



Health & Wellness Guide 2024

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How seniors can get their balance back

Balance issues can pose a serious threat to individual health. When a person experiences issues with their balance, they may experience dizziness, lightheadedness and feel as if a room is spinning. Each of those factors can increase the risk for potentially harmful falls.

Seniors may not have the market cornered on balance issues, but the National Institute on Aging notes that many older adults experience such problems. The NIA also notes that people are more likely to have balance problems as they grow older. A number of variables can contribute to balance problems, including medications, health conditions like heart disease and vision problems,

and alcohol consumption. The NIA notes that the remedy to balance issues may depend on what's causing them, though some exercises that require individuals to move their heads and bodies in a certain way can help treat some balance disorders. A physical therapist or another professional with an understanding of the relationship between balance and various systems in the body also may be able to help.

When a specific cause, such as hypertension or low blood pressure, is identified, health care teams may be able to recommend various approaches to help seniors get their balance back.

Hypertension

A 2015 study published in The Journal of Physical Therapy Science found that hypertension, also known as high blood pressure, can negatively affect balance. The study found that this occurs because hypertension damages the large arteries and decreases microcirculation in specific functional areas, ultimately resulting in impairment that reduces a person's ability to maintain a stable posture. Taking steps to address hypertension, such as eating less sodium, maintaining a healthy weight and exercising regularly, may also lead to a reduction in balance problems related to the condition.

Low blood pressure

Low blood pressure also can contribute to balance problems. According to the American Geriatrics Society, sudden low blood pressure, which is also referred to as orthostatic hypotension, can manifest when sitting up and standing up. When it does, a person may experience dizziness or lightheadedness, which may last just a few seconds or several minutes. The AGS notes that dizziness related to low blood pressure also may appear within one to three minutes of sitting up or standing up, which means individuals may be vulnerable to falls even when they initially feel fine after sitting up or standing up. The NIA reports that individuals with low blood pressure can manage the issue by drinking plenty of fluids, including water, and avoiding alcohol. In addition, pay careful attention to posture and movements and make a concerted effort to stand up slowly.

Balance issues are often linked to aging, but that does not mean seniors are helpless against symptoms like dizziness and lightheadedness that are linked to problems with balance. Working with a health care team and identifying potential causes of balance issues can help seniors improve their health outcomes.



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Seniors can boost energy with the right foods

A nutritious diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. And for seniors, the right diet can be a key part of treating any number of health issues. In fact, changing one's diet may be something seniors can consider if they are feeling sluggish.

Food can be a helpful ally for seniors dealing with fatigue and low energy. WebMD says eating a balanced diet is one of the ways to improve low energy levels, and that balanced diet should include certain foods that are natural energy boosters.

- **Whole grains:** Switching refined grains for whole grains is a good way to boost energy. These grains are full of complex carbohydrates that help boost metabolism and provide energy. They'll also work longer in the body than the more refined options. Swap out "white" products like breads and rices for whole wheat or brown rice.

- **Lean protein sources:** While protein does not give the same quick boost of energy as a high carbohydrate meal, it will help fuel the body and keep a person feeling full longer. According to Discovery Senior Living, protein helps increase concentration levels, produces stronger muscles and helps maintain optimal blood sugar levels. Chicken, tuna and legumes are some notable protein sources.

- **Nuts:** Most nuts are a complete pack-

age that provide healthy fats, proteins and amino acids that are good for the body. The fiber and carbohydrates in nuts digest more slowly and help provide a steady supply of energy throughout the day. Replace croutons in salads with nuts, or sprinkle some nuts on oatmeal at breakfast.

- **Fruits and vegetables:** Berries, sweet potatoes, dark, leafy greens, and other produce are low-calorie, low-sugar options for snacks and sides that boost health. They're full of fiber and antioxidants that can ward off illness, and they can provide an energy boost as well. Berries and vegetables can be added to smoothies or salads.

The right foods can help seniors restore energy levels and promote overall health.



Warning signs of developing mental health issues

Various mental illnesses are more common among women than men, including depression and anxiety. The Mayo Clinic says it's common to have mental health concerns from time to time, but when one of those concerns becomes frequent or affects one's ability to function, it becomes an illness.

According to Clearview Treatment Programs, women often live with mental illness for months, even years before seeking treatment. Individuals may not realize the severity of their conditions, or they may mistake mental illness for stress or feeling overwhelmed. Even though the stigma surrounding mental health issues has decreased considerably in recent years, women still face societal barriers, says McLean Mass General Brigham Hospital. Women may not be inclined to discuss their issues and, in turn, fail to receive prompt care.

