

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

Savvy Jersey Seniors



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

Volume 7, Number 3 & 4 • March and April 2026

Welcome

In this latest edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for March and April of 2026, we continue our new regular feature by the director of the Stockton University Center on Successful Aging, Dr. Christine Ferri, who will be offering insights and suggestions on how the region's seniors can stay connected and thrive.

And we continue another new feature...simple exercise tips for seniors of all ages—courtesy of Rich Crowell, the principal at one of South Jersey's most widely respected physical therapy firms.



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



- Activities you'll find at the Stockton Successful Aging Festival on May 8,
- Slashing your risk for diabetes,
- The role of exercise and movement in treating the symptoms of Parkinson's disease,
- Why you should still consider becoming a New Jersey Poll Worker,
- How having a "sense of purpose" can stave off dementia,
- Money scams targeting seniors,
- The health benefits of ballroom dancing,
- Tips on how to deal with constipation, and
- Why New Jersey has decided to stop using transponders in its EZ Pass system.

Your Ideas?

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.

And, 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 22,700 non profit organizations that serve our region.



Slash Your Diabetes Risk...The Disease is Not "Inevitable" for Older Adults

"Diabetes is not inevitable for older adults," say University of Tennessee Endocrinologist Dr. Samuel Dadogo-Jack. "There is plenty you can do to lower your risks."

Here are some steps you can take now, according to the *AARP Magazine*, that can impact your future health:

- Cut risk as much as 25%: Skip sugary drinks. They raise blood glucose levels, causing weight gain and surges in insulin, and ultimately reduce your body's ability to absorb blood sugar.

- Cut risk as much as 17%: Stop eating ultra-processed foods (UPFs). According to a 2024

study midlife and older adults get half their calories from UPFs like sweet and salty snacks. Swapping 10 percent of daily UPF calories for less-processed foods reduced diabetes risk 17 percent in a recent European study.

- Cut as much as 12%: Walk 2,000 steps a day. Moderate-intensity walking – fast enough that you can still talk but not sing – was most protective. Take 5-minute walking breaks from sitting to get started.

- Cut as much as 17%: Pick up some weights. Up to 60 minutes a week, three 20 minutes of strength routines three times a week, will make the difference.

- Cut as much as 45%: Get your sleep. Bad sleep habits like skimping on sleep and irregular to-bed and wake-up times may throw off body clocks that control blood sugar absorption. According to the lead author of a 2025 Norwegian study, Hilde Riise, an associate professor at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, "Small steps like keeping a regular bedtime, limiting caffeine in the evenings and creating a calm bedtime routine can make a real difference."



- Cut risk as much as 72%: Lose a little belly fat: Dropping as little as 5 percent of your weight could reduce your risk of progressing from prediabetes to type 2 diabetes.

The key factor is losing the visceral fat, the deep abdominal kind that boosts inflammation and reduces blood sugar absorption.

Exercise and Movement Key to Treating Symptoms of Parkinson's Disease

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, reminds South Jersey physical therapy guru Rich Crowell.

"Parkinson's is a neurodegenerative disease that present with symptoms such as stiffness, slow movements, tremors, and balance issues. Just like with other conditions, exercise and movement are key to treating the symptoms," says Crowell.

Treatments include activities such as yoga, tai chi, or Rock Steady Boxing, which you can usually find in your local community.



Giavana Good

"But if you're looking for more tailored care, there are physical therapist specialists—including our own Giavana Good—who are certified in a program involving exercise to improve balance, walking, and limb movement. But the most important thing is to stay moving," says Crowell.

You can contact Rich and Giavana at Romash & Crowell Physical Therapy, LLC, 76 Euclid Avenue East, Suite 100, Haddonfield, New Jersey 08033 or at 856-427-9311.



Stockton's Successful Aging Festival Returns on May 8

Mark Friday, May 8, on your calendar for the 2026 Successful Aging Festival, an annual event that offers opportunities for learning and connection for hundreds of older adults in southern New Jersey.

Hosted by the Stockton Center on Successful Aging (SCOSA), the Successful Aging Festival brings together older adults, families, caregivers, students, and community partners on Stockton's Galloway campus.

The Festival runs from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. and just some of this year's presentations include:

- Volunteering: The Ultimate Mood Booster (No Prescription Needed!),
- Managing Money: A Caregiver's Guide to Finances,
- Protecting Yourself in an AI-Powered World,
- Safeguarding Tomorrow, Today: Helping Families Get Organized Before Crisis Hits,
- CareSpark AI: Empowering Dementia Caregivers Every Day, and
- Legislative Advocacy: Steps for Success.

STOCKTON CENTER ON SUCCESSFUL AGING

Throughout the day, attendees can also explore SCOSA's exhibit hall, featuring dozens of

community organizations and health and wellness resources. Local artists, artisans and authors will sell their wares at a marketplace alongside produce and seedings from the Stockton Farm.

The event will also feature chair yoga, a film screening and announce the winners of SCOSA's annual art contest. So, whether you are seeking community resources, inspiration, or simply a day of fun, the 2026 Successful Aging Festival offers something for everyone.

This article is the second in a series for *SJS* by Christine Ferri, Ph.D., Director of the Stockton Center on Successful Aging at Stockton University. Dr. Ferri will be sharing suggestions on how the region's seniors can stay connected and thrive, including information on courses offered by the Stockton Institute for Lifelong Learning (SILL).



By the way, Stockton is New Jersey's only official "Age Friendly University." The school joined the AFU Global Network and endorsed the Network's Ten Principles in December, 2018.



Running around after the grandkids can keep your brain sharp

Having a "Sense of Purpose" Can Help Stave Off Dementia

"You're 28 percent less likely to develop dementia or another cognitive impairment if you have a sense of purpose," according to an October 2025 study cited in *Better Homes and Gardens*.

A sense of purpose which helps your brain's resiliency, may include:

- Working or volunteering,
- Helping others
- Pursuing personal goals
- Caring for family members and/or
- Nurturing your spirituality or faith.

Once Retired, Seven Percent of Seniors 55+ Now Looking for Work

According to *USA Today*, seven percent of retirees have said in the past six months that they have been forced to get a job for financial reasons.

A new AARP survey has found this is more than double the average number. They observed that the desire to stay active is only a secondary motivation.

Approximately 38 million Americans over 55 years of age are looking for work, two and one half times the number of older adults who were looking 40 years ago.

Many are going back to work because of the high costs of living and an inadequate safety net.

Fortunately, says AARPO, the wisdom and experience of these retirees can help them in their search for work in what is a difficult labor market for all ages.



**Could You Use an Extra \$300?
Election Day Poll Workers Needed**

Would an extra \$300 come in handy? Volunteer to be a poll worker on Election Day. To apply 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.



Workers are needed for both the Primary Election on Tuesday, June 2, and the General Election on Tuesday, November 3. For more information, contact your County Board of Elections.

New Jersey Replacing EZ-PASS Transponders...Operational by Year End

The plastic windshield transponders that have been used by motorists for twenty years are being replaced with new sticker-based tags with embedded digital chips that will adhere to the motorist's window.



The system is similar to those already in use in California and Georgia. The shift is being made for financial reasons. The battery-operated transponders typically last eight to ten years before they need replacing.

In 2022 alone, the Turnpike Authority spent nearly \$8 million replacing almost a million transponders with dead batteries.

The Turnpike Authority will test the stickers in a pilot program before rolling them out state-wide.

Existing transponders will continue to work during this period. Then at the end of the pilot program, when a transponder quits or needs replacement, the transponder will be replaced with sticker. The new system should be fully operational by the end of 2026.

As the online *NJ Digest* notes, "This isn't anything groundbreaking, but for New Jersey drivers who've dealt with dead batteries and endless customer service calls trying to replace them, it's an upgrade that prioritizes efficiency and reliability."





Targeting Seniors' Money: Four Scams to Watch Out For

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, an increasing number of scammers are targeting the bank accounts and 401(k)s of older Americans.

Sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) tools like Chat-GPT are used by swindlers to create scam messages via email, text, phone calls and social media that are difficult to spot and use deepfake audio to impersonate government officials. Scammers use fear, urgency and misinformation to trick their victims.

Here are four common financial scams and what victims can do about them.

- *Investment scams.* "These scams aim to swindle seniors in particular by promising high guaranteed returns with little risk in cryptocurrency ventures or phony high-yield investments, among other pitches," according to the *Journal*.

Potential victims are told to wire money to a phony online account and then scammers send fake account statements that show rising returns on their investment, statements that are difficult to spot as fraudulent. John Gill, president of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners advises "The best thing people can do to protect themselves is to call the institution the scammer claims to work for to verify his or her identity and make sure any account is legitimate."

Victims can report an investment scam to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center, the Federal Trade Commission, or call the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority's helpline at 844-574-3577, or report the incident to the State attorney general.

- *Government imposters.* Swindlers are increasingly contacting seniors by phone, email or text, or even appearing in person, posing as agents from the IRS, Medicare, Social Security and other government agencies. The goal: to steal personal information and money.

"They may use a caller ID to make it seem like they are calling from an official government number, use AI to create fake voices to trick victims, or send a phishing text or email with a link that when clicked installs malware or steals personal information."

Seniors should be aware that the IRS, Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid never initiate contact by phone, email, text or social media to request personal or financial information or to threaten arrest. These agencies rely on the postal service to contact clients and set up appointments for contact.

TIPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Don't send money to someone you don't know or have never met in person.
- Don't click on links in text messages or emails.
- Always do your research! Verify information and only use official sources.
- Talk to someone you trust — they can help identify red flags that you've missed.

TYPES OF SCAMS TO WATCH OUT FOR

1. **Grandparent Scams:** Scammers pretend to be a grandchild (or loved one) in trouble and ask for money quickly.
2. **Government Imposter Scams:** Scammers pose as IRS, Medicare, or Social Security representatives demanding payments or personal information.
3. **Tech Support Scams:** Calls or pop-ups claim your computer has a virus and request remote access or payment for fake repairs.
4. **Romance Scams:** Scammers build online relationships and then ask for money, often for emergencies or travel.
5. **Charity Scams:** Fraudsters pose as charities, especially after disasters, and pressure for donations.
6. **Lottery & Sweepstakes Scams:** You are told you've won a prize but must pay fees or taxes to claim it.
7. **Investment Scams:** If someone promises big profits with no risk, it's likely a scam.
8. **Home Repair Scams:** Fake contractors demand upfront payments and disappear without completing work.
9. **Phishing Scams:** Fraudulent emails or texts impersonating banks or companies to steal your personal information.
10. **Utility Scams:** Callers claim your utilities will be shut off unless an immediate payment is made.

Seniors should tighten their privacy settings on social media and update password settings. Victims of such fraud should report the crime to The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center, the FTC and their local police, bank, credit card companies and wire-transfer services to freeze accounts and attempt to reverse transactions.

• *Tech-support scams.* Tech-support scammers will tell their victims there is something wrong with their computer with the goal of gaining remote access to their machine so they can steal passwords, credit-card information and bank and other financial information. They scare their victims into acting immediately without vetting whether the phone number or website links are legitimate.

Seniors should protect themselves by using unique and strong passwords, multifactor authentication, antivirus software that removes malware immediately.

Victims should change their passwords, review account statements for fraudulent activity and report scams to the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center and the FTC, as well as their bank, brokerage, credit-card companies and credit-rating firms.

Victims should freeze their credit with all credit-rating firms and contact the FTC. They should check statements from these agencies to see if there are unauthorized charges or billing for fake services, medical care, equipment, or prescriptions. Victims of a tax scam can also file forms with [identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov).



• *Romance scams.* According to AARP's recent Romance Scams Survey, nearly one in six adults over 50 say they or someone they know lost money to such a social media romance scam.

Scammers create fake profiles on these social media sites to create relationships with seniors, then make a pitch for money needed for an emergency or crisis. They often ask that it be sent via gift cards or cryptocurrency. Often they live far away and cannot meet in person, and might ask to communicate via WhatsApp or other messaging platforms.

Health Benefits of Ballroom Dancing

Writing for the *Courier Post*, Steve Dorman makes a strong case for the many benefits of ballroom dancing.

Dorman's article "Aging in Motion," cites a study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that found the regular ballroom dancing was linked with a 76 percent reduction in dementia risk, similar to the effect of playing board games or musical instruments.



Other physical activities like walking, bicycling or household work did not show the same reduction. Ballroom dancing, Dorman observed, can increase mental wellbeing and emotional resilience while easing anxiety, grief and social isolation.

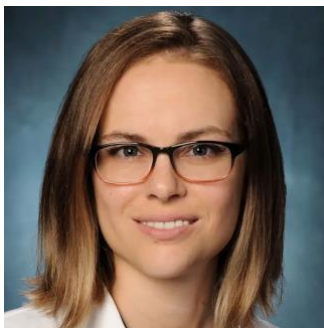
It can supplement physical therapy and helps those with steadiness, mobility and balance issues, as it requires and develops coordination, posture, rhythm and control.

