

health mind and body



THURSDAY, January 25, 2024

How seniors can get their balance back



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

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

PLEASE SEE **BALANCE** | C2

How to get kids more engaged in their dental health

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Dental health should be a priority at any age, and is especially important for children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says more than half of children between the ages of six and eight have had a cavity in at least one of their primary teeth. Also, more than half of adolescents aged 12 to 19 have had a cavity in at least one permanent tooth. Cavities and other oral health

conditions, such as periodontal diseases, are largely preventable with proper oral hygiene.

Parents know that getting children – especially young ones – to care for their teeth in the correct manner may require some help and then reinforcement throughout the developmental years. However, there are ways to make dental care a more engaging activity for youngsters.

USE PLAQUE-DISCLOSING TABLETS

Show children just where they may need to direct more brushing effort with plaque-disclosing tablets. These tablets use food-grade coloring in them, which sticks to areas with plaque accumulation. After chewing the tablets and the child smiles, he or she will see the spots where efforts need to be ramped up.

PLEASE SEE **DENTAL** | C2



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Did you know?

The hormone cortisol can affect individuals' vulnerability to heart disease. According to the University of Rochester Medical Center, cortisol is released as part of the human body's natural response to stress. Though cortisol is not inherently harmful, the URM reports that studies have suggested high levels of cortisol resulting from long-term stress can increase blood cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, and blood pressure. Such increases elevate individuals' risk for heart disease. Various studies have found that acute stress can have a positive impact, providing motivation to accomplish goals and overcome daily challenges. However, individuals with chronic stress are urged to speak with their physicians so they can avoid the adverse outcomes, including heart disease, that can develop when individuals have high levels of cortisol related to long-term stress.



DENTAL
FROM PAGE C1

This can be a fun lesson as children will likely enjoy seeing their teeth covered in the tablet color.

FLAVORED TOOTHPASTES AND MOUTHWASHES

Mint reigns supreme in oral health products as the dominant flavor, but not all children are enamored with that flavor. Most oral care products geared toward the younger set come in different flavors like bubble gum and berry. Kids can take active roles in their oral health by choosing the flavored products they prefer to use.

ELECTRONIC TOOTHBRUSHES

Children may enjoy using electronic toothbrushes

because they are easy to maneuver and can even seem like a toy. According to the Cleveland Clinic, electric toothbrushes generally are considered more effective at removing plaque and keeping teeth clean. That benefits kids and adults because it potentially means fewer painful visits with the dentist.

MAKE IT A COMPETITION

Children love games and healthy competition between peers and siblings. Offer a prize (non-sugary, of course) to children who brush and floss daily for the required times. Extra points can be awarded for every dental wellness check that comes back with a glowing report.

MAKE SMART FOOD CHOICES

Engage children in lessons and choices about which

foods are good for oral health and which may be poor. Sticky foods or those with a lot of sugary content should only be occasional treats. The entire family can work together to plan meals around foods that are good for the teeth and gums, such as crunchy veggies, leafy greens, high-calcium dairy products, and fatty fish.

PRACTICE ON PETS

Pets need clean teeth, too. Children may enjoy not only brushing their own teeth, but learning how to keep their companion animals' mouths healthy with brushing and care.

Various strategies can increase the chances that kids engage with oral hygiene practices early on.

BALANCE
FROM PAGE C1

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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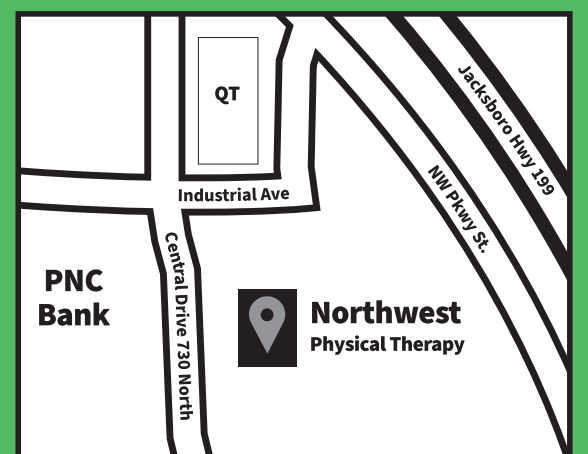
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Moderate-intensity activities that can improve overall health

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. The current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicates adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. But what constitutes moderate-intensity physical activity?

Moderate-intensity physical activity gets the heart pumping, but only around one in five adults and teens get enough exercise to main-

tain good health, says the American Heart Association. It may be because people are having difficulty figuring out what constitutes moderate-intensity activity. Here is a more detailed explanation of the types of activities considered moderate-intensity.

- Walking very briskly (roughly four miles per hour)
- Heavy cleaning, like washing windows, vacuuming and mopping
- Mowing the lawn with a power mower
- Bicycling with light effort (10 to 12 miles per hour)
- Playing recreational

badminton

- Playing doubles tennis
 - Slow dancing
 - Shooting a basketball
 - Water aerobics
 - Playing volleyball
 - Heavy gardening
 - Painting and decorating
- Anything that doesn't increase heart rate and breathing speed will not count as moderate-intensity activity towards the recommended amount of activity. However, any exercise is better than no exercise at all. As long as an activity breaks up long periods of sitting still, doctors says it is still beneficial.

Go ahead & smile!

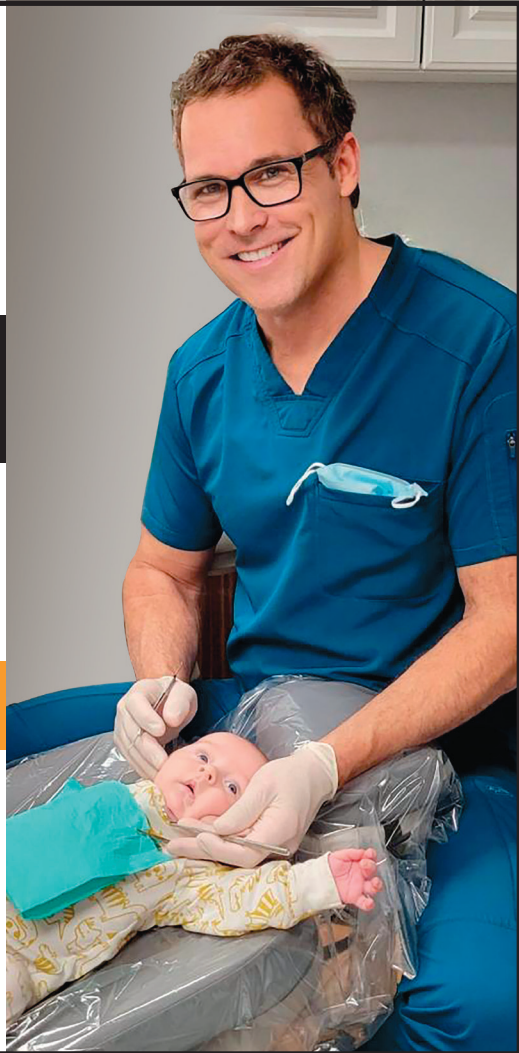
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Did you know?

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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Notable senior health concerns

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The human body changes as it ages. While certain conditions are commonly associated with aging, some individuals may be surprised to learn of the more common health conditions that can affect seniors. The World Health Organization says one in six people will be 60 or older by 2030. With such a large portion of the population on the cusp of turning 60, it makes sense for individuals to familiarize themselves with the more notable issues affecting seniors.

COGNITIVE DECLINE

A certain degree of memory loss is a natural component of aging. Forgetting where you left your keys or experiencing difficulty putting a name to a face can be a random and frustrating occurrence. However, dementias, like Alzheimer's disease, are not a side effect of aging. As many as one in five seniors experiences mental health issues that are not associated with aging, and it helps to learn the early warning signs of dementia. Such recognition may compel individuals to seek treatment that can slow the progression of the disease.

OSTEOARTHRITIS

Aches and pains may come with aging, and often can be attributed to osteoarthritis, which is the most common form of arthritis, according to the Mayo Clinic. Osteoarthritis occurs when the protective cartilage that cushions the ends of bones wears away over time. It is progressive and cannot be reversed, but maintaining a healthy weight and staying active can help alleviate pain and improve joint function.

CATARACTS AND REFRACTIVE ERRORS

It should come as no surprise to most that the eyes change as the body ages. Refractive errors like nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism, and presbyopia can make objects look blurry when viewed, says the National Eye Institute. Cataracts, which are a clouding of the eye's natural lens, affect about 20 percent of people age 65 and older, according to the American Geriatrics Society, while the National Eye Institute says half of all people over age 80 will get them. Cataract removal surgery and prescription eyeglasses can help.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

American Senior Communities estimates 25 percent of adults age 65 and older have type 2 diabetes. Unchecked diabetes can lead to a host of ailments, including vision problems, mobility issues, kidney damage, and increased risk for heart disease or stroke. Many people can manage type 2 diabetes with diet and exercise.

HEART DISEASE

The National Institute on Aging says adults age 65 and older are more likely than younger people to suffer from cardiovascular disease that affects the heart, blood vessels or both. Conditions like high blood pressure and high cholesterol need to be properly managed, and diet and exercise is important throughout life.

BALANCE ISSUES

Balance issues that can lead to falls are a major concern for seniors. According to HealthinAging.org, many things can adversely affect balance. These include nerve and brain problems, vision troubles, diabetes, arthritis, inner ear problems, and even dehydration. Dizziness or balance problems should be addressed.



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.

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What seniors should know about prediabetes

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Most seniors recognize that routine visits to their physicians are an important component of preventive health care. Annual physicals are important for everyone, but they're especially important for individuals 65 and older who may be more vulnerable to disease and various other health conditions than younger adults.

The National Institute on Aging reports that millions of individuals 65 and older have visited their physicians and learned they have a condition known as prediabetes. For some, the day they receive a prediabetes diagnosis also marks the first time they've heard of the condition. Since so many seniors are affected by prediabetes, it can behoove anyone to learn more about it.

WHAT IS PREDIABETES?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that prediabetes is a serious health condition characterized by higher than normal blood sugar levels. When a person has prediabetes, his or her blood sugar levels are not yet high enough to indicate type 2 diabetes, but that could change if prediabetes patients do not make changes to prevent such a progression.

HOW COMMON IS PREDIABETES?

A 2023 study published in the journal Diabetes Care indicates that 464 million individuals across the globe had impaired glucose tolerance (IGT) and 298 million had impaired fasting glucose (IFG) in 2021. Each of those conditions are hallmarks of prediabetes, cases of which the study indicates are expected to rise significantly by 2045.

WHAT CAUSES PREDIABETES?

The CDC notes that when a person has prediabetes, the cells in his or her body do not respond normally to insulin, which is a hormone produced by the pancreas that enables blood sugar to enter cells, which then use it for energy. The pancreas then makes more insulin to get cells to respond, but eventually the pancreas cannot keep up, resulting in a rise in blood sugar.

DOES PREDIABETES PRODUCE SYMPTOMS?

Many people have prediabetes for years and do not know it. In fact, the CDC reports that more than 80 percent of the 98 million American adults who have prediabetes are unaware that they do.

HOW CAN I DETERMINE IF I HAVE PREDIABETES?

The sheer volume of people who have prediabetes but are

unaware that they do begs the question of what individuals can do to learn if they have the condition before they develop type 2 diabetes. Recognition of the risk factors for prediabetes is a good start. The CDC urges anyone who has any of the following risk factors to speak with their doctor about having their blood sugar tested:

- Being overweight
- Being 45 or older
- Having a parent, brother or sister with type 2 diabetes
- Being physically active less than three times per week
- A history of diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes) or giving birth to a baby who weighed more than nine pounds
- Having polycystic ovary syndrome
- Being African American, Hispanic/Latino American, American Indian, or Pacific Islander. Some Asian Americans also are at greater risk for prediabetes.



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Did you know?


There's no one-size-fits-all strategy when it comes to calorie consumption, and that can contribute to some confusion as adults try to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Dietary guidelines established by the United States Department of Health and Human Services promote nutrient-dense foods and beverages, but many people prefer to know how many calories they should consume each day. Though that's understandable, the quality of the calories consumed goes a long way toward determining how nutritious a diet is. The Cleveland Clinic notes that the DHHS guidelines have historically recommended adults 21 and over consume between 1,600 and 3,000 calories per day. However, staying within those parameters does not necessarily mean a person's diet is healthy. Though individuals should keep total calorie consumption in mind when planning their diets, it's equally important to recognize what else the DHHS has to say about diet, particularly foods to avoid. The DHHS recommends limiting consumption of foods and beverages that are high in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium. Limiting consumption of alcoholic beverages is another way to ensure your diet is working for you and not against you.



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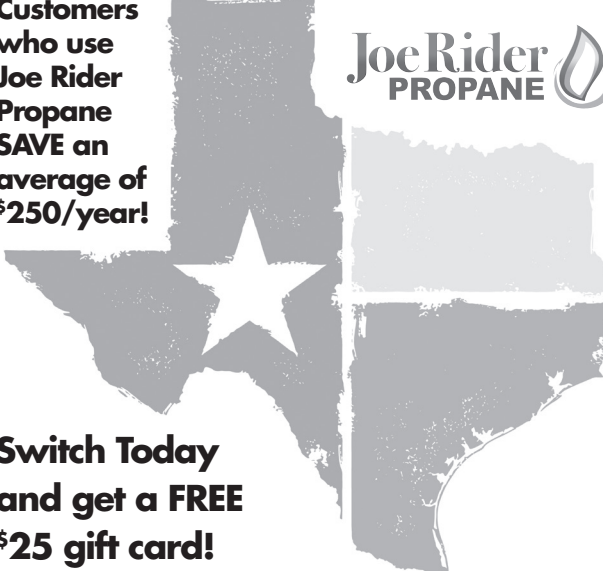


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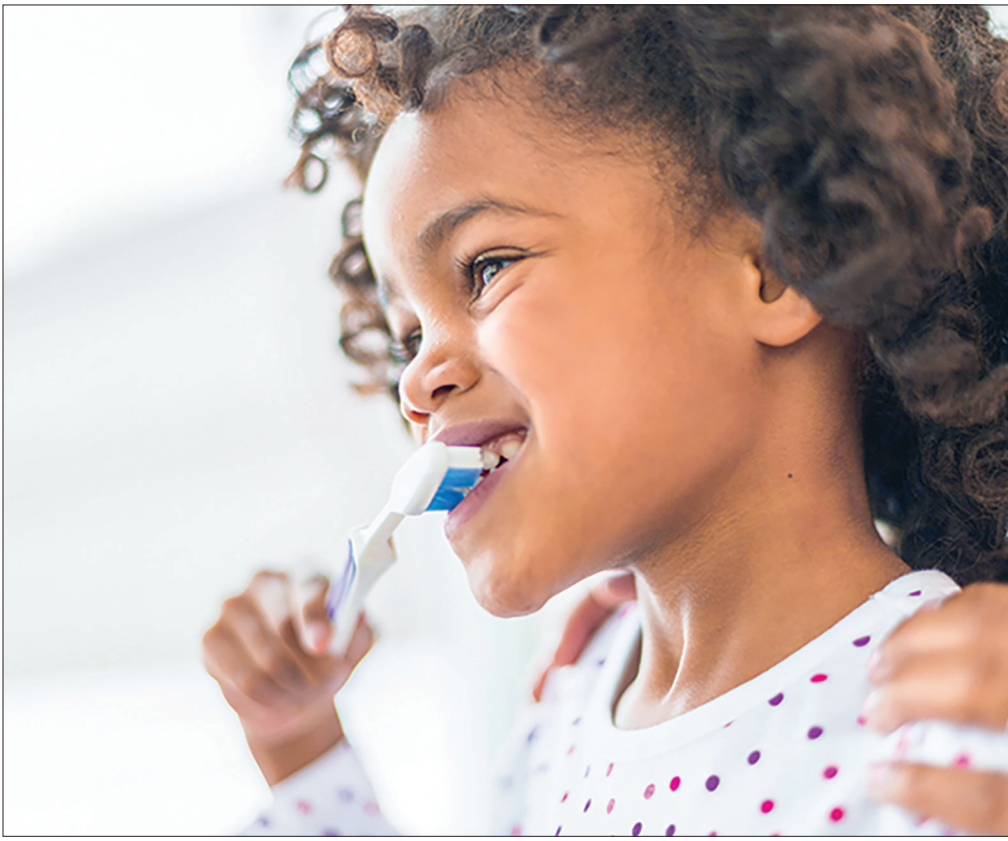
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The long-term effects of proper childhood dental care

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Parents of young children are undoubtedly familiar with the morning and nighttime ritual of getting kids to brush their teeth. Kids may or may not embrace that routine no matter how hard parents try to relate the benefits of proper oral hygiene, but moms and dads can take solace in the knowledge that childhood dental care can have a positive and lasting effect on kids' overall health.

DENTAL CARE AND HEART DISEASE

Harvard Health Publishing notes that numerous studies have now shown that people with poor oral health exhibit higher rates of cardiovascular issues, including heart attack and stroke. The reason behind that remains something of a medical mystery, but some theorize that bacteria that infects gums and causes conditions such as gingivitis and periodontitis trigger an

immune response, inflammation, that then contributes to vascular damage.

DENTAL CARE AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

The National Institute on Aging reports that a recent analysis published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease noted the bacteria that cause gum disease are also linked with the development of Alzheimer's disease. That analysis found that older adults with signs of periodontitis, a condition marked by inflammation of tissue around the teeth that can cause loosening of the teeth, were more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. Additional research is necessary before more concrete conclusions about the link between dental care and Alzheimer's disease can be made, but dental care that protects the gums could very well reduce individuals' risk for dementia.

DENTAL CARE AND CANCER RISK

Cancer is among the leading causes of death across the globe, affecting people from all walks of life. Researchers at Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health discovered a link between dental care and cancer risk. In a letter published in the journal Gut in 2020, researchers reported that they found that people with a history of gum disease have a higher risk of stomach and esophageal cancers than people with no such history. And that risk was not exactly minimal, as researchers reported a 43 percent higher risk for esophageal cancer and a 52 percent higher risk for stomach cancer.

An emphasis on lifelong oral hygiene in childhood could pay lasting dividends, potentially reducing kids' risk for various diseases when they reach adulthood.



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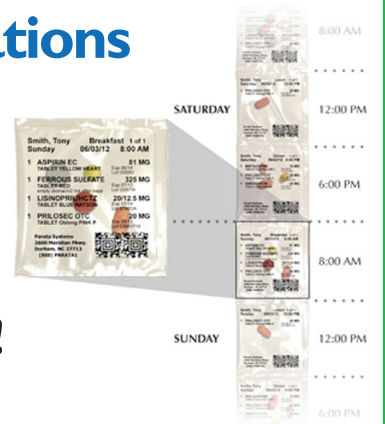
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3 questions to ask before beginning a new fitness regimen

METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Exercise is widely recognized as a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. Despite that, a recent analysis of data from the 2020 National Health Interview Survey found that more than two-thirds of individuals are not getting enough exercise. Though the survey was conducted amid the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which suggests the overall figures might be somewhat lower than they might have been had the data been collected in a more typical year, just 28 percent of respondents were meeting the physical activity guidelines established by the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Routine exercise is beneficial for people of all ages, and seniors are no exception. Aging adults who want to be more physically active but think they are among the 72 percent of individuals who aren't meeting CDC exercise guidelines can speak with their physicians and ask these three questions to ensure the transition to a less sedentary lifestyle goes smoothly.

1. SHOULD I GET A HEART CHECKUP?

Doctors may already be monitoring aging individu-

als' hearts even if they have not exhibited symptoms of heart problems in the past. However, it's best to discuss heart health in greater detail prior to beginning a new fitness regimen. In an interview with Penn Medicine, Neel Chokshi, MD, MBA, medical director of Penn Sports Cardiology and Fitness Program, noted the risk of heart attack or cardiac complications slightly increases when individuals begin to participate in a moderate or intense activity. So a physician might want to conduct a heart checkup in order to determine if a patient has an underlying heart condition.

2. WHICH TYPES OF ACTIVITIES SHOULD I LOOK TO?

A physician also can recommend certain activities depending on a person's age and medical background. Though exercise is beneficial for everyone, certain activities may not be. For example, AdventHealth notes that high-impact activities like jogging and jump rope may not be suited for individuals with arthritis. In addition, aging individuals with physical limitations that require them to use a wheelchair should not write off their ability to exercise, as physicians can recommend exercises for

patients with mobility issues as well.

3. SHOULD I TAKE EXTRA CAUTION WHILE ON MEDICATION?

Prescription medication use is another variable that must be taken into consideration before beginning a new exercise regimen. The CDC notes that roughly 84 percent of adults between the ages of 60 and 79 use one or more prescription medications. Each medication produces different effects, and a 2016 study published in the Methodist DeBakey Cardiovascular Journal noted that certain medications evoke an acute drop in blood

pressure, which can disturb balance and increase fall risk, while others actually facilitate greater improvements in health outcomes. That means the dynamic between medications and exercise is unique to each medication, which underscores the importance of speaking with a physician whenever a fitness regimen is started or tweaked and/or a new medication is prescribed.

These are just three of the questions seniors can ask when discussing exercise with their physicians. Seniors are urged to ask any additional questions they might have during such discussions.

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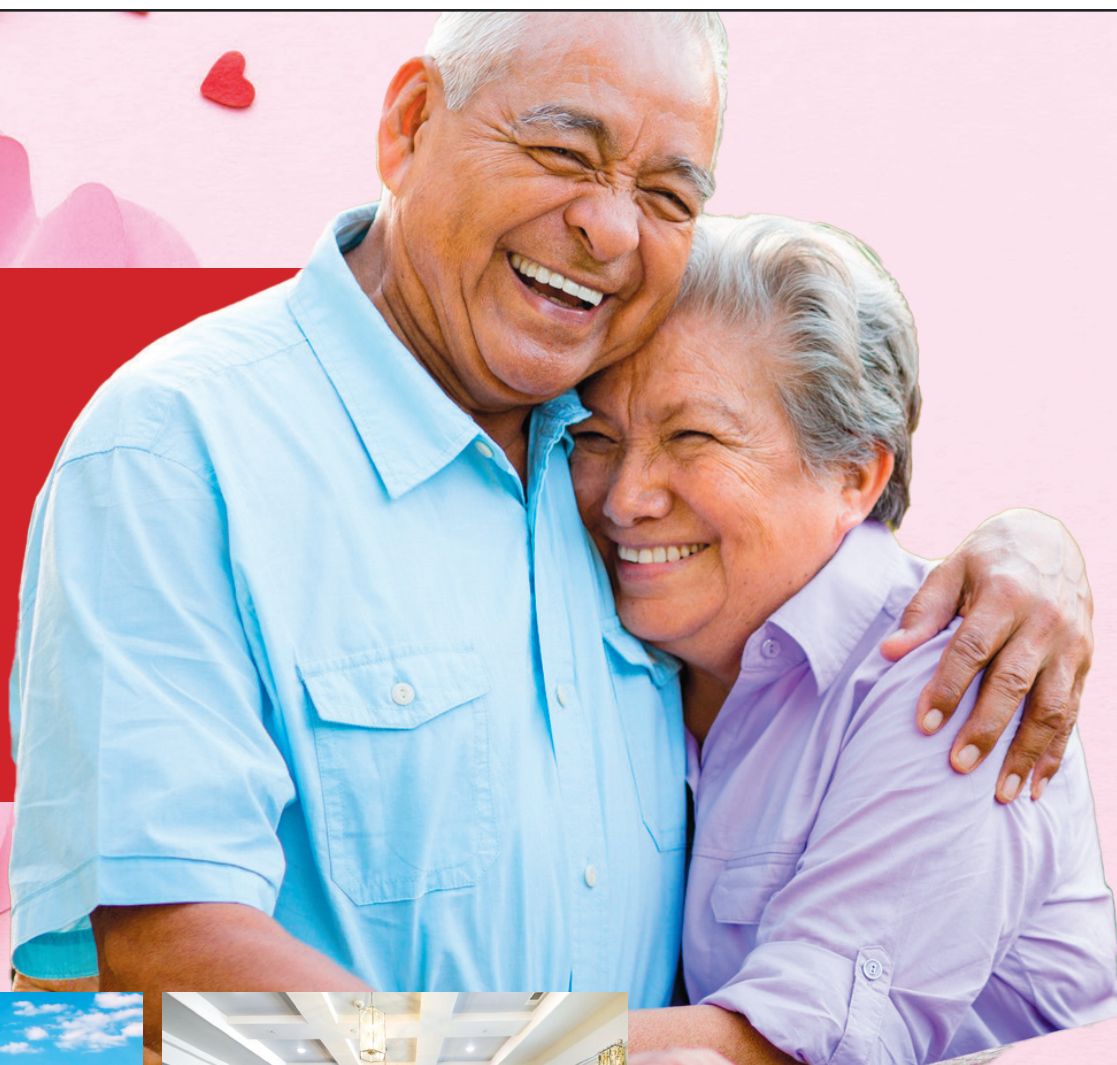


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