Signs of mental illness vary, depending on the disorder and additional variables. A condition may affect a person's emotions, behaviors and thoughts. Some signs of a burgeoning mental illness include:

- Significant changes in sleep habits, which may include sleeping more or not at all.
- Changes in eating behaviors, which may include binge eating or going without food.
- Women tend to internalize mental illness, and symptoms can include ruminating, withdrawal from activities and generally retreating from life.

- Physical conditions that cannot be explained, such as headaches, stomach aches, chronic pain, and even high blood pressure.

- Emotional lability, which means rapid mood swings from happiness to anger and sadness.

- Confused thinking or a reduced ability to concentrate.

- Excessive fears or worries.

- Detachment from reality, resulting in delusions.

- Trouble relating to situations and people.

- Changes to sex drive.

- Excessive anger or hostility.

- Suicidal thoughts or attempts.

Mental illness can affect anyone. According to research, women may have a higher propensity to develop certain mental health conditions and thus need to be aware of the symptoms of those disorders. Anyone in crisis should call 911 or their local emergency number immediately. In the United States and Canada, women can call or text 988 to reach suicide and crisis support.



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Boost your diet with these powerhouse foods

A nutritious diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. That's an important thing to remember for people looking to turn over a healthier leaf and accomplish their long-term wellness goals.

Avoiding certain ingredients, like saturated fats and added sugars, and choosing foods known for their nutritional benefits is one way individuals can utilize diet to live healthier. Although such foods cannot entirely eliminate risk for certain diseases or make a person invincible, eating more of them certainly can benefit individuals' overall health.

• **Kale:** Kale long has had a place on healthy eating lists. Kale is a good source of vitamins A, C and K, and also contains alpha-linolenic acid, which is an omega-3 fatty acid. According to Britannica, studies show kale can help combat heart disease and can-

cer, and also boost eye health by reducing risk for cataracts and macular degeneration. Kale is not the only dark, leafy green vegetable that has earned superstar status. Swiss chard, spinach, collard greens, and turnip greens are equally beneficial.

• **Berries:** There is strong antioxidant capacity associated with berries that helps reduce the risk of heart disease and other inflammatory conditions, says Healthline. That's why blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and cranberries are so revered by nutritionists. They're also great sources of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

• **Honey:** This natural sweetener is a powerful ally to animals and insects. Honey is one of the most appreciated and valued natural products, according to the study "Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical

Research," published in 2017. Since ancient times, honey has been used therapeutically due to its antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antiproliferative effects.

• **Walnuts:** Studies have found that those with higher nut consumption have improved cardiovascular risk factors and lower rates of cardiovascular disease. Nuts are an important part of the Mediterranean diet, which has been found to be heart healthy as well, according to Harvard Health. Walnuts are a particularly good choice for lowering LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and apoprotein B (a protein linked to cardiovascular disease).

• **Legumes:** Legumes, also known as pulses, include beans, lentils, peas, peanuts, and alfalfa. Legumes are full of nutrients, like minerals, protein, fiber, and B vitamins. Healthline notes legumes also improve feelings of fullness, which may help people eat less at each meal.

• **Teff:** Not too many people have heard of teff, which is a very small grain that is a dietary staple in parts of eastern Africa. Teff is high in the nutrients iron, magnesium, zinc, calcium, and vitamin C. Teff also contains ample protein and fiber. Teff also is gluten-free, so it can be ground and used in place of other flours in cooking, says Britannica.

• **Kefir:** Fermented foods and beverages have garnered increased attention recently

because of their effect on helping maintain gut health. Kefir is loaded with vitamins, minerals and nutrients, says the Cleveland Clinic. It is a fermented milk that boasts higher concentrations of probiotics than some other fermented foods, like yogurt. Kefir has approximately 12 active probiotic strains.

These nutrient-rich foods can make great additions to health-conscious individuals' diets.



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How nutritional needs change with age

Healthy eating is important at any age and can set the course for a life of vitality and wellness. Sufficient nutrition can help prevent chronic illnesses and make sure that growing bodies develop properly. As one ages, various changes take place in the body, making healthy eating even more essential.

According to Healthline, nutritional deficiencies can effect aging individuals, which can decrease quality of life and lead to poor health outcomes. Individuals should pay attention to their vitamin and mineral intake at various ages so they do not miss out on important nutrients. As a person ages, here are some approaches to consider.