Aficionados say that the combination of partner connection, rhythmic repetition and musicality enables dancers to reach what is colloquially known as "moving meditation." The basic idea is that when you're dancing with a partner, you can't think about yesterday or tomorrow. It forces you to be fully present...which some dancers find to be "incredibly healing."

Dorman interviewed Susan and Hank Savitch, 84 and 85, respectively, NJ snowbirds who just celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary about the impact taking up ballroom dancing has had on Susan's early stage Alzheimers. "Her motor functions, balance, and cognition have all improved," her husband reported. "She really looks forward to going to the studio...When we're dancing together, I see the old Susan come out."

The Five Best Drinks for Constipation...Plus Two to Avoid

It's probably no surprise that no drink can make you poop immediately. But some drinks can make it easier to poop when you're constipated, according to Dr. Christine Giordano.



Board-certified in general internal medicine, Dr. Giordano received her medical degree from Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and completed residency at Thomas Jefferson University.

It's also probably no surprise that, Dr. Giordano notes, that "water is the best drink for constipation because it helps keep stool soft so it can easily pass through your gut."

Coffee, tea, probiotic drinks, and fruit juices are also good drinks for constipation, says Dr. Giordano.

But, she cautions "avoid drinking alcohol and milk if you're constipated, since they can make constipation worse."

If you've ever struggled with constipation, you may have heard about home remedies like adding fiber to your diet and increasing your physical activity.

These changes can make it easier to have regular bowel movements. But did you know that what you drink can also affect the size and consistency of your stool?

Here is the list of the five best things to drink when you're constipated that Dr. Giordano created for *Good Rx*:

1. *Water*: Water is the best thing to drink when you're constipated. Not only can it help ease constipation, it can also keep constipation from coming back. For stool to be solid yet soft enough to move through your gut, it needs the right amount of water. When there's not enough water, your poop gets harder and more difficult to pass.

Drinking enough water keeps your entire body—including your stool—hydrated. When you're fully hydrated, you're less likely to experience constipation.

Water also makes other constipation remedies work better. For example, more fiber in your diet helps with constipation. But there needs to be enough water to "plump up" the fiber in your stool.

Water also makes other constipation remedies work better. For example, more fiber in your diet helps with constipation. But there needs to be enough water to "plump up" the fiber in your stool.

Everyone's water needs are a bit different. The general rule is eight glasses of water a day, but you may need more or less depending on your weight, activity level, and other medical conditions. Getting enough water throughout the day can help you get rid of constipation for good.



2. *Coffee*: Coffee is another great drink if you're constipated. You may have already noticed that coffee can make you poop. That's because coffee activates the gastrocolic reflex, which triggers stool to move through your colon. It's likely that the caffeine in coffee plays the biggest role in this process. But studies show that even decaf coffee stimulates movement in your colon — just to a lesser extent than regular coffee. This effect is strongest first thing in the morning, so consider adding a cup of coffee to your morning routine.

3. *Warm drinks*: If you're not a coffee drinker, don't worry—other warm drinks may also help relieve constipation. A small study looked at whether drinking warm water helped restore bowel function after surgery. It found that the people who drank warm water after surgery started passing gas sooner than those who didn't. Tea, warm broth, and warm lemon water can all do the trick. Some warm drinks, like green or black tea, also have a small amount of caffeine to help move things along.

4. *Fruit juice*: Certain fruit juices can also help you poop when you're constipated. Pectin, a type of soluble fiber, is often added to juice to help improve juice texture. Soluble fibers like pectin

soften hard stool. Some of the best fruit juices for constipation include apple juice, pear juice, and prune juice. These juices contain pectin as well as sorbitol, a type of sugar alcohol. Sorbitol causes water to move into your colon, which can help relieve constipation.

Try adding a glass of apple, pear, or prune juice to your daily routine. If you're watching your sugar intake, check the nutrition label for total/added sugars.

5. *Probiotic drinks:* Probiotic drinks can help support gut health, and may also help with constipation. The gut needs healthy bacteria — called probiotics — in order to work properly. There's evidence that probiotics can relieve constipation by stimulating movement in your gut and decreasing the time it takes for stool to pass. Fermented drinks like kombucha and kefir are natural sources of probiotics. You can try adding these to your daily routine.

If you don't like the taste of fermented drinks, try a smoothie made with fiber-rich fruits or vegetables and a probiotic yogurt.

While some drinks can help relieve constipation, others can make it worse. If you have constipation, here are two drinks that Dr. Giordano advises you to avoid:

- *Milk:* Milk has lactose, a type of sugar found in milk. It can cause constipation if you have lactose intolerance.

If you've been diagnosed with lactose intolerance and are experiencing constipation, take a break from milk and other lactose products.

- *Alcohol:* Alcohol can affect how quickly food moves through your gut. There's evidence that drinks with high alcohol concentrations can have the opposite effect. These drinks can slow down bowel movements, leading to constipation. Also, alcoholic drinks — including beer, wine, and spirits — don't contain any fiber. You should avoid low-fiber foods and drinks if you have constipation.



As you would expect, Dr. Giordano advises checking in with your healthcare team for advice if you're experiencing constipation on a regular basis. Everyone gets constipated from time to time. And most cases of constipation can be treated with diet changes and over-the-counter (OTC) medications.

But sometimes, constipation can be a sign of a more serious condition. If you're having frequent constipation, it's best to seek care.

And, she adds, be sure to contact your healthcare team right away if you have constipation plus other concerning symptoms, such as: abdominal pain, weight loss, nausea and vomiting, fever, or blood in your stool or dark black stools.

How Cannabis May Affect Aging Brains...Adults Over 60 Are Fastest Growing Group of Users According to New Study

About 15.4 percent of Americans over the age of 12 have used cannabis in the past month, according to 2024 data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Interestingly, adults over the age of 60 are the fastest growing group of users. A 2022 study revealed older adults started using marijuana for medical reasons, including to treat pain and arthritis, sleep disturbances, anxiety and depression. More than three quarters of these users found cannabis to be somewhat or very helpful.

In an article for the *Washington Post*, Sarah Klein looked at some of the research which has tried to determine what the side effects of such use might be, whether there are risks of cognitive decline and/or dementia.

And while there is general agreement much more research is needed, some studies have identified risks, especially for those who began using cannabis in adolescence and those who are heavy and frequent users.

Cannabis use has been linked to worse working memory. It is not difficult to imagine that while high, a user's ability to retain information in the short term is affected, but studies on its effect on memory in the longer term also show consistent cannabis users tend to have lasting memory deficits compared with nonusers.

A January 2025 study in *JAMA Network Open* showed heavy lifetime users "exhibited lower brain activity during a working memory task compared with nonusers," according to Klein.



There isn't much research on potential long term memory effects, however, and "available research suggests no overarching association between cannabis use and cognitive decline or dementia."

While long term cannabis use has been associated with changes in brain volume, its most pronounced effect is for those who started using as adolescents, when the brain is still developing.

"In adults ages 40 to 70 who began using after the age of 25, lifetime cannabis use is actually

associated with *greater* brain volume, according to research published this year in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*.

That's particularly true in areas of the brain with receptors for cannabinoids, the active compounds that modulate things such as pain, mood and appetite. The study authors concluded this may be a sign of 'neuroprotective' benefits of cannabis in older adults, given that brain atrophy is common with age and is linked to cognitive decline and lower quality of life."

Staci Gruber, director of Marijuana Investigations for Neuroscientific Discovery at McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA and associate professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, pointed out that some people use cannabis, alcohol and nicotine to mitigate symptoms without addressing the underlying cause, which might help in the short run, but in some cases may exacerbate the problems.

Gruber would like future research to focus on whether the potential therapeutic benefits of cannabis can be harnessed without increasing the risk of harm to improve upon current standards of care.”

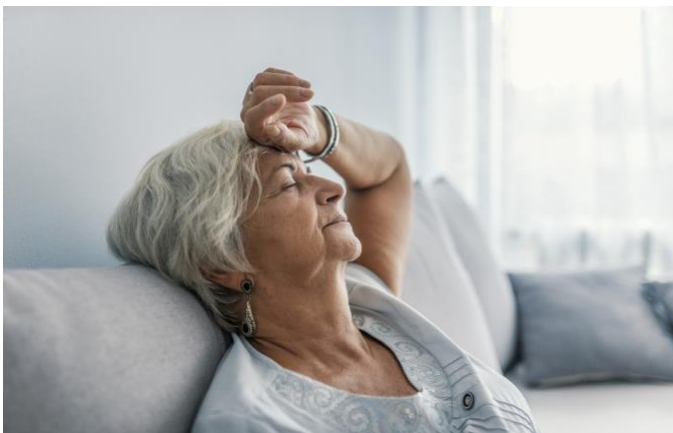
Seven Medications That Can Make You Tired...And Why Your Antibiotic Isn't One of Them

In a recent article Stacia Woodcock, PharmD, notes that if you're feeling tired, it's possible your medication is to blame. Common culprits, Woodcock says, include antihistamines, muscle relaxers, and benzodiazepines. Opioid pain medications commonly cause drowsiness, too.



“While acetaminophen (Tylenol) and antibiotics aren't known to make you drowsy, “they both treat conditions (pain, fever, and infection) that can make you feel more tired than usual, she adds and notes that “in some cases, your energy will return as your body adjusts to the medication you're taking. But let your healthcare team know if it doesn't, or if your fatigue worsens. They can make adjustments to help get you feeling better.

When you're feeling tired, it can be hard to go about your daily activities. And this isn't an uncommon occurrence. Older first-generation antihistamines are more likely to make you tired. These include over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications, including Benadryl, ZzzQuill, ChlorTabs, Unisom SleepTabs, and Vistaril. The newer second- and third-generation antihistamines are less likely to cause drowsiness. So if you're looking for a non-drowsy option, you can give Allegra, or Claritin a try. Zyrtec, however, can cause drowsiness for some people.



Here's Woodcock's list of seven types of medication that can cause fatigue that Dr. Woodcock prepared for *Good Rx*:

1. *Antihistamines*: Antihistamines are medications taken for allergies, hives, and itchy rashes. Some are also used to prevent nausea or help you sleep. So it should be no surprise that some antihistamines can make you feel drowsy if you take them during the day.

2. *Muscle relaxers*: Muscle relaxants, commonly referred to as muscle relaxers, can help treat painful muscle spasms. But

they can also make you feel drowsy. Commonly prescribed muscle relaxants include Soma and Zanaflex. You should use caution when driving or doing other activities that require you to be alert when taking muscle relaxers. It's also a good idea to avoid alcohol, since it can make your drowsiness worse.

Some muscle relaxers, such as metaxalone (Skelaxin), are less sedating than those listed above. So if drowsiness is bothersome, talk to your prescriber about a different treatment option. In fact, up to 45 percent of people in the U.S. experience fatigue.

3. *Some antidepressants*: Some medications are used to treat depression and anxiety. But they're also prescribed for other health conditions, such as chronic pain, migraines, or insomnia.

Fatigue is possible with most antidepressants, but some are more likely to make you feel tired than others, including Trazodone, Mirtazapine (Remeron), Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), such as amitriptyline and doxepin (Silenor), and Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), such as selegiline (Emsam) and isocarboxazid (Marplan).

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) include escitalopram (Lexapro), paroxetine (Paxil), and fluoxetine (Prozac). They can cause sleep problems that lead to daytime fatigue. But some SSRIs can make you feel drowsy without sleep problems, too.

Overall, SSRIs are less likely to cause drowsiness than the antidepressants listed above. But they may be more likely to cause drowsiness than other options.

Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) are similar to SSRIs in terms of making you feel tired. They include duloxetine (Cymbalta) and venlafaxine (Effexor XR).

"Keep in mind," Woodcock says, "that the side effects of antidepressants can vary from person to person. And often, the condition you're treating could also be contributing to your fatigue. It typically takes 4 to 8 weeks for most antidepressants to start working and improve condition-related fatigue. Regular exercise and a balanced diet can help keep your energy levels up in the meantime.



"Your prescriber may also be able to adjust your dose or when you take your antidepressant to help with daytime drowsiness. Or they may switch you to a medication that's less likely to make you tired, such as bupropion (Wellbutrin SR, Wellbutrin XL).

4. *Anti-seizure medications*, such as topiramate: Antiepileptic medications treat seizures and certain mental-health conditions. They often cause drowsiness and dizziness.

In fact, topiramate (Topamax) is an anti-seizure medication that's often referred to as "Dopamax" because of this side effect. Other common examples include Lamictal, Neurontin, Dilantin, and Tegretol).

In most cases, drowsiness and fatigue caused by anti-seizure medications will go away over time. Your prescriber may slowly raise your dose when you first start taking one of these medications to minimize this side effect.

