

Healthy Lifestyles

March 27, 2024

Stepping safely into Spring: A physical therapist's guide to stair safety

By Christian Campilli PT, DPT

As the season turns and the freshness of spring steps into our lives, it's an opportune time to discuss a crucial aspect of daily mobility - stair safety. Staircases are omnipresent, and as we "spring forward" in energy and activity, physical therapists emphasize the importance of navigating these common structures with care.

Understanding the Risks -

With the vibrancy of spring, there may be a temptation to take on activities with renewed vigor, including bounding up and down the stairs. However, this can lead to an increased risk of mishaps. Stairs are a leading location for falls, especially for those with mobility issues or conditions that affect balance and coordination.

Spring into Action:

Safety Tips on the Steps

1. Leg Strength and Balance Check: Begin the season with a self-assessment or consultation with a physical therapist to evaluate your leg strength and balance. As flowers need a strong stem to stand tall, your legs need strength to carry you safely up and down stairs.

2. Assistive Devices: Like a trellis supports climbing plants, assistive devices can provide the support needed for safe stair navigation. Ensure you're using the appropriate device and have been trained in its correct use on stairs.

3. Proper Technique: Just as we plant one seed at a time, step carefully and deliberately. Lead with the stronger leg when going up and with the weaker leg when descending.

4. Steady Foot Placement: Place the full foot on each step, similar to how we fully



Stepping out with the Center for Physical Therapy are, from left, Terri Walsh, Lisa Dispensa, Christian Campilli, Maggie Bottjer and Maria Gramuglia. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

plant our feet on solid ground for stability while gardening.

5. Consistent Handrail Use: Always hold onto handrails, like you would support a young sapling, to maintain balance.

6. Mindful Pace: Slow down to appreciate your journey, just as you might pause to enjoy the blooming spring around you.

7. Clear Vision: Ensure stairways are well-lit, just as gardens are bathed in sunlight, to see each step clearly.

8. Regular Exercise: Engage in exercises to strengthen your legs and core, akin to preparing the soil for a new season, so you can

navigate stairs with confidence.

Recovery with Physical Therapy - In case of a fall, professional assessment and treatment are paramount. Physical therapy provides the nurturing environment necessary for healing, much like the gentle care required for a recovering plant. We offer rehabilitation programs to heal injuries and preventive guidance to reduce the risk of future falls.

Cultivating a Community of Safety - As part of our springtime community outreach, we advocate for stair safety, including optimal design and accessibility. We sow the seeds of knowledge on proper stair use to ensure

everyone can enjoy a safe and active spring season.

Conclusion - As the days grow longer and the world awakens to the beauty of spring, let's embrace the season with a commitment to safety. By taking care on stairs, we ensure that we can step into all the joys that spring has to offer, without missing a beat. So, take a moment to check your step—it's a simple action that embodies the care and attention we give to all aspects of our lives during this season of renewal.

For more information, visit centerforphysicaltherapy.com or call 845-297-4789.

The importance of caring for the caregiver

By Brookmeade Community

In cases of emergencies or crisis, what do you do? Usually the first step is to take care of yourself so you'll be in a healthy position to take care of others. Only when we help ourselves can we effectively take care of the ones we love.

Self-care is one of the most important, and often most neglected, priorities. Caring for a loved one can be a unique experience. There's the pride and joy of knowing that your loved ones are well cared for, but there's also the stress and exhaustion, not to mention the financial concerns.

Avoiding Burnout

It's common for caregivers to

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become sick as well; prolonged stress, the physical and emotional demands of care-giving, the aging process, all place a caregiver at a higher risk for health problems. Assuming the role of caregiver for a loved one while juggling their own lives will have an increased risk to experience depression and chronic illness.

The progression of a chronic illness or injury for someone in your care cannot be thwarted, however, as caregivers we can take responsibility for our own personal health by ensuring our

needs are met.