- **Consume fewer calories:** According to Connie Bales, PhD, RD, associate director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center at Durham VA Medical Center, people need fewer calories every decade. That's because individuals are moving around less and have less muscle. This causes a decline in metabolic rate.

- **Include more nutrient-dense foods:** Even though caloric needs go down with age, it's important to pack as much nutrition into the calories a person does consume. That means finding nutrient-rich foods like whole grains, fruits, nuts, beans, vegetables, fish, and lean cuts of meat.

- **Consume more lean protein:** Muscle loss and loss of strength can develop as a person ages. Healthline says the average adult loses 3 to 8 percent of their muscle mass each decade after age 30. Eating more protein could help aging bodies maintain muscle.

- **Eat fortified cereals and grains:** The ability to absorb vitamin B12 can decrease as one gets older and with the use of certain medicines. Many health professionals recommend patients get more vitamin B12 by consuming foods enriched with this vitamin. Vitamin supplements may be needed in addition to food.

- **Drink more fluids:** Health.com says sensation of thirst declines with age. Drinking water and other fluids becomes a priority to stay hydrated. It also helps with digestion.

- **Prioritize bone health:** Osteoporosis is a concern for older adults, particularly women who have reached menopause. Osteoporosis occurs when bones become brittle and can break from only the slightest bump or fall, says the Mayo Clinic. Vitamin D and calcium help strengthen bones, and older adults may need more of these nutrients.

Individuals should speak with their health care providers and nutritionists for further insight into their changing nutritional needs. Such professionals can help customize diets to address specific health concerns.

Potential warning signs of kidney problems

Kidneys play an important role in the body. Kidneys filter waste and excess fluids from the blood, which are then removed through urine. Without fully functioning kidneys, dangerous levels of electrolytes and other substances in the blood can build up in the body.

More than 37 million American adults are living with kidney disease, say the National Kidney Foundation. The NHS, a health service based in the United Kingdom, says many people with chronic kidney disease will not exhibit symptoms until the illness reaches an advanced stage. It is vital to recognize symptoms of kidney issues early to avoid severe complications. Here are some possible signs of kidney disease.

- **Feeling more tired and having trouble concentrating:** When impurities build up in the blood, this can cause people to feel tired and weak and adversely affect the ability to concentrate. The NKF also says anemia, which causes weakness and fatigue, is an additional complication of kidney disease.

- **Vomiting, nausea and lack of appetite.** All may occur from chronic kidney disease.

- **Swollen feet and ankles.** A buildup of excess fluid may lead to swelling in the extremities.

- **Hypertension.** High blood pressure may develop and prove difficult to control.

- **Chest pains.** Chest pains can arise if

fluid retention builds up around the lining of the heart.

- **Presence of blood in the urine.** There may be a need to urinate more frequently, and when one does so, he or she may notice blood in the urine. This occurs when blood cells start to leak into the urine due to damaged kidney filters.

- **Muscle cramping.** Electrolyte imbalances caused by kidney dysfunction can lead to muscle cramping.

It is important to recognize any signs of kidney issues and visit the doctor at the first indication of a problem. However, kidney disease in its earliest stages may produce few to no symptoms, which underscores the significance of annual health checkups and healthy lifestyles.



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The impact of heart disease on women

Heart health is vital. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of a healthy heart, cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death around the world. CVD includes coronary artery disease and other issues affecting the heart or blood vessels. e.

Even though heart disease affects both men and women, it's often mistakenly seen as a condition that mostly affects men. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that heart disease, namely coronary artery disease, is the leading cause of death for women and those assigned female at birth. It occurs when plaque develops in the walls of the arteries and slows down the flow of blood supply to the heart and other parts of the body. Women are particularly at risk because, after menopause, hormone changes like a reduction in the production of estrogen can cause higher risk of coronary heart disease, especially in smaller blood vessels.

In addition to hormonal changes after menopause, the risk factors for heart disease in women include:

- Diabetes: Women with diabetes are more likely to develop heart disease than men with diabetes. There's also an increased risk of silent heart attack since diabetes can change the way women perceive pain.
- Mental health: Emotional stress and depression can affect women's hearts more than men's, as depression may compromise a

woman's ability to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Smoking: Smoking is another risk factor for heart disease.
- Inactivity: A sedentary lifestyle increases heart disease risk.
- Inflammatory diseases: Individuals with arthritis, lupus and other inflammatory conditions may be at an elevated risk for heart disease.

Learning about the warning signs of heart attack and stroke can help women stay on top of their health. Here's what to look for, courtesy of GoRedForWomen.org.

Heart attack

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of your chest. It lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
 - Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
 - Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.
 - Cold sweats, nausea or lightheadedness.
 - Chest pain or discomfort.
- Stroke
- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
 - Sudden confusion or trouble communicating.

- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

Women mindful of the risk factors of heart disease as well as the symptoms of heart attack and stroke may be better positioned to protect their long-term heart health.



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Stay healthy while pregnant

Pregnancy can be an exciting time in a couple's life. Ensuring mother and child stay healthy is a foremost concern during pregnancy, and women can do various things to maintain their health during this magical time in their lives.

- Avoid tobacco and alcohol. It is never a good idea to smoke or drink alcohol while pregnant. The moment a woman learns she is pregnant, she should cease these habits if she is a smoker and/or drinker.

- Visit an obstetrician for prenatal testing. A health care provider can counsel a woman through the stages of her pregnancy. Routine blood tests and additional screenings are part of prenatal care, which is important for learning about the development of the fetus and ensuring a healthy pregnancy.

- Healthy eating is important. Nemours Kids Health says eating a nutritious diet is

important for anyone, but when a woman is pregnant she needs to pay special attention to her diet to boost her baby's growth and development. Nutritious foods include lean meats, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.

- Increase fluid intake. It is important for a pregnant woman to drink plenty of water and other healthy beverages to support the life inside her. Water can prevent excessive swelling of limbs and urinary tract/bladder infections and help a woman avoid constipation. The Institute of Medicine recommends roughly 10 cups of fluids daily.

- Maintain a healthy weight. Weight gain is common during pregnancy, but it is important to avoid gaining too much extra weight. Physical fitness helps keep the heart, bones and mind healthy during pregnancy. So after checking with her doctor, a pregnant woman

should engage in workouts that align with her physical abilities.

- Be mindful of medication. Certain over-the-counter and prescription medications are unsafe during pregnancy. A woman should speak with her doctor to find out which medications should be avoided.

- Take an Rh factor blood test. According to the Mayo Clinic, Rh factor is an inherited protein found on the surface of red blood cells. Having the protein makes a person Rh positive. The absence of the protein makes one Rh negative. Rh positive is much more common. During pregnancy, problems may arise if a mother is Rh negative and the baby is Rh positive. Although the blood of both mother and fetus don't usually mix during pregnancy, a small amount can mix during the birth, introducing antibodies. While this will not affect a first pregnancy, subsequent

pregnancies can be impacted. An injection of Rh immune globulin typically will be administered if a woman is Rh negative during pregnancy. A second shot may come after the birth if her infant is found to be Rh positive.

Women can employ various strategies to increase their chances of enjoying a healthy pregnancy.

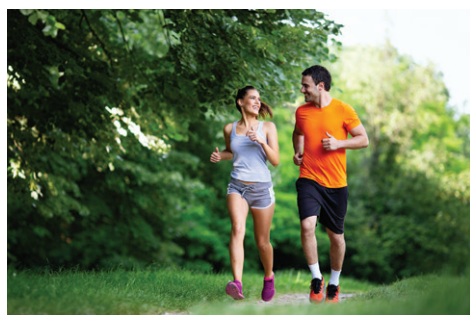


Did you know?

Falls pose a significant threat to the senior population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says someone age 65 or older suffers a fall every second of every day in the United States. This makes falls the leading cause of injury and injury death among this demographic. The National Council on Aging says one in four Americans fall each year. In fact, the NCOA notes that falls result in more than three million injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms each year, including more than 800,000 that lead to hospitalization. The financial toll of falls among older adults also is significant, and estimates suggest falls will cost \$101 billion annually by 2030. That cost is only expected to increase as the population ages.

Did you know?

Exercise is just as beneficial for older adults as it is for children and young adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, engaging in regular physical activity is among the most important steps older adults can take as they seek to safeguard their overall health. Such activity can prevent or delay many age-related health problems and strengthen muscles while improving balance, which can reduce risk for falls and injuries such as broken bones. The CDC notes that certain physical activities can be characterized as multicomponent activities, which means they combine aerobic activity, muscle strengthening and balance training. Examples of such activities include dancing, yoga, tai chi, gardening, and even sports participation.





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