





Senior Focus

A Guide to Healthy Living For Seniors & Others






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Moving Healthcare Forward

10 doctor-recommended ways to improve your overall health

STATEPOINT - While investing in your health and wellness can sound like an overwhelming goal, doctors say that there are easy, tangible steps you can take to feel your best and better protect your health.

“It is always the right time to consider your personal goals, and how you can make positive health choices,” says American Medical Association (AMA) president, Gerald E. Harmon, M.D. “Small lifestyle changes today can have a lasting effect in improving your health.”

Not sure where to start? Consider these tips from the AMA:

1. Make sure your family is up to date on their vaccines, including the annual influenza vaccine for everyone age six months or older and the COVID-19 vaccine for everyone age five and older. Anyone with questions about the COVID-19 vaccines should speak with their physician and review trusted resources, including [getvaccineanswers.org](https://www.getvaccineanswers.org).
2. Learn your risk for Type 2 Diabetes by taking a simple online 2-minute self-screening test at dolhaveprediabetes.org.



Photo courtesy (c) Ridofranz / iStock via Getty Images Plus
For a happy, healthy future, consider making these 10 doctor-recommended tips for improved wellness.

3. Be more physically active. Adults should do at least 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, or 75 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity activity.
4. Know your blood pressure numbers. Take the time to visit [ManageYourBP.org](https://www.ManageYourBP.org) to better understand your numbers and take necessary steps to get high blood pressure -- also known as hypertension -- under control. Doing so will reduce your risk of heart attack or stroke.
5. Reduce your intake of processed foods, especially those with added sodium and sugar. Also reduce your consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and drink more water instead.
6. If your health care professional determines that you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Antibiotic resistance is a serious public health problem and antibiotics will not make

you feel better if you have a virus, such as a cold or flu.

7. If consuming alcohol, do so in moderation as defined by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans -- up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men, and only by adults of legal drinking age.
8. Talk with your doctor about tobacco and nicotine use and quit. Declare your home and car smoke-free to eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke.
9. If you are taking prescription opioids, follow your doctor's instructions, store them safely to prevent diversion or misuse, and properly dispose of any leftover medication.
10. Manage stress. A good diet and daily exercise are key ingredients to maintaining and improving your mental health, but don't hesitate to ask for help from a friend or mental health professional when you need it.

More health resources and tips can be found my visiting ama-assn.org. For a happy, healthy future, consider making these 10 doctor-recommended tips for improved wellness.

How home healthcare can improve lives and deliver better care

STATEPOINT - There is a growing demand for in-home caregivers and there is good reason for that, say experts. There are many unique advantages that healthcare at home, or in another familiar setting, provides. “Offering a full continuum of care, home healthcare includes pediatric, adult nursing, senior care, postoperative care, Medicare-approved visits and hospice, allowing for an individualized approach focused on empowerment and the pursuit of possibilities rather than perceived limitations,” says Jennifer Sheets, president and CEO of Interim HealthCare Inc., the nation's leading franchise network of home healthcare, personal care, healthcare staffing and hospice services. “The home is where care can happen in the most personal way, typically resulting in higher quality care, reduced hospital readmissions, optimization of healthcare dollars, improved outcomes and greater patient satisfaction.”

As part of “The Difference is Home,” a campaign aiming to educate people on the value of home healthcare, Interim HealthCare is sharing the experiences of individuals profoundly impacted by home healthcare:

- Kaitlyn Metro, pediatric care patient. Born with a condition causing seizures and severe developmental delay, Kaitlyn requires a feeding tube and total nursing care. She's received home healthcare for 16 years. While she doesn't speak or walk, home healthcare allows her to be surrounded by her loving family and nurses who



Photo courtesy (c) jacoblund / iStock via Getty Images Plus
There are many unique advantages that healthcare at home, or in another familiar setting, provides.

adore her and closely monitor her condition.

- Louis Klein, COVID-19 recovery patient. After spending four days in the hospital with COVID-19, Louis was discharged into home health services as part of his Medicare benefits. Prior to that, he was an active 85-year-old who played golf every week. The compassionate nursing care, physical therapy, and occupational therapy he received helped him improve significantly in a matter of weeks, with the goal of full recovery without the need for rehospitalization.
- Howard and Charlene Russell, hospice patients. Married for 65 years, Howard and Charlene have had many wonderful life experiences and wanted to continue living well as they aged. After receiving home health services, the couple transitioned to hospice due to declining health. The nursing and aide care, social services and chaplain support that hospice at home uniquely provides have allowed them to make the most of their time, while surrounded by loved

ones. To see more stories like these, visit: differenceishome.com.

Behind the Success “The tireless helping hands behind the scenes of these inspiring stories often go unrecognized,” says Sheets. “From home health professionals and paraprofessionals who provide care and the certified agencies who employ and support them, to physicians, discharge planners and social workers who support their outcomes and the health plans that reimburse this invaluable service, there is an entire community of care that the home healthcare industry thrives on.”

As the nation's first home care company, Interim HealthCare continues to innovate the care delivery process. For more information on Interim HealthCare's services, visit interimhealthcare.com. “Every day, we see the difference home-based care has on clients' lives,” says Sheets. “What the last two years have taught us is that home is where outcomes are better and where people truly want to be.”

65 or older? It's time to assess the risk of pneumococcal pneumonia

STATEPOINT - Now, more than ever, you're likely acutely aware of the importance of helping protect your lung health. As you return to doing the things you love, it's essential to understand the risk for pneumococcal pneumonia, a potentially serious lung infection that can strike anyone at any time.

Older adults are at greater risk of serious illness and death resulting from pneumococcal pneumonia compared to younger adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To give you the facts you need to help protect yourself, the American Lung Association is partnering with Pfizer to raise awareness about the risk of pneumococcal pneumonia for adults 65 and older.

An Overview

When words begin with “pneumo” it means related to the lungs, and a pneumonia is an infection in one or both lungs, which you can get from bacteria, viruses or fungi. This infection causes the air sacs in your lungs to fill with fluid or pus, which makes the gas

exchange that supplies your body with oxygen more difficult. It also can result in a host of uncomfortable and potentially serious symptoms.

Pneumococcal pneumonia, the most common type of bacterial pneumonia, is caused by bacteria that can be spread through coughing and close contact with an infected person. Common symptoms include high fever, excessive sweating, shaking chills, coughing, difficulty breathing, shortness of

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Mental healthcare and you – Finding the right fit

STATEPOINT - Searching for a mental health provider? You likely have questions. Recent research from virtual care provider MDLIVE suggests that confusion around finding a mental healthcare provider

is common. One in five surveyed said they were concerned about finding a provider match and 70% experience confusion and uncertainty about where to begin. The research also revealed that not everyone

knows the difference between the various mental health professionals – psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, mental health coaches and others. “Many people are ready to get depression, anxiety and stress under control by working with a mental health professional but get bogged down right from the start. Confusion about selecting a professional that best suits their needs causes a lot of people to give up. That’s something we want to change,” says Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, who brings more than two decades of direct practice experience to her role as behavioral health medical director at MDLIVE.

To help you in your search, MDLIVE is answering some frequently asked questions: When is it time to see a therapist? Mental healthcare is self-care that most everyone can benefit from. However, if your emotional state is interfering with your daily life, it’s definitely time to take action. Beyond the common signs of mental illness, such as sadness, drug and alcohol misuse, trouble sleeping and mood swings, Dr. Espada-Campos notes that there are some often overlooked signals

that could indicate it’s time to seek treatment. These include withdrawing from loved ones, feeling fatigued, having a lack of motivation and frequently “zoning out.” She also notes that life events such as decoupling, job loss or the loss of a loved one can often trigger the need for professional mental health support. What’s the difference between therapists and psychiatrists? Psychiatrists and therapists can treat the same things, however, psychiatrists are medical doctors who can diagnose psychiatric conditions and prescribe medication, while therapists are licensed providers who can evaluate and support people with emotional or behavioral health concerns through talk therapy. What should one look for in a provider? Mental healthcare is highly personal and it’s essential that your provider is someone you can open to make

progress with and not feel judged by. A good place to start is by working with a provider who has experience treating patients like you. Understand that you may not find the right therapist on your first try. Dr. Espada-Campos encourages individuals to both trust their feelings in this regard and to take an active role in their sessions by asking questions like, “What can I do to help my treatment?” and “How can we work together to achieve my goals?” Does insurance cover therapy? In recent years, many health plans and employers have acknowledged the importance of mental healthcare and have expanded the resources available to their members and employees. Check coverage details online or through the plan’s call center. Alternatively, you may wish to seek counseling through an

Employee Assistance Program (EAP). EAP counselors can help with a variety of mental health concerns, however, members are typically restricted to a set number of sessions. If you’re suffering from a recurring mental health issue, check what options are available through your health plan. Can therapists be seen remotely? Virtual care, an increasingly popular option, can provide private, convenient, quality care quickly, and is often offered by health plans. For example, MDLIVE’s platform makes it easy to search for a provider that meets your needs and to schedule an appointment with one of their psychiatrists or licensed therapists. MDLIVE is a covered benefit for more than 60 million Americans through health insurers such as Cigna, Aetna, certain Blue Cross Blue Shield plans, and many regional and local plans. To learn more or to register, visit www.mdlive.com. Finding a mental healthcare provider can feel overwhelming. However, identifying what you want out of care and understanding the different treatments available can help demystify the process.



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RISKS

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breath and chest pain. Certain symptoms, such as cough and fatigue, can appear quickly and without warning and severe cases can lead to hospitalization and even be potentially life threatening.

Risk Factors and Protection

The immune system naturally weakens with age, making age a risk factor regardless of health status“ Even healthy

adults aged 65 and older are over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized with pneumococcal pneumonia than those aged 18-49,” says Albert Rizzo, MD, chief medical officer, American Lung Association. “If you also live with a chronic lung disease like COPD, asthma, diabetes or chronic heart disease, you face a greater risk.”

Dr. Rizzo speaks on behalf of the American Lung Association when he encourages all adults 65 and older to speak with their doctor about vaccination. But he knows all too well that there are

disparities among who is most likely to be protected against this potentially serious lung infection. While the overall vaccination rate among adults 65 and older was 59% in 2017, only 42% of Latino/Hispanic individuals were vaccinated. And with only 45% percent of Black adults and 56% of Asian adults vaccinated, the gap in coverage has potentially serious consequences for communities of color.

Additionally, Latino and Black Americans are at greater risk of developing chronic health

conditions such as asthma and diabetes compared to white Americans, which further increases their risk of getting pneumococcal pneumonia.

If you are 65 or older, talk to your healthcare provider about pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination, which is available at many doctor’s offices and local pharmacies. You can also learn more at Lung.org/pneumococcal, where you can take a free personal risk assessment quiz. Don’t ignore pneumococcal pneumonia. Get the facts you need to help protect yourself.

Taking an over the counter anti-inflammatory



Facing the expiration of its patent protection, ibuprofen’s manufacturer applied to the FDA for approval to sell it at a lower dose without a prescription. In contrast to the 400mg, 600mg, and 800mg tablets of prescription-only Motrin® in 1984, the FDA approved ibuprofen as non-prescription Motrin-IB®200mg tablets.

Years later, naproxen followed the same path: first as a prescription-only anti-inflammatory, then approved for OTC use as Aleve®. There are four options for pain relief by mouth without a prescription: aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, and naproxen.

For muscle pain, menstrual cramps, and toothache, non-prescription doses of naproxen or ibuprofen are much safer than aspirin and more effective than acetaminophen.

NSAIDs are sold by themselves and as an ingredient in many over-the-counter (OTC) cold, flu, and allergy remedies.

78-year-old Rose has heart failure. She takes a water pill to keep fluid from building up in her lungs. Six months ago, Rose came down with a flu-like illness, becoming so short of breath that her doctors first suspected COVID or pneumonia and hospitalized her. It turned out that despite taking her water pill, her lungs were filling with fluid from an exacerbation of her heart failure. Over the next 3 days, she recovered and went home.

Last month, Rose returned to the Emergency Department, short of breath. The only thing she did differently was take Advil® Cold and Flu, which contains ibuprofen. She continued taking her water pills, but it wasn’t enough. The ibuprofen triggered fluid retention, causing her breathing problems from the fluid building up in her lungs.

Ever since, she has avoided all NSAID medicines, and she feels great.

Although NSAIDs are usually safe when taken to relieve fever and muscles aches, they can be dangerous for people with certain medical conditions like Rose’s heart failure.

NSAIDs can also spell trouble for people with kidney problems, like diabetics. Taking prescription or OTC ibuprofen or naproxen can trigger kidney damage in certain situations, especially if you get dehydrated. Sweating a lot when outside in hot weather or experiencing nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea can cause dehydration. Taking any NSAID when your body is too dry can seriously harm your kidneys.

People who have had a bleeding ulcer should also avoid taking NSAIDs like ibuprofen and naproxen. That’s because these medicines interfere with maintaining the protective gel layer that lines your stomach. This vital gel layer ensures that your stomach acids digest your food instead of your stomach. Taking ibuprofen or naproxen encourages thin spots and erosion of the lining of your stomach, setting you up for an episode of stomach pain or bleeding.

Even considering these possible side effects, NSAIDs like ibuprofen and naproxen are powerful against muscle sprains or strains, tension headache, dental pain, and menstrual cramps.

When taken at the beginning of menstrual flow, just one dose of ibuprofen or naproxen can head off debilitating abdominal cramps. One dose of an NSAID right before a tooth extraction can avoid suffering from swollen “chipmunk cheeks” afterward.

Here are 5 Tips to Help Keep Yourself Safe When Taking NSAIDs:

1. Keep yourself well hydrated.

Even young, healthy people can suffer severe kidney damage if they become dehydrated while taking an NSAID medicine. NSAIDs interfere with

your body’s safety net for your kidneys when you get low on fluid. Several professional athletes have discovered this the hard way, and ended up needing a kidney transplant.

2. Ask your doctor first.

Most people can take low doses of ibuprofen or naproxen without harm. For those who have kidney problems, it’s much safer to take Tylenol® or acetaminophen for your aches and pains. NSAIDs can aggravate and accelerate kidney problems. Please consult your doctor first before taking ibuprofen, naproxen, or any other NSAID for more than a couple of days.

3. Protect your heart.

Have you been diagnosed with congestive heart failure, also called CHF? If so, avoid taking any medicine that includes an NSAID, which causes sodium and water retention. NSAIDs counteract the beneficial effects of drugs that work to keep fluid out of your lungs and reduce swelling in your hands and feet.

4. Watch your blood pressure.

NSAIDs cause sodium retention, triggering water retention. This can cause your blood pressure to rise, interfering with how most blood pressure medicines do their job.

5. Don’t double up.

Avoid taking more than one NSAID at a time. It’s surprisingly easy to take two NSAIDs at the same time. That’s because the prescription strengths have different brand names than the OTC versions of the same medicines. Not realizing that you are taking two medicines with the same ingredient puts you at risk for overdose and side effects like stomach pain, bleeding, or kidney problems.

Dr. Louise Achey, Doctor of Pharmacy, is a 43-year veteran of pharmacology and author of Why Dogs Can’t Eat Chocolate: How Medicines Work and How YOU Can Take Them Safely. Get clear answers to your medication questions at her website and blog TheMedicationInsider.com. ©2022 Louise Achey