Stress

How we react to an event plays a big role in how we cope with it. Stress from care-giving is expected, but stress may come about unexpectedly from the perception of our situation and feeling isolated in our experiences as a caregiver. Stress levels are impacted by several variables:

- Whether or not our care-giving is voluntary.
- The relationship with the care recipient

- How we cope with stressful situations
- Type of chronic illness or injury the care recipient has.
- Whether support and resources are available.

Steps to managing stress • Recognize and identify your stress triggers

- Identify what you can and cannot change
- Set goals on what you'd like to accomplish in the next few months.
- Utilize stress-reduction techniques
- Address your healthcare needs
- Get proper rest, nutrition, exercise
- Seek a support system & resources for respite

Respite Care

Respite Care is a period of rest or relief. Having a substitute caregiver to give the primary caregiver a break, whether once a week or more or when that primary caregiver gets sick is important in order to avoid caregiver burnout.

Respite Care Options:

- Home Care Agency provides a caregiver in the home setting. This provides a familiar environment and flexible scheduling
- Healthcare Facility: Care recipients can receive short-term stays at an assisted living or nursing home. Some benefits include activities and socialization with around the clock nursing care.
- Adult Day Healthcare Program: May offer medical & social programs for care recipients to take part in, receive meals and skilled nursing care. A medical model is a professional care setting in which older adults living with dementia or disabilities receive individualized therapeutic, social, and health services.

Explore all the options for yourself and for your loved one so you can understand the pros and cons for your situation. Take control as a caregiver of your health. When we take care of ourselves, our loved ones will benefit too.

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How a balanced diet can help kidney function

By Premier Medical Group

March marks not only National Nutrition Month but also National Kidney Month, making it the perfect time to explore the vital link between diet and kidney health. Our kidneys play a crucial role in filtering waste products from the blood and regulating fluid balance in the body. Maintaining optimal kidney function is essential for overall health and well-being, and one of the most effective ways to support kidney health is through a balanced diet.

Importance of a Balanced Diet for Kidney Health - A balanced diet provides the essential nutrients our bodies need to function properly. When it comes to kidney health, maintaining a balanced diet helps reduce the risk of developing kidney stones, kidney disease, and other related complications. The foods and beverages you consume play a crucial role in helping your kidneys maintain a healthy equilibrium of salts and minerals in your body, ultimately contributing to your overall well-being.

Foods to Avoid for Kidney Health - Certain foods and beverages can strain the kidneys and worsen kidney function. Dietary needs can vary depending on the health of a person's kidneys, but in general, individuals with kidney issues or those looking to maintain optimal kidney health should limit or avoid the following:

1. High-Sodium Foods: Excessive sodium intake can increase blood pressure and put a strain on the kidneys. Processed foods, canned soups, fast food, and salty snacks are examples of high-sodium foods to avoid.

2. Processed Meats: Processed meats contain high levels of sodium and phosphorus, both of which can be harmful to kidney health. Examples of processed meats you should limit or avoid altogether include deli meats, bacon, sausage, and hot dogs.

3. Sugary Foods and Beverages: Consuming too much sugar can contribute to obesity and diabetes, both of which are risk factors for kidney disease. Limiting sugary snacks, desserts, and sweetened



beverages is essential for kidney health.

4. High-Phosphorus Foods: Foods rich in phosphorus, such as dairy products, nuts, seeds, and whole grains, should be consumed in moderation by individuals with kidney disease, as high phosphorus levels can lead to bone and heart problems.

Best Foods for Kidney Health - Incorporating kidney-friendly foods into your diet can help support optimal kidney function and overall health. Some of the best foods to eat for kidney health include:

1. Fresh Fruits and Vegetables: Fruits and vegetables are excellent sources of essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They are also low in sodium and can help reduce inflammation and support kidney function.

2. Lean Protein Sources: Opt for lean protein sources such as fish, poultry, tofu, and legumes instead of red meat. These protein sources are lower in phosphorus and saturated fat, making them ideal choices for kidney health.

3. Whole Grains: Whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, oats, and whole wheat provide fiber, vitamins, and minerals without contributing to high phosphorus levels.

4. Healthy Fats: Incorporate healthy fats from sources like avocados, olive oil, nuts, and seeds into your diet. These fats can help reduce inflammation and support heart health, which is crucial for individuals with kidney disease.

Foods to Consult Your Doctor About - While it's important to talk to your doctor about all nutritional decisions, especially if you have concerns about your kidney health, there are some foods and nutritional habits, in particular, you should keep on your radar if you have chronic or advanced kidney

disease.

1. High-Potassium Foods: Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) can make it difficult for the kidneys to remove potassium from the blood. Levels that are consistently too low or too high can cause muscle and heart issues for some patients with poor kidney health. If you have CKD, talk to your Premier Medical physician about getting regular blood screenings to monitor your potassium levels. If your levels are high, it might be necessary to modify your diet to also limit potassium.

2. Liquid Consumption: People with advanced kidney disease might need to track the amount of liquids they consume since it can be difficult for the kidneys to remove excess fluid.

Consuming too many fluids can lead to swelling, elevate your blood pressure, and impose greater strain on your heart. If you have chronic or advanced kidney disease, consult your Premier Medical physician about tracking your liquid intake.

As we commemorate National Nutrition Month and National Kidney Month, let's recognize the significant impact that diet can have on kidney health. By adopting a balanced diet that includes kidney-friendly foods and limits or avoids foods that strain the kidneys, individuals can take proactive steps toward maintaining optimal kidney function and overall well-being. Remember, small dietary changes can make a big difference in supporting kidney health for years to come.

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Parents: It's time to prepare for IEP conferences

By now many parents have brought their concerns to a special education committee to evaluate the needs of their children. Some children may receive an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which will address their individual educational needs.

An IEP is a legal document. It is a mandate. It is not a suggestion. The following information is taken from Wrightslaw, which was founded by Peter and Pam Wright and is a valuable resource for parents. It provides them with accurate information on special education law and advocacy for their children with disabilities.

"The school has a responsibility to provide your child with an education tailored to his/her unique needs and to prepare your child for further education, employment, and independent living. Find the legal authority in IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Parents, you must be prepared. You want this meeting to be productive and result in the solutions that will benefit your children. The information you provide is extremely important.

Be clear and as detailed as possible regarding the issues your children are experiencing.

MAKING EDUCATION WORK with Diane Fulves

Do not be afraid to speak up. You know what your children need better than anyone. You are their advocates. Listen carefully to what is being recommended. If the decision is made that your child is eligible for an IEP, make sure that you understand what this entails.

Ask questions. What is the disability and how will it be addressed? What services will be offered? How often? When will they begin? How will you be informed of your child's progress? Take notes during this discussion. Peter Wright, Esq. offers very wise advice when he states, "If it was not written down, it was not said. If it was not written down, it did not happen."

Document everything!

Make a list of your concerns and requests and provide copies for each person who will be at this meeting. Check each item as it is discussed. If you are not satisfied with a response to any of your concerns, continue to advocate for your child. Remember that the IEP is a plan to address the UNIQUE needs of

your child. The following information is a quote from Wrightslaw regarding the unique needs of your child.

"The purpose of IDEA is to meet the unique needs of your child, not the class, not the teacher, not the school, not the district budget. Do not accept these statements from the school.

- We don't have to do it.
- We don't have money in the budget.
- We can't make exceptions.
- We have never done that before.

After the meeting, it may be a good idea to write a letter to the team to thank them for their time and to reiterate what you were told at the meeting. Request that this letter be placed in your file. This letter becomes another written document to confirm the decisions that were made.

The IEP is the first step. Parents, you must stay involved. When you receive this document, review it carefully.

Be sure that the goals meