

Live long, be well:

Science-based tips for healthy aging

Caring for your body, mind, mental health, and relationships has health benefits no matter your age.

These science-based tips can help you stay healthy, happy, and independent for years to come.



Prioritize your health with tips from the National Institute on Aging.

Get moving

Physical exercise can increase mobility, help prevent falls and fractures, and reduce the risk of some diseases associated with aging. It can also give the brain a boost, which can help with tasks like processing information, learning new things, paying attention, and solving problems. These kinds of exercise are especially important as you get older:

- **Endurance and aerobic exercises** such as hiking, biking, dancing, and swimming, which strengthen your heart and lungs and boost circulation
- **Strength exercises** such as weightlifting, resistance band workouts, and carrying groceries, which keep your muscles strong
- **Balance exercises** such as tai chi and standing on one foot, which help improve coordination and build strength to reduce the risk of falls and fractures
- **Flexibility exercises and stretches** such as yoga, which can help keep you limber and protect you from injuries

Experts recommend aiming for 2.5 hours of physical exercise each week, which is only slightly more than 21 minutes per day. Get more tips for [getting \(and staying\) physically active as you age](#).

Eat healthy

A diet that includes plenty of [nutrients, vitamins, and minerals](#) keeps your brain and body healthy and may reduce your risk of some aging-related diseases.

- **Prioritize nutrient-rich foods** such as seafood, plant-based proteins like nuts and seeds, and lean (low-fat) meats and poultry.

- **Limit foods with unhealthy additives** such as added sugars and saturated fats.
- **Say “yes” to fruits and vegetables.** Research [shows that eating five servings of fruits and vegetables every day can reduce your risk of some chronic diseases](#).
- **Watch your portion size.** Keep an eye on how much you are eating and talk to your doctor about how many calories are right for you and your lifestyle.

A Mediterranean-style diet—which includes nuts, vegetables, and fish—is one example of a diet that’s good for heart health and [may support the brain’s ability to think and remember](#).

Prioritize your physical health

Small changes add up. Start today for greater health benefits later in life.

- **Drink less alcohol.** Alcohol can contribute to health problems, especially as you get older. If you drink, try sticking to one drink a day or less, or stop drinking altogether.
- **Prioritize sleep.** Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. A bedtime routine and a regular sleep schedule can help develop good sleep hygiene.
- **Quit smoking and tobacco use.** If you use tobacco, dropping the habit now will help you feel better right away and can add years to your life, even if you’ve been smoking for a long time.
- **Keep up on your health care.** Make sure to get regular checkups and stay up to date on your health screenings and vaccinations.

Hobbies are fun, and they’re also an important part of healthy aging. Research shows that **older adults who engage in personally meaningful activities live longer**, are less likely to develop certain diseases, and are happier, less depressed, and more resilient.

SOURCE: National Institute on Aging

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

Care for your mental health

- **Keep your stress in check.** Chronic stress can damage the brain and body, including the parts of the brain involved with learning and memory. Strategies like getting regular exercise, meditating, and connecting with friends and family can help you manage stress.
- **Speak up if you feel down.** If you're struggling with mental health, don't be afraid to reach out. [Help is available!](#)

Nurture your relationships

No matter your age, feeling lonely and socially isolated can be harmful to your physical, emotional, and cognitive health. Developing and maintaining strong social ties can help you feel more engaged and connected. Try:

- **Volunteering** for a local organization.
- **Scheduling regular check-ins** with friends and family who live far away.
- **Connecting with other people in your community.** Get to know your neighbors or join a local club.

Engage your mind

Exercising your brain is just as important as exercising your body. Activities that challenge your brain on a regular basis keep your mind active and healthy and may help slow cognitive decline as you get older. Try:

- **Learning something new** like a new skill, language, or game.
- **Getting out and about**—you could visit a museum or try an exercise class.
- **Spending time on your hobbies**—for example, reading a book, playing the guitar, or cooking a nourishing meal.

Join a clinical study

Scientists are learning new things about the aging process and the best ways to support health, well-being, and healthy aging throughout life. Participating in a clinical research study is a great way to contribute to the scientific process and improve lives. [Find out more about clinical research and how to volunteer for studies.](#) ■

What we know about the science of healthy aging

Every day, NIH-funded scientists are making discoveries about aging process, age-related diseases and conditions, and ways to help people live longer, healthier lives.

[What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?](#) is a free booklet from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) that breaks down the science of healthy aging and provides steps you can take today to optimize your health as you grow older.

[What Do We Know About Healthy Aging?](#) is available as a PDF download or paper publication that you can share with friends and loved ones.



IMAGE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING



Use NIA's resources to spread the word about the harmful effects of social isolation and loneliness and to share strategies for staying connected.

STAY CONNECTED:
Tips from the National Institute on Aging for combating social isolation and loneliness

1 in 3 adults aged 45 and older feel lonely, and **1 in 4** aged 65 and older are socially isolated.

SOURCE: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

Ways to stay connected include:

- **Checking in regularly** with family and friends via phone, email, or video chat
- **Meeting other people** with shared interests
- **Trying a new activity** or revisiting an old hobby
- **Getting involved** in the community

Have you ever felt lonely in a busy supermarket or a crowded party? While we all feel lonely sometimes, social ties are important for everyone. Strong connections are particularly important for the health and well-being of older adults.

Loneliness and social isolation aren't the same thing, but they are related. Loneliness is a feeling of emotional pain about being alone or separated from other people (even if we're not physically alone). Social isolation results from not having many social contacts or people to interact with, which can lead to feeling very lonely.

As people age, they often find themselves spending more time alone. Certain things can put older adults at a higher risk for social isolation and loneliness. These include living alone, having limited mobility or no reliable way to get around, financial struggles, language barriers, and caregiving duties. Physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic also made it harder to see family and friends in person.

One in four adults aged 65 and older are socially isolated, and research shows that this can take a toll on overall health and well-being. Loneliness and social isolation have been linked to conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline.

To address this challenge, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) has tips to help older adults stay connected. [Check out NIA's Loneliness and Social Isolation—Tips for Staying Connected](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) for more information and resources to help you and your loved ones stay in touch.

You can also spread the word online with NIA's [Social Isolation and Loneliness Outreach Toolkit](#). With these tools and resources at your fingertips, you can join the fight against loneliness and social isolation and support older adults in your family, community, and beyond in building and maintaining strong social connections. ■

IMAGE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING