

## Senior Health and Well-Being

For most older adults, good health ensures independence, security and productivity as they age. Yet millions of seniors struggle every day with health and safety challenges that can negatively affect quality of life. These include:

- **Chronic disease:** About 80% of older adults have at least one chronic disease and 77% have at least two. Four chronic illnesses — heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes — cause almost two-thirds of all deaths each year.
- **Falls:** Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma and injury deaths. Falls are also the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries in older adults.
- **Mental health and substance abuse:** One in four older adults experiences some type of mental health disorder, such as depression, anxiety and dementia. Untreated mental health problems and substance abuse are associated with poor health outcomes, higher health care use, increased disability, increased mortality and higher risk of suicide.

Older adults can follow these tips to remain active and independent as long as possible:

- Follow a healthy diet. Make healthy food and drink choices, such as vegetables, fruit, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy products and water.
- Move more, sit less. Being active can help older adults prevent, delay and manage chronic diseases, improve balance and stamina, reduce risk of falls, and improve brain health. Aim for moderate physical activity at least 150 minutes a week and muscle strengthening activity at least two days a week.
- Don't use tobacco. If you do use tobacco, try to quit. You can use the Blue Cross Quit Tobacco Digital Health Assistant program when you log in to your account at [bcbsm.com](https://www.bcbsm.com), or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) for free help.
- Get regular checkups: Visit your doctor for preventive services, not just when you're sick. This can help prevent disease or find it early when treatment is more effective.
- Know your family history. Share your family history with your doctor, who can help you take steps to prevent chronic diseases or catch them early.
- Be aware of changes in brain health. Everyone's brain changes as they age, but dementia isn't a normal part of aging. See your doctor if you have questions about memory or brain health.
- Be mindful. A study published by Mindfulness NY found that mindfulness-based interventions for older adults had positive outcomes. The results offer support for mindfulness-based interventions for emotional well-being of older adults, with effects on anxiety, depression, stress and pain acceptance.



Sources: [ncoa.org](https://www.ncoa.org)\*, [cdc.org](https://www.cdc.org)\*, [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)\*

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