impact of the new respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines.

"The evidence is clear; individuals should get vaccinated if they have conditions that place them at risk for severe disease.

For older adults and those with chronic conditions, RSV should be considered as serious as the flu, and they should get vaccinated," says Angela Branche, an infectious diseases researcher.

RSV is a significant cause of severe respiratory illness among older adults, especially those with underlying health conditions. Worldwide, RSV causes millions of infections, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths annually in adults aged 60 and older.

In the U.S., adults over 65 experience high rates of RSV-related hospital visits, intensive care unit admissions, and deaths. Older people with RSV are at higher risk of severe illness compared to those with influenza or COVID.

In 2023, the FDA approved three RSV vaccines for older adults. Studies have shown these vaccines to be effective, with the Pfizer, GSK, and Moderna vaccines preventing RSV pneumonia and bronchitis in more than 80% of participants.

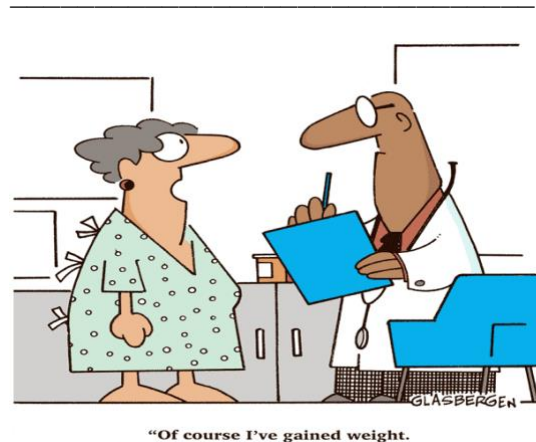
A recent study found that RSV vaccines were 80% effective in preventing hospitalization, ICU admission, and death among adults aged 60 and older. Vaccine effectiveness was consistent across age groups, including those 75 and older, and among immunocompromised individuals. The study did not find evidence of waning vaccine protection within the season.

Restaurant Portions Getting Smaller?

Portion sizes in American restaurants shot up in the 1980s and never came down. Nutritionists and policymakers haven't had much success fighting portion creep.

But today, a combo plate of economics, demographics, and climate science may accomplish what years of official hand-wringing could not: loosening the grip that super-size restaurant portions have on the national diet.

More than 75% of customers say they want smaller portions for less money, according to the 2024 National Restaurant Association report on the industry. Food costs aren't the only pressure on serving sizes. As much as 40% of food served in restaurants goes uneaten





"You can come down now, Everett. The children have grown up and left."



The People Who Have Helped Make SJS Happen

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