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June 2022

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How seniors can travel safely during the pandemic

A big advantage of retiring is having more leisure time to travel, and millions of seniors capitalize on that free time every day.

Seniors spend more on travel and leisure than any other demographic, according to the United States Census Bureau.

The international travel agency Virtuoso says the average retiree spends nearly \$12,000 a year on travel.

Even though they have the money and time to get away, the global pandemic has made it harder to join the jet set. However, a renewed wanderlust spurred by an increasing number of people having been vaccinated against COVID-19 is driving travel interest once again. Additional booster shots also have assuaged some fears about travel by ramping up virus protection even further.

Seniors who want to get away all over again can take note of the following safety tips so they can stay healthy as they hit the road.

Check with the airline

If air travel is on the horizon, confirm with the carrier if any safety precautions have been implemented. Most airlines still require passengers to wear masks. Proof of vaccination or a recent negative COVID test may be required as well.

Confirm with the airline if any seats on the aircraft are deliberately left empty to maintain social distancing.

Travel during off-peak hours

Mid-afternoon and early evening tend to be busy travel times. No matter how you're traveling, avoiding crowds can reduce infection rates. If possible, travel in the early morning or late at night when fewer people will be out.

Consider vaccination

Seniors were among the first groups of people to be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. The travel resource Go Backpacking says vaccination is now one of the primary requirements for entering destinations

around the globe. If you have not been vaccinated, now may be the time to discuss the vaccine with a doctor.

Check infection rates

Avoid destinations with high infection rates. The World Health Organization offers daily counts of cases on their Coronavirus Dashboard. Visit <https://covid19.who.int> to learn more.

Pack accordingly

Along with the usual travel gear, bring along hand sanitizer, antibacterial wipes, masks, and disinfecting sprays. Wipe down common touch points in hotel rooms, like doorknobs and remote controls.

Dine outside

Many people have safely returned to indoor dining. But if you want extra protection, ask to be seated outdoors at restaurants. Try to limit time spent in other public places if they are crowded. That includes bars, clubs or even museums.

Some simple planning can help seniors travel safely during the pandemic.



Travel perks and discounts for seniors

Having made it to their golden years, seniors enjoy not only the privilege of earned wisdom, but also a few perks that come with aging. Many adults who have reached a certain age are entitled to an array of discounts, which take into consideration seniors' fixed retirement incomes. Discounts are available on various services, including many travel options.

Seniors have a lot of time to devote to recreational pursuits. This list of available travel discounts can help seniors get the most bang for their vacation bucks.

Airline tickets

Before booking a flight, it is worth investigating if a particular airline carrier offers senior discounts. The global pandemic has changed how some airlines do business, and many have faced significant adversity since early 2020. Airlines may offer more affordable flights to drum up business. In the past, American Airlines, Southwest Airlines, British Airlines, and United Airlines have offered various discounts for people ages 65 and older.

Ground travel

Flying isn't the only mode of travel available. AARP partners with various car rental companies to offer senior discounts. Seniors also may be entitled to discounts of 5 percent or more on tickets from Greyhound, Amtrak, and Trailways. Seniors who live in metropolitan areas also may get reduced fares on public buses and trains through providers like New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Accommodations

Getting there is one thing, but seniors also can receive discounts on hotel stays or cruise cabins. AARP reports that many major hotel and motel chains offer senior discounts between 5 and 15 percent. Royal Caribbean has offered senior discounts on select sailings and stateroom categories. Smarter Travel notes that most chains require travelers to book directly rather than through an online booking agency/deal site to be eligible for discounts.

Dining out

Many restaurants, and national chains in particular, offer senior discounts with or without AARP membership. Applebee's offers 10 to 15 percent off to those age 60 or older. Brick House Tap & Tavern, Carrabba's Italian Grill, Denny's, IHOP, Outback Steakhouse, and many others provide discounts or special senior pricing.

Tours and more

Seniors also can speak with travel agents or booking services about discounts on sightseeing tours and other vacation excursions.

One of the perks of getting older is the chance to save money on travel-related services.

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Simple strategies to stretch retirement savings

Running out of money is a common concern among retirees. And that anxiety is not necessarily unfounded, as a recent study from the Society of Actuaries found that people routinely underestimate just how much money they will need in retirement. **Similarly, a 2019 model created by the employee benefit experts at EBRI found that nearly 41 percent of households in which the head of household is between the ages of 35 and 64 are projected to run short of money in retirement.**

Such figures underscore how important it is for younger professionals to save for retirement, but what about current retirees or those on the cusp of retiring? Individuals who fit those descriptions may need to embrace these strategies designed to stretch their retirement savings.

Downsize your home. Homes are many individuals' greatest expense, and that does not necessarily change in retirement. Downsizing to a smaller residence allows homeowners to pad their savings with money earned in the sale of their homes and also reduce their monthly overhead, as utilities, property taxes and maintenance expenditures are typically much lower in smaller homes than larger homes.

Look for other ways to downsize. Individuals also can stretch their retirement savings by downsizing in other areas. Lower monthly expenses by shopping around for less expensive auto insurance policies, downgrading cable television packages or cutting the cord entirely. And though individual streaming services may not be too costly, these expenses can add up for individuals

who have five or more subscriptions. Downsizing streaming services to one or two packages at a time can help individuals keep more money in their retirement savings accounts each month.

Be flexible with your withdrawals. The "set it and forget it" model of retirement investing helps professionals avoid the tricky process of trying to predict the markets. Retirees may take the same approach when it comes to withdrawing their money, following the industry standard and automatically withdrawing 4 percent from their accounts each year. But individuals who want to stretch their savings should remain flexible with their annual withdrawals and routinely examine their spending habits. An individualized approach to retirement withdrawals can help retirees avoid taking more than they need out of their accounts each year. The 4 percent rule has its merits, but retirees should recognize that they may not need to take that much out every year.

Work with a financial advisor. Ensuring you don't outlive your retirement savings can be complicated, as it often involves navigating fluid concepts such as inflation. A certified financial professional can help retirees plan for changes that are beyond their control and even recommend when certain risks might be worth taking. Many individuals will need to stretch their retirement savings in the years ahead, and various strategies can help individuals do so.

Qualities to look for in a post-retirement job



The notion of relaxing on a beach all day in one's golden years is still a retirement dream for millions of adults across the globe. But many individuals also harbor a desire to keep working after retiring. Whether it's a volunteering gig or a part-time job retirees are looking for, certain qualities can make an opportunity uniquely suited to a post-retirement job.

Flexibility: Retirees may be looking to contribute to their communities or simply earn a little spending money, but they will likely still want the freedom to travel or spend time with their families whenever they choose. So flexibility is something to look for in a post-retirement job. This is what makes consultant work so attractive to retirees. In-person hours may not be required of consultants, who can then offer their input while visiting their grandchildren or traveling the world.

Socialization: Though the ability to work from home can make it easier for retirees to earn some extra money, some seniors aren't concerned about their finances but want to work so they can get out of the house. In that case, look for a job that offers the opportunity to socialize and meet new people. Socializing as an older adult is a great way to fend off loneliness. In addition, one study published in 2007 in the journal of the American

Public Health Association found that social support networks have a positive effect on cognition among older adults. So a post-retirement job that enables retirees to socialize could delay or reduce the severity of age-related cognitive decline.

Engagement: A job seniors find engaging also is more likely to provide the types of benefits seniors are looking for in post-retirement work. For example, researchers at Boston College's Sloan Center on Aging and Work found that seniors who find a job or volunteering opportunity truly engaging are more likely to benefit psychologically from those experiences than those whose post-retirement work is not engaging. If seniors find themselves simply going through the motions with their post-retirement work, they can look for opportunities that they can be more enthusiastic about.

Pressure-free: Regardless of what retirees did for a living prior to calling it a career, chances are they dealt with work-related stress. In fact, the American Stress Institute reports that 83 percent of workers in the United States suffer from work-related stress, while Statistics Canada reports that 62 percent of Canadian workers say work is their main source of stress. After a lifetime of confronting work-related stress, individuals who want to work in retirement should look for pressure-free opportunities. This is an important quality, as the ASI indicates that stress has been linked to increased rates of heart attack, hypertension and other disorders.

The right post-retirement job may differ from what individuals looked for during their careers. Various qualities can combine to make for a post-retirement gig that benefits seniors in myriad ways.

The Renaissance of Florence: Voted as a Best Assisted Living Community by U.S. News

U.S. News & World Report recently awarded The Renaissance of Florence as a 2022-23 Best Assisted Living community.

The Renaissance has been proudly serving Florence for over 23 years. Our assisted living community provides fulfilling, independent lives to our seniors. Our residents enjoy every aspect of our community, from our sprawling garden with over 100 species of perennial plants and beehives to technology classes and chef prepared meals.

Our services and amenities include:

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- Engaging social activities and special events
- Fully enclosed sunroom
- Outdoor walking paths
- Chef-prepared meal



What can I expect in assisted living?

The best part about retirement is the freedom to enjoy your golden years. Life at The Renaissance is designed so that you can remain living the life you want for as long as you want. We take care of burdensome tasks and lend a helping hand when needed, so you have the opportunity to spend your time the way you want.

Here at The Renaissance, we encourage older adults to bring the comforts of home with them to our community—including their pets and hobbies. Our residents are welcome to come and go as they please. Our community is your home, and we are happy to provide daily meals, activities, and care services in one central location. We also understand it's vital for seniors to attend worship services and interact with friends and family outside of the community as well.

Senior living is about being a part of a community. All the things everyone brings make our community great. We encourage residents to introduce their culture, hobbies, and knowledge. We love when new residents introduce us to new activities or suggest new educational programming.



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Day trips seniors can enjoy



coastal trinkets or decor. Seaside spots also may boast their share of fishing charters or sightseeing cruises, and seafood fans will appreciate what these regions have to offer in the way of dining.

Historic cities and villages

Touring historic places of register, like Colonial Williamsburg or areas of historic Boston, can be a hands-on way to learn about the country's history. They can provide more personal experiences than books and movies alone.

Zoos and aquariums

Interacting with wildlife is on the itinerary when visiting zoos and aquariums, and such establishments typically offer discounted admissions to seniors. From the famed San Diego Zoo to the Georgia Aquarium, it's possible to get up close and personal with many species.

Wine tasting

A recent study from Wine & Vines magazine said there are 8,391 wineries in North America, and that number is on the rise. One is likely to find a winery to visit and sample the wares close to home. Make a day of it by bringing a picnic lunch.

Museums

Museums are ideal day trip destinations because many are indoors. That means weather never needs to be an issue while visiting. With historic artifacts, paintings, sculptures, or niche items like pop art or collectibles, there are museums for just about every interest. For example, railway enthusiasts can visit the National Railroad Museum in Wisconsin, one of the oldest railroad museums in the country.

Restaurant crawl

Certain town centers and tourist destinations organize restaurant events where day trippers can enjoy tasting menus from various establishments for a single price. Day trips also can culminate at one specific restaurant. A new restaurant can be visited each month.

Day trips are enjoyable ventures that seniors can enjoy when they want to get out but not necessarily get away.

Vacations to faraway destinations can make lasting memories that families cherish forever. Though day trips might not require the planning of more traditional vacations, these brief getaways can still be a great way to spend a day, especially for seniors.

Day trips typically are based around visits to historic attractions, shopping districts, restaurants, or museums. Since they don't require much in the way of advanced planning, and tend to be easy on the wallet, day trips are ideal for those looking for short getaways.

When considering day trips, seniors should look for locales that are no more than two to three hours away. Such proximity ensures travelers will have plenty of time to see the sights and still get home at a reasonable hour.

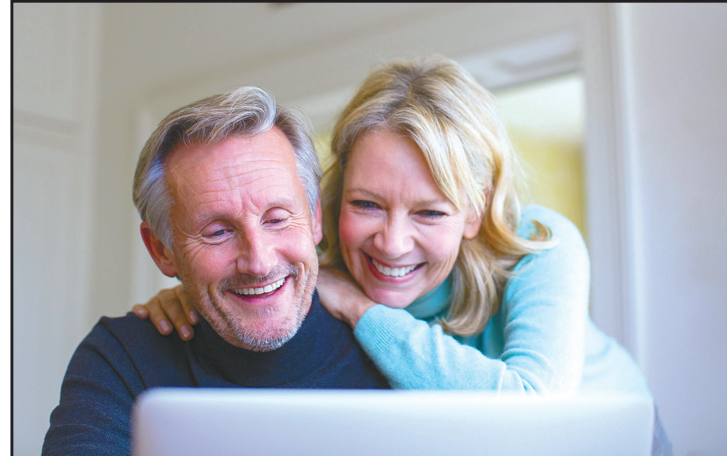
Need day trip inspiration? Here are some ideas to get started.

Botanical gardens

Botanical gardens are beautiful and relaxing places to spend a day. The Botanic Gardens Conservation International reports that there are between 296 to 1,014 botanical gardens and arboreta in the United States, while there are roughly 70 botanic gardens across Canada. People can tour topiaries, exotic plants, butterfly retreats, acres of rolling landscape, and even bonsai collections.

Seaside towns

Visits to the coast make for memorable, scenic excursions. Many boast quaint shops to purchase



What seniors should know about social media safety

Seniors might not be the demographic individuals initially associate with social media. However, Pew Research notes that seniors' social media usage has been steadily rising for a number of years, proving that individuals 65 and over are not tech-averse.

Pew data from 2019 indicates that 46 percent of individuals 65 and older use Facebook.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram can be a great way to stay connected with family and friends and stay up-to-date on community events. But social media usage is not without risks, especially in regard to users' safety. Seniors without much social media experience can heed these safety tips as they navigate popular platforms and discover all they have to offer.

Examine your account settings.

Social media users can control their privacy settings so they can decide who can (and can't) view their online activity. Each platform is different, but profiles set to public generally allow anyone to view individuals' activity, so seniors should set their profiles to private to limit access to their information.

Be mindful of your social media social circle.

It's easy to make virtual friends via social media, but seniors should be mindful of who they accept as online friends. Carefully consider each friend request and decide just how big or small you want your social media community to be.

Many individuals prefer to limit their online social circles to individuals they know well and want to stay in touch with, and that can serve as a good measuring stick when deciding whether or not to accept a friend request.

Avoid sharing personal information.

Seniors are no doubt aware that they should never share especially personal information, such as their Social Security number. However, seniors also should hesitate to share personal information like vacation plans. Seniors who post about upcoming trips could return home to find they've been victimized by criminals who scoured their social media accounts and learned when they were going to be away. A good rule of thumb is to keep personal information private and limit posts to information that is not overly specific or sensitive.

Recognize the threat posed by scammers.

Social media platforms have had varying degrees of success in regard to keeping their sites scam-free. But scammers find a way, and users must take steps to avoid being victimized. Never click on a link within a post from someone you don't know and avoid anyone soliciting donations through social media platforms.

Seniors are engaging with social media more than ever. Such engagement requires seniors to be mindful of the many ways to protect their privacy when spending time online.



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How active seniors can lower their injury risk

Physical activity is one of the key components of a healthy lifestyle. Though physical activity benefits people of all ages, it can be especially helpful for seniors by making it easier for them to overcome some of the obstacles associated with aging.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, physical activity supports daily living activities and independence. That's a significant benefit for seniors who are worried that age-related physical and mental decline might one day compromise their ability to live independently. The CDC also notes that physical activity lowers the risk for early death, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers.

The CDC reports that physical activity is generally safe for fit individuals who are 65 and older and have no existing conditions. Despite that, it's best for any senior to consult his or her physician prior to beginning a new exercise regimen. Once doctors give seniors the go-ahead to begin a new workout routine, seniors can take the following steps to reduce their risk for injury.



Warm up before working out.

Seniors may think they don't need to warm up before exercising because their workouts are not as high-intensity as they might have been when they were younger. But Harvard Medical School notes that warming up pumps nutrient-rich, oxygenated blood to the muscles and helps increase heart rate. The American Council on Exercise reports that warming up helps reduce workout-related injury risk by improving tissue elasticity. So prior to beginning a workout, regardless of how moderate- or low-intensity that regimen will be, seniors should warm up for five to 10 minutes.

Start with a routine that's commensurate with your abilities.