But let them know if drowsiness doesn't improve or is bothersome. They may need to adjust your medication to address it.



5. *Beta blockers*: Beta blockers can help treat a variety of conditions and are commonly prescribed for certain heart conditions, such as high blood pressure and irregular heart rate. They can also be used to prevent migraines and control tremors. Some examples of beta blockers are: Toprol XL, Lopressor, Coreg, Bisoprolol, and Propranolol.

Beta blockers can make you feel tired. And you may feel more easily exhausted with daily activities, such as walking up a flight of stairs.

Fatigue caused by beta blockers often improves over time as your body adjusts to the medication. But if it doesn't, let your prescriber know.

6. *Opioids*: Medications, such as hydrocodone / acetaminophen (Norco), oxycodone (Roxicodone, Oxycontin), and acetaminophen / codeine (Tylenol #3), are used to treat pain. And they're highly sedating medications. Even tramadol (Qdolo, ConZip), a lower-strength opioid, can still cause significant drowsiness. Opioids are often combined with acetaminophen (Tylenol). So it's common to wonder if it's acetaminophen that's contributing to drowsiness. But acetaminophen isn't associated with making you sleepy on its own.

But what about OTC sleep aids such as Tylenol PM (acetaminophen / diphenhydramine), asks Woodcock? "Well, these products contain acetaminophen *and* an antihistamine. Although acetaminophen can improve your sleep by reducing pain, it's the antihistamine that makes you feel sleepy after you take it."



7. *Benzodiazepines*: Benzodiazepines (BZDs) are used to treat anxiety and seizure disorders. They're also often prescribed for insomnia — so it makes sense that they can make you sleepy.

Some examples include Lorazepam (Ativan), Diazepam (Valium), Alprazolam (Xanax), and Clonazepam (Klonopin).

"If you take BZDs every day, it's likely your body will adjust and you won't feel as sleepy over time. But if you're only taking them once in a while, it's more likely you'll feel drowsy after you take them. Talk to your prescriber if you're feeling too sleepy while taking BZDs. They may change your dose or try a different medication," advises Woodcock.

And if you're worried that antibiotics might make you tired, Woodcock says that antibiotics don't make you drowsy. If you're taking an antibiotic, such as amoxicillin (Amoxil) or erythromycin (E.E.S., Ery-Tab), you may feel tired. But it's probably the infection itself—not the antibiotic—that's causing your drowsiness.

It's your body's way of telling you to slow down and rest so it can fight off what's making you sick.

Also, some bacteria release toxins as they die, which can make you feel more tired once you start taking antibiotics to kill them off. Doxycycline (Doryx, Vibramycin) and ciprofloxacin (Cipro) are examples of antibiotics used to treat toxin-releasing bacteria.

The bottom line, says Woodcock, is that if you're feeling drowsy, your medication may be the

cause. Several medications, like diphenhydramine (Benadryl, ZzzQuil) and amitriptyline, may cause drowsiness. Often, this side effect will go away over time as your body adjusts to the medication — but this isn't always the case.

Your best bet is to contact your prescriber if you're feeling too sleepy from your medication. They can help decide on the best course of action.

Good News for "Geriatric Americans" from *The Atlantic*

In its most recent edition, *The Atlantic's* Idrees Kahloon reports that the United States is, in fact, "a fine country for old men."

"Over the past 40 or so years, American wealth has grown ever more concentrated among the oldest generations..." And, the article notes, "across all government programs, \$2 are now spent on seniors for every \$1 spent on children."

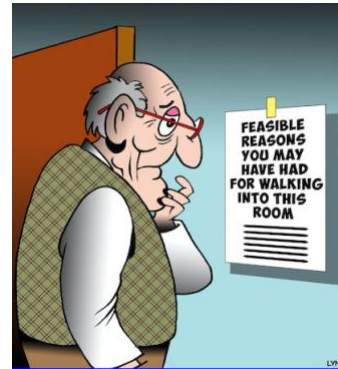
Much of this shift is the result of demographic change: 18 percent of Americans are seniors citizens today, up from 13 percent in 1990. But, *The Atlantic* report adds, "Americans over 55 have accrued wealth more rapidly than those who are younger...Among those 75 and older...household net worth is 55 percent higher than the national average."



"I'm looking for an Uber driver who can take me back to 1964!"



"Don't prescribe anything for my memory. I like it when I forget I'm old!"



Contact Us:

Remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

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