

Living 50 Plus



HOW TO STAY FLEXIBLE AS YOU AGE

Men and women may begin to feel less flexible as they get older. According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, that loss of flexibility is because muscles lose both strength and elasticity as the body ages.

A lack of flexibility can make men and women more vulnerable to certain types of injuries, including muscle strains and tears. While people might not be able to maintain the flexibility they enjoyed in their twenties, there are ways for them to combat age-related loss of flexibility.

- Stretch frequently. Stretching is a great way to combat age-related loss of flexibility. Stretch major muscle groups, such as hamstrings and shoulder muscles, several times per week. When practicing static stretching, the goal is to gradually elongate the muscle being stretched before holding the elongated position, and ultimately allowing the muscle to return to resting position. As flexibility improves, elongated stretches can be held for 30 seconds. Avoid stretching muscles that are sore or injured, and discontinue a stretch if you feel pain or discomfort.

- Include yoga in your exercise regimen. Practitioners of yoga typically love how this unique discipline that exercises the body while relaxing the mind improves their flexibility. Many yoga poses are designed to improve the strength and flexibility of muscles, and some physicians may even recommend yoga to aging patients. Yoga DVDs or streaming sessions can be great, but beginners may want to visit yoga studios or sign up for classes at their gyms so instructors can personally ensure they are doing each pose correctly. As their flexibility improves, men and women can try more difficult poses and classes if they so desire.



- Get in the pool. Swimming is another activity that can help aging men and women improve their flexibility. Strength-training exercises are an important component of a well-balanced exercise regimen, but such workouts tend to focus on one or two muscle groups at a time. That means other muscle groups may be inactive and tighten up as a result. Swimming works the entire body, which helps all muscle groups stay loose and flexible. One or two swimming sessions per week can contribute to great gains in overall flexibility, especially for men and women who remember to stretch when they get out of the pool.

Flexibility may decrease as men and women age, but there are various ways to combat the natural loss of flexibility.

ADDICTED SENIORS A SERIOUS PROBLEM: OPIOID USE AMONG THE OLDER POPULATION

The public is quickly learning that drug abuse goes beyond the illegal substances that are purchased on the street. Abuse of drugs extends to the prescription medications sitting in many medicine cabinets.

While teenagers and young adults may be the first to be stereotyped as prescription drug abusers, seniors may have unwittingly become mixed up in one of the most misused prescription classes: opioid pain relievers.

The problem of opioid abuse has been a growing issue for years. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates 2.1 million people in the United States suffer from substance abuse of opioid pain relievers. Older patients are increasingly and repeatedly prescribed opioids to address chronic pain from arthritis, cancer and other problems that become more apparent as people age.

Data from U.S. Medicare recipients found that, in 2011, roughly 15 percent of seniors were prescribed an opioid after being discharged from the hospital. When followed up on three months later, 42 percent were still taking the medication. Fast forward to 2015, and almost one-third of all Medicare patients were prescribed opioid painkillers by their physicians, says AARP.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information says adults between the ages of 45 and 64 and seniors age 65 and older had the highest rates of hospitalizations due to opioid poisoning over the past 10 years.

AARP also indicates nearly three million Americans age 50 or older have started to take painkillers for reasons beyond what their doctors prescribed. Experts from the Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing warn that dependence on opioids can set in after just a few days. Discomfort and side effects can occur when the pills are stopped. Opioids can decrease pain at first, but many people find they can be less effective over time. As a result, patients need to take greater amounts. Although many people can take opioids in small doses for short periods of time without problems, many find themselves overcome by a troubling addiction. Some doctors prefer not to use opioids as a first line of treatment for chronic pain.

Another possible risk of opioids among seniors is that the medication can cause disorientation that may lead to falls and fractures. The senior care resource A Place for Mom also says that prescription narcotics may increase risk of respiratory arrest. What's more, an older body may not absorb and filter medicines as effectively as younger bodies can. This means that older adults might become addicted to or have side effects from a prescription drug at a lower dose.

Seniors concerned about opioids can discuss other options with their doctors, such as nonopioid medications and alternative therapies for pain management, like massage or acupuncture. If opioids are prescribed, ask for the lowest dose and don't exceed the time frame for taking the medicine. Only take the pills when absolutely necessary, and never mix opioids with alcohol or other substances.

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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AVOIDING FOODBORNE POISONING

Numerous foodborne illness outbreaks of salmonella and E. coli have occurred across the United States and Canada in 2018. And such outbreaks are not limited to North America. In May, more than 40 cases of hepatitis A were reported in six European Union countries, according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control.

When two or more people get the same illness from the same food or drink source, the event is called a foodborne disease outbreak, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While infection from salmonella strains and escherichia coli are some of the most notable contagions, other illnesses can occur as well, as evidenced by the EU hepatitis outbreak. Listeria and cyclospora are some other known foodborne illness pathogens. Through the first half of 2018, warnings and recalls have been issued by the CDC for shell eggs, romaine lettuce, dried coconut, chicken salad, kratom, raw sprouts, and frozen shredded coconut due to illness outbreaks.

The ramifications of food illnesses are significant. The Food and Drug Administration and the CDC reported that 121 people in 25 states became ill in April 2018 from eating romaine lettuce grown in the region of Yuma, Arizona. Forty-six of those individuals were hospitalized, including 10 who developed a type of kidney failure. One person in California died from the sickness.

Increased reporting about foodborne illness outbreaks begs the question as to whether or not more can be done to reduce the spread of these harmful pathogens. Contamination can occur in various places as food makes its way to dinner tables. Long-term prevention of foodborne illness outbreaks involves the cooperation of many people in the production chain — all the way to the consumer, according to the CDC.

- Production and harvesting needs to be safe and clean, with efforts to keep food products free of animal waste and sewage contamination.
- Inspection of processing plants can help ensure sanitary practices are in place.
- Pasteurization, irradiation, canning, and other steps can kill pathogens during food processing.
- People who package or prepare foods must properly wash their hands and clean facilities where food is handled.
- Food service workers should not go to work when they are ill.
- Foods need to be kept at proper temperatures during transport and when on display at stores.
- Consumers should be aware of expiration dates and employ proper food handling and cooking measures. These include thoroughly washing produce, and cooking poultry, meats and other foods to the recommended temperatures.

People who experience food poisoning should report each instance to the local or state health department. Identifying symptoms and location can help health officials track illnesses and look for similar exposures.

WELCOME BACK, Dr. Karamalegos (Dr. K.)



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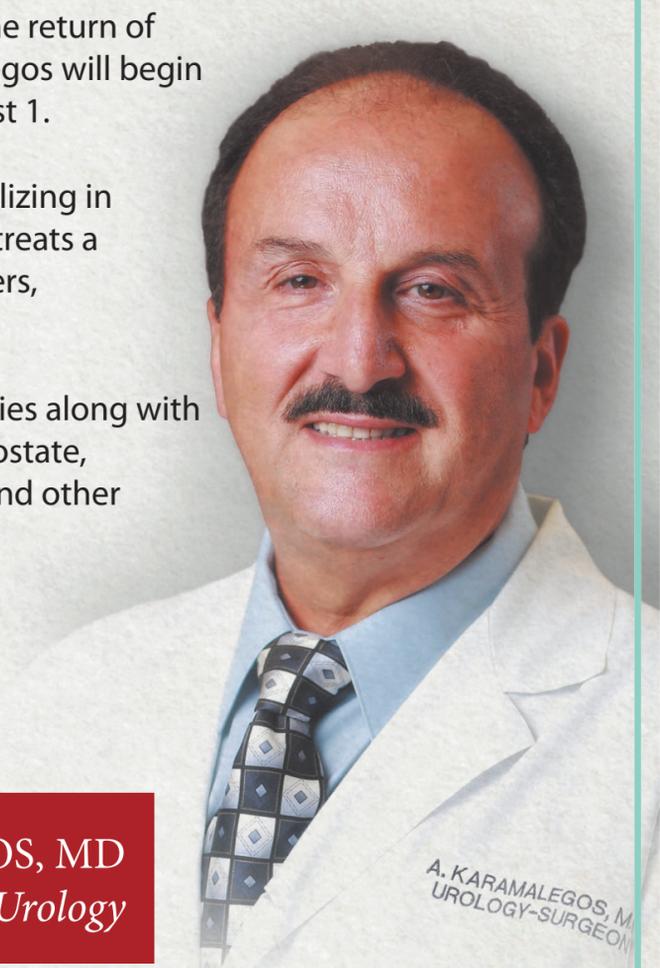
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SLEEP LOSS CAN AFFECT MEMORY IN SENIORS



Poor sleep can leave people feeling groggy, disoriented, depressed, and not up for facing the day. And now there's new evidence that insomnia can contribute to memory loss and forgetfulness among the elderly.

A study — the first of its kind — unveiled a new link between lack of sleep and memory loss. Researchers at the University of California, Berkley found that during sleep important brain waves are produced that play key roles in storing memories. These waves transfer the memories from the hippocampus to the prefrontal cortex, a portion of the brain where long-term information is stored. Sleep loss can cause the memories to remain in the hippocampus and not reach the long-term storage area, found researchers. This can contribute to forgetfulness and difficulty remembering simple details, such as names.

Seniors are frequently plagued with deteriorated sleeping patterns that lead to shallow sleep and more awakenings, says those at the University of California. This can contribute to the prevention of memories being saved by the brain each evening.

This is not the first time sleep and brain health have been measured. A 2008 University of California, Los Angeles study discovered that

people with sleep apnea showed tissue loss in brain regions that help store memories.

WebMD says imaging and behavioral studies show the role sleep plays in learning and memory and that lack of sleep can impair a person's ability to focus and learn efficiently. Combine this with the necessity of sleep to make those brain wave connections for memories to be stored, and the importance of deep sleep is apparent.

Another study, published in the journal *Brain*, conducted by doctors at Washington University in St. Louis, linked poor sleep with early onset of dementia, especially Alzheimer's disease. Although poor sleep does not cause Alzheimer's, it may increase brain amyloid proteins believed to be intrinsic to the disease.

When slow-wave deep sleep is disrupted, levels of amyloid can grow and clog the brain. This is corroborated by data published in the journal *Neurology*. Getting deep sleep is important for reducing these proteins.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recognizes the difficulties elderly people may have in regard to sleep. The quality of deep sleep among older adults is often 75 percent lower than it is in younger people. Doctors can be cognizant of how sleep impacts memory and the onset of dementias and discuss insomnia treatment options with their patients.

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.

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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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DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illnesses in the United States. Roughly 40 million adults in the United States, or 18 percent of the country's population, has an anxiety disorder. Developing from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events, anxiety disorders are highly treatable. Unfortunately, the ADAA notes that less than 40 percent of those suffering from anxiety disorders receive treatment. Treatment of anxiety disorders can be highly effective and can even help people deal with other disorders, as the ADAA says nearly one-half of people diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. People living with anxiety disorders who seek treatment may find they also are suffering from depression, compelling them to receive treatment for that disorder as well and further improving their quality of life.

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