Seniors excited by the prospect of working out must temper that excitement if they're not accustomed to physical activity. Such individuals should consider working with a personal trainer. Personal trainers design exercise regimens based on each individual client's fitness levels and goals. As clients make progress and their bodies become acclimated to routine physical activity, personal trainers can then tweak regimens to make them more challenging. Seniors can take on these responsibilities themselves, but are urged to begin

slowly and gradually build up their exercise tolerance.

Don't skip strength training.

Seniors may think lifting weights is for young people who want to look buff, but the AARP® notes that muscle-strengthening activities protect the joints, reducing seniors' risk for injury as a result. The Department of Health & Human Services recommends seniors who have been cleared to exercise engage in strength training at least twice per week.

Stretch after your workout. Harvard Medical School reports that efforts to cool down after a workout, including stretching, can prevent muscle cramps and dizziness and lengthen muscles throughout the body, which improves range of motion. Harvard Medical School recommends holding each stretch for 10 to 30 seconds, as the longer a stretch can be held the more flexible individuals' muscles will be.

Physical activity is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle for seniors. Active seniors can take various steps to reduce their injury risk so they can continue to reap the rewards of exercising for years to come.



Did you know?

Getting out and about is a vital component of many seniors' daily lives, but it's important that aging men and women recognize how much exercise is healthy for them. The Department of Health & Human Services notes that adults need a mix of physical activity to stay healthy. That mix should be a combination of moderate-intensity aerobic activities, which can include golfing, swimming and even gardening, and muscle strengthening activities like weightlifting that make the muscles work harder than usual. The DHHS recommends adults combine 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week with at least two days of muscle-strengthening activities. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that these guidelines are safe for individuals who are 65 and older, generally fit and have no limiting health conditions. Individuals who do not fit that criteria should consult with their physicians before beginning a new exercise regimen, as it's possible that they could be putting their health at considerable risk if they attempt to follow guidelines designed for people who are generally fit. It's also important that healthy seniors avoid overdoing it in regard to exercise. Though the DHHS suggestions are the minimum recommendations, going too far beyond those guidelines without first consulting a physician could increase seniors' risk for injury, illness or even death.

Inside active senior living

Housing needs may change as adults grow older and their children move out. Adults nearing retirement may want to reduce their cost of living and could find a big house is more than they need at this stage in life.

According to the financial management resource The Motley Fool, in 2019 48 percent of seniors planned to downsize, while 52 percent wanted to remain in their existing homes.

A lower cost of living could be the primary motivator to sell, but less house to maintain and the extra free time that comes with fewer chores can be powerful motivators as well.

Many adults age 50 and older consider adult communities when seeking to downsize their homes. Senior home options are categorized based on the level of care they provide. "Active adult living" is a relatively new option that reflects a growing desire for residences that afford aging adults a chance to downsize their homes and engage in their favorite activities.

Active adult living, leisure living or active adult communities include single-family homes, townhouses, condominiums, and other housing options within a community that offers an array of amenities and services. According to Retirement Living,



residents in active adult communities enjoy country club settings with amenities like swimming pools, clubhouses, golf courses, exercise centers, walking trails, computer labs, hobby centers, and even on-site restaurants. Active adult living communities may provide transportation options and have their own travel clubs. Though active adult residences do not typically provide medical services, many communities are conveniently located close to local shopping centers and complexes, ensuring that the doctor's office is not that far away.

Other features of active living covered by homeowner's association fees include outdoor

maintenance like landscaping, snow removal and sanitation services. Security, internet service and cable also may be included in the monthly fees. Active communities emulate the benefits afforded by all-inclusive vacations, where day-to-day details are handled by management so residents can focus on fun and leisure.

Unlike general neighborhoods, seniors may appreciate active living communities because they have access to an array of services within the community. Some promote a resort vacation feeling, while others may focus on sports or cultural life. What's more, since age is restricted, residents know that many people in these communities have shared experiences.

Active adult communities also are amenable to adults who like to travel. Residents get the peace of mind to lock up their homes and leave knowing lawns will still be mowed and shrubs trimmed — removing signs that the residence is unoccupied. This is an ideal situation for a snowbird who spends time in a different location for part of the year.

Active adult living is the relatively new kid on the block for senior communities, filling an important niche for independent retirees and near-retirees.

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Improve GERD symptoms with natural remedies

Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD, is a painful condition in which stomach acid flows up the esophagus and into the mouth. Sometimes called dyspepsia, acid reflux or heartburn, GERD can generate a fiery sensation in the chest and throat that can range from mild to severe.

What is GERD?

GERD can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender or ethnicity. In the United States, approximately 20 percent of the population has GERD, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). Five million Canadians experience heartburn and/or acid regurgitation at least once each week, states the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation.

GERD can cause difficulty swallowing, regurgitation of food or sour liquid, a sensation of a lump in the throat, or chest pain, advises the Mayo Clinic. Some people experience intermittent symptoms of GERD, while others experience symptoms with every meal or in between meals. People who have chronic reflux might also suffer from nighttime symptoms, such as disrupted sleep or chronic cough. The NIDDK says GERD also may cause Barrett's esophagus, a condition in which tissue that is similar to the intestine replaces the tissue lining the esophagus.

Treating symptoms

In many mild to moderate cases of reflux, individuals can rely on lifestyle changes and natural remedies to prevent symptoms.

Avoid food triggers. Certain foods and beverages, such as greasy or spicy recipes and alcoholic beverages, can make GERD symptoms strike. Acidic foods, chocolate, onions, carbonated beverages, and caffeinated beverages also may trigger GERD.

Fasting before bedtime. Avoid eating food and consuming beverages two to three hours before bedtime.

Lose weight. According to the Center for Esophageal Motility Disorders at Vanderbilt University, obesity is the leading cause of GERD. Extra stomach fat puts pressure on the abdomen, pushing gastric acids into the esophagus. Losing weight can reduce this pressure.

Eat small meals. Rather than eating a few big meals, eat small meals throughout the day.

Try natural herbs. WebMD says that some natural GERD remedies contain German chamomile, lemon balm, licorice, milk thistle, and angelica. Also, melatonin, a supplement used as a sleep aide, has been suggested to help relieve heartburn. But the research is conflicting as to whether melatonin is effective. Always discuss supplement use with a doctor prior to starting a regimen.

Drink low-fat milk. Milk may temporarily buffer stomach acid, but high-fat milk may stimulate the stomach to produce more acid.

Chew gum. Chewing gum stimulates the production of saliva, which can be an acid buffer, offers WebMD. Chewing gum also results in more swallowing, which can force acids out of the esophagus.

Quit smoking. Some studies indicate nicotine relaxes the muscles of the lower esophageal sphincter, the flap that blocks stomach acid from coming into the esophagus.

Losing weight may help reduce symptoms of GERD.



Stay upright. Stay upright after eating a meal for at least three hours. In bed, sleep on a slight angle by raising the head of the bed a few inches.

GERD can be painful, but with a few changes, people can overcome this condition.



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The connection between eating and energy



The connection between energy and eating is significant. A healthy diet and approach to eating can vastly improve energy levels, while a poorly planned diet that lacks nutrition can contribute to feelings of fatigue and increase a person's risk for various ailments.

The Harvard Medical School notes that different kinds of foods are converted to energy at different rates. That's why some foods, such as candy, provide quick boosts of energy while foods such as whole grains tend to supply the body with energy reserves that it can draw on throughout the day.

It's not just what people eat but how they eat that can affect their energy levels. In addition to choosing the right foods, men and women can try the following strategies as they look to eat to boost their energy levels.

Eat smaller, more frequent meals.

Avoiding the traditional three-meals-per-day approach may help improve energy levels, especially for people

who tend to eat sizable meals once, twice or even three times every day. According to the Cleveland Clinic, the metabolisms of people who do not eat regularly will slow down, as the body absorbs and stores more of the food it eats. Those stores include cholesterol and fat, which can be unhealthy and contribute to weight gain. However, by eating small meals more frequently, one's metabolism speeds up and more calories are burned. The body recognizes more food is soon on the way and, as a result, it does not need to store as much cholesterol and fat as it would if meals were eaten less frequently.

Avoid a big lunch. The Harvard Medical School notes that, while the reasons are unclear, research has indicated that the circadian rhythms of people who eat big lunches indicate a more significant drop in afternoon energy levels than the rhythms of people who eat smaller midday meals. Men and women who eat big lunches

and find their energy levels waning later in the workday can try to eat smaller midday meals to boost their energy.

Be careful with caffeine. The foods people eat are not the only components of their diet that can affect their energy levels. Caffeinated beverages can provide a temporary boost of energy as well. However, men and women who drink coffee or other caffeinated beverages to boost their energy levels should avoid doing so in large amounts after 2 p.m. That's because caffeine can cause insomnia, and insufficient sleep can dramatically affect energy levels.

Choose the right snacks. Eating smaller, more frequent meals may compel some people to snack. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics notes that snacks are important as long as they're the right snacks. Avoid snacks that are just empty calories in favor of foods that contain protein and fiber-rich carbohydrates. Such snacks, which may include fruits such as apples and fresh berries or protein sources like nuts and Greek yogurt, can provide lasting energy. It's also important that men and women not snack to fill themselves up, but rather to quell any hunger pangs and get an energy boost between meals.

The foods people eat and when they eat them can have a dramatic impact on their energy levels.

The right snacks can provide an energy boost that lasts until meal time comes around again.



When is clumsiness a cause for concern?

Who hasn't tripped over his own feet or knocked over a water glass on a table? No one is immune to the occasional clumsiness, but some people may grow concerned that their bouts of clumsiness are becoming more frequent.

For healthy people, bumping into a wall when misjudging a corner or dropping silverware on the floor is often a minor, isolated incident. Lack of concentration or multitasking often may be to blame. In 2007, Professor Charles Swanik and a research team at the University of Delaware studied athletes to discover why some seem to be more injury prone than others. Researchers found that clumsy athletes' brains seemed to have "slowed processing speed," which referred to how their brains understand new information and respond to it.

But clumsiness also can be a sign of a bigger issue at play, namely motor problems within the brain. According to Taylor Harrison, MD, clinical instructor in the neuromuscular division of Emory University, coordination of the body is complicated and tied to both motor and sensory systems. That means the eyes, brain, nerves,

cerebellum, which specializes in coordination and balance, muscles, and bones must work together.

Clumsiness can result from stroke, seizure disorders, brain trauma or the presence of tumors, and other conditions. Healthline also says that clumsiness may be an early symptom of Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's. Parkinson's affects the central nervous system and can impair motor skills. Alzheimer's slowly damages and kills brain cells and may cause issues with coordination. This may be the case with other dementias as well.

Clumsiness may sometimes result from a lack of sleep or overconsumption of alcohol. Arthritis also can lead to clumsiness when joint pain and restrictive movements make it challenging to get around.



Psychologists may suggest cognitive behavioral therapy or propose performing tasks with more mindfulness to reduce clumsiness. If that doesn't work, men and women should visit their physicians, who can conduct tests to rule out certain things and provide peace of mind.

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3 beverages to avoid to enjoy better sleep on the road



A good night's sleep has been linked to numerous health benefits, including improved mood and less chronic pain.

While many people go to great lengths to create welcoming sleep environments in their homes, it can be difficult to recreate such atmospheres while traveling. That only highlights the importance of taking other steps to improve sleep while on the road, including avoiding certain beverages that can compromise one's ability to get a good night's rest.

1. Alcoholic beverages: The National Sleep Foundation notes that alcohol may interrupt a person's circadian rhythm, affecting chemicals in the body that signal it when to sleep or wake up. Alcohol can help induce sleep, but the London Sleep Centre notes that alcohol can be especially disruptive in the second half of the night, reducing rapid eye movement, or REM, sleep, which researchers believe is restorative.

2. Caffeinated beverages: It may seem like a no-brainer to avoid caffeinated beverages, as caffeine is a stimulant that can provide a quick boost of energy. However, people who avoid caffeine during and after dinner in the hopes of avoiding sleep trouble may not know that even caffeinated beverages consumed in late afternoon can

adversely affect their sleep quality. The NSF notes it takes roughly six hours for half of the caffeine the body consumes to be eliminated. That means half of the caffeine from a coffee

consumed around 4 p.m. may still be in the body come 10 p.m. Travelers who typically have trouble falling asleep on the road may want to avoid caffeinated beverages in the afternoon.

3. Soda: Sodas contain caffeine, but people may think choosing caffeine-free sodas can help them sleep better. In fact, the NSF notes that carbonated beverages, including sodas, can trigger a condition known as gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. GERD can produce a host of negative side effects, including physical discomfort and chronic cough, that can compromise a person's ability to sleep. Avoiding carbonated beverages two to three hours before bedtime can reduce the likelihood that GERD symptoms will surface, which should help people achieve a more restful night's sleep.

So what can travelers drink before going to bed? While water is always a safe bet, the NSF recommends caffeine-free herbal tee as a relaxing pre-bedtime beverage.



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Understanding panic disorder

Various disorders can disrupt daily life and compromise people's productivity while adversely affecting their happiness. Panic disorder is one such condition and can be especially problematic because of the seeming spontaneity of panic attacks.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America notes that roughly 3 percent of Americans experience panic disorder, or PD, in a given year. While that might seem like a small percentage, it still translates to nearly 10 million people, many of whom may benefit from taking the time to understand PD.



What is PD?

The ADAA says panic disorder is diagnosed in people who experience spontaneous panic attacks. These people are preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack.

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is the abrupt onset of intense fear or discomfort. Panic attacks peak within minutes and are characterized by a host of symptoms, not all of which must be present to qualify an incident as a panic attack. Attacks occur unexpectedly and may even cause sufferers to awake from sleep.

Can anyone have PD?

No one is immune to PD, though some people are more likely to experience PD than others. The ADAA notes that panic disorder is twice as common in women than in men. While even children can have panic disorder and may experience panic-like symptoms, PD typically begins in adults age 20 or older.

What are the symptoms of a panic attack?

Various symptoms are associated with panic attacks. But the ADAA notes that not all symptoms linked to panic attacks must be present to confirm an attack. In fact, some people may experience limited-symptom panic attacks, which are similar to full-blown panic attacks but consist of fewer than four symptoms. Men and women should never self-diagnose, and anyone who suspects he or she suffered a panic attack should consult a physician immediately. But if at least four of the following symptoms are present, a person may have suffered a full-blown panic attack.

- Palpitations, pounding heart or accelerated heart rate
- Sweating

- Trembling or shaking
- Sensations of shortness of breath or smothering
- Feelings of choking
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or abdominal distress
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady, light-headed, or faint
- Chills or heat sensations
- Paresthesia (numbness or tingling sensations)
- Derealization (feelings of unreality) or depersonalization (being detached from oneself)
- Fear of losing control or “going crazy”
- Fear of dying

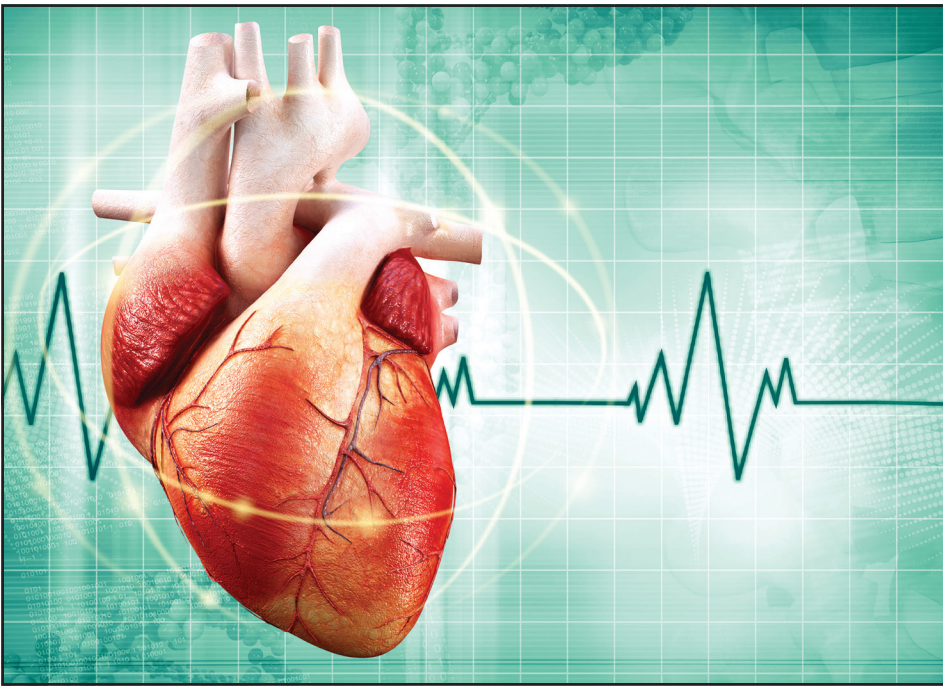
People who have experienced panic attacks and have not been diagnosed with PD may feel as though they are dealing with a life-threatening issue, as the intensity of attack symptoms can mimic those of conditions such as heart disease, thyroid problems and other issues. Individuals who think they might have experienced a panic attack or those who suddenly exhibited any of the aforementioned symptoms are advised to exercise caution and report incidents to their physicians as soon as possible.

Is PD treatable?

The ADAA notes that PD is highly treatable and that people who suspect they have experienced panic attacks should not hesitate to report incidents to their physicians out of embarrassment or fear.

More information about panic disorder is available at www.adaa.org.

The warning signs of a heart attack



An umbrella term that encompasses various conditions, cardiovascular disease, or CVD, is a formidable foe. According to the World Health Organization, cardiovascular diseases claim the lives of 17.7 million people across the globe every year, accounting for 31 percent of all deaths worldwide.

If CVD statistics are alarming, then it's important to note that many premature deaths related to CVD can be prevented. While the WHO notes that four out of five CVD deaths are due to heart attacks and strokes, men and women who learn to recognize the warning signs of heart attack may be able to get help before things escalate. In fact, the American Heart Association notes that many heart attacks begin slowly with mild pain or discomfort. By paying attention to their bodies and learning to recognize these warning signs, men and women may be able to get help before heart attacks claim their lives.

Chest discomfort: Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back is a telltale sign of heart attack. The discomfort may feel like pressure in the chest, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

Discomfort in the upper body: Discomfort in areas of the upper body that are not the chest also may be a warning

sign of heart attack. The AHA notes that such discomfort or pain may occur in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

Shortness of breath: Shortness of breath may be an early warning sign of heart problems. The AHA notes that this may or may not be accompanied by discomfort in the chest.

Additional signs: The AHA notes that some people suffering from a heart attack may break out in a cold sweat, experience nausea or begin to feel lightheaded.

Are symptoms different for men and women?

Symptoms of heart attack tend to be different for men and women. While the most common symptom for both men and women is chest pain or discomfort, women are more likely than men to experience additional symptoms. According to the AHA, women are more likely than men to experience shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and pain in their backs or jaws.

The AHA urges fast action by anyone who suspects they or a loved one are suffering a heart attack. Acting quickly can save lives and help men and women avoid joining the nearly 18 million people who succumb to cardiovascular disease each year.

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Simple hygiene tips that can have a lasting, positive impact

Personal hygiene isn't about just looking good. The effects of maintaining personal hygiene are myriad and include reducing one's susceptibility to infection and decreasing the risk for disease.

Because personal hygiene can have such a profound impact on overall health, some may feel that they need to go to great lengths to maintain their hygiene. But that's not the case. In fact, the following are a handful of simple ways that men, women and children can maintain their personal hygiene.



Wash your hands. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that is one of the most important steps a person can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. After using the toilet, changing a diaper or handling raw meats that have invisible fecal matter from animals on them, people who do not wash their hands can spread germs such as salmonella, E. coli and norovirus. In addition, feces from people or animals can contribute to the spread of respiratory infections, including adenovirus and hand-foot-mouth disease. A 2008 study into the efficacy of handwashing published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that improvements in hand hygiene resulted in a 31 percent reduction in gastrointestinal illnesses and a 21 percent reduction in respiratory illnesses.



Clean and trim your fingernails. Some may consider cleaning and trimming one's fingernails a purely cosmetic activity, but proper grooming of nails can reduce a person's risk for infection. For example, keeping fingernails clean and short can help to prevent and control pinworm infection, which the CDC notes is the most common worm infection in the United States. Pinworms are small, white roundworms that sometimes live in the colon and rectum of humans. People infected with pinworms may itch or scratch infected areas, ultimately spreading the pinworms if they do not wash their hands and trim and clean their fingernails. Reinfection may occur among people infected with pinworms who do not clean their hands and fingernails and keep their fingernails short.



Brush and floss your teeth. There's more to personal hygiene than cleaning hands and fingernails. The American Dental Association notes that the mouth is filled with bacteria, some of which can contribute to tooth decay and gum disease, which has been linked to problems such as cardiovascular disease, stroke and bacterial pneumonia. The presence of periodontitis, an advanced form of gum disease that can result in tooth loss and, in pregnant women, can even increase a woman's risk of delivering preterm and/or delivering low-birth-weight infants. Brushing your teeth thoroughly twice per day and flossing between the teeth once per day can improve your overall health and contribute to fresh breath.

Personal hygiene can help people look their best, but the most significant benefit to emphasizing personal hygiene might be the effects that such an emphasis has on overall health.

Did you know?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, certain foods may help people fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly while others may compromise a person's ability to enjoy a restful night's sleep. In lieu of white bread, refined pastas and sugar-laden baked goods, all of which can reduce serotonin levels, the NSF recommends whole grains. The buildup of serotonin in the brain during periods of wakefulness can contribute to the onset of sleep later in the day. If serotonin levels in their brains are disturbed, then people may experience difficulty falling asleep. The NSF also recommends almonds and walnuts, which contain melatonin, a hormone that helps to regulate the sleep/wake cycles. In addition, foods that are high in lean protein that contain the amino acid tryptophan also may increase the production of serotonin, potentially contributing to a restful night's sleep.





Platelet power could heal injuries faster

Professional athletes have access to various medical experts to keep their bodies in top form. Should injury arise, doctors and specialists will take innovative steps to get professional athletes back on the field as quickly as possible. One tool in their medical arsenal that has evolved over the last several years is platelet-rich plasma therapy, which is now available to the public.

Platelet-rich plasma therapy, or PRP, utilizes injections to help the body heal itself naturally. According to Johns Hopkins Medical Center, platelets are cells that circulate within the blood and bind

together when they recognize damage. For example, when a person suffers a cut, the platelets bind to the damaged vessel, causing a clot. However, platelets also contain hundreds of proteins called growth factors as well as cytokines, which are very important in the healing of injuries. Doctors have learned that they can use these natural healing cells to do much more in the body, particularly to lessen pain and help the growth of reparative cells that will heal musculoskeletal injuries and soft tissue damage.

While the exact mechanisms are still not precisely known, Columbia Pain Management says PRP contains concentrated growth factors and chemical cell signaling molecules essential for muscle repair. The Brooklyn-based rehabilitation and sports medicine center Physio Logic says it is possible to use PRP and adult stem cells to heal and even regenerate lost, damaged or aging tissue.

The process involves some lab time and an injection. Essentially a sample of a patient's blood is extracted and placed in a centrifuge. This spins the blood to separate the components, namely red and white blood cells, platelets and plasma. Through centrifugation, the concentration of platelets can increase by five to 10 times the normal concentration. According to data published in *Current*

Reviews in Musculoskeletal Medicine, preparations for PRP are not standardized, so the concentration of blood matter may vary depending on the centrifugation process. PRP obtained from apheresis results in a more consistent platelet concentration, typically five times that of whole blood. Apheresis is a more expensive procedure that requires filtration of blood circulating from patient to machine. The platelet-rich serum is then placed in a syringe and injected directly into the site of injury.

The Hospital for Special Surgery in New York says several clinical studies have demonstrated that PRP injections have improved function and decreased pain in the elbow, wrist, shoulder, hip, knee, and ankle tendonitis. Early work is also showing promise for osteoarthritis. Also, because the injections are formed from the patients' own blood, there is a minimal risk of side effects. However, it may take a few weeks before patients experience relief.

PRP may be a medicine-free way to treat various musculoskeletal injuries. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons suggests those considering treatment with PRP to check their eligibility with their health insurance carrier, as it is not covered by all plans.

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Breathe easier concerning bad breath



Digging into a bowl of pasta topped with a garlicky scampi sauce certainly may fill the belly, but such a meal also can lead to bad breath. Halitosis, or bad breath, is often the catalyst for jokes. But for many people, bad breath is no laughing matter. Many things may

contribute to bad breath, and some causes may signal serious underlying health conditions.

Strong foods

Foods with strong odors, such as onions or garlic, tend to contribute to bad breath. That's because the foods are initially broken down in the mouth, but then they have to travel through the digestive system until they are passed through the body. These odoriferous foods may leave their mark in the mouth, get carried to the lungs through blood in the circulator system and then be excreted through the pores on the body. Some may even linger on the skin after washing. Avoiding these types of foods can prevent bad breath, as brushing or rinsing one's mouth may only temporarily staunch their power.

Poor oral hygiene

Food and beverage particles can linger on the teeth and gums if proper dental hygiene is not practiced. The Mayo Clinic says that a colorless, sticky film of bacteria can form from the breaking down of food particles, which can cause tooth decay, periodontal disease and possibly bad breath. Daily brushing

and flossing as well as routine dental cleanings are necessary components of proper oral hygiene.

Dehydration

Failure to drink enough water can cause food — and the bacteria that feed on it — to stay in the mouth much longer. Drinking water helps flush away food particles. Similarly, dry mouth can contribute to bad breath. Saliva works all day and night to wash out the mouth. The American Dental Association says inadequate saliva production can cause bacteria to multiply.

Sore throat disease

Diseases of the throat, such as strep or tonsillitis, may cause bad breath. The same bacteria that can cause halitosis may also infect the tonsils and throat, causing the foul aromas, advises the American Academy of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery.

Gastrointestinal distress

The Journal of Medical Microbiology says that bad breath may originate in the gut. Bad breath may be a symptom of gastrointestinal reflux disease, or

GERD, ulcers or other conditions of the stomach and intestines. If persistent bad breath is accompanied by heartburn and stomach pain, it's worth a consult with a doctor.

Oral infections

Surgical wounds from oral procedures like tooth extractions can become infected and produce bad breath. Gum disease and mouth sores also may be to blame. A dentist or doctor can rule out infections as a cause for halitosis.

Tobacco

Smokers and oral tobacco users often have bad breath. Quitting smoking or oral tobacco can be an easy way to freshen up one's breath.

Disease

The gases that are excreted through the mouth and causing bad breath may be tied to everything from liver and kidney damage to diabetes to asthma, say researchers at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Bad breath is more than just a nuisance. In fact, bad breath may indicate the presence of a serious health problem.

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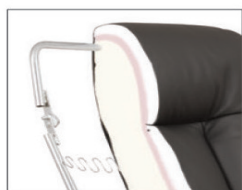
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Ten years on molded foam cushions and steel frames.

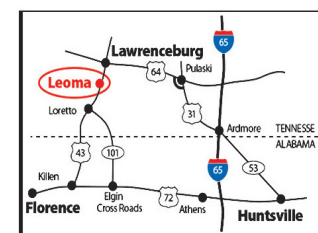
Five years on mechanisms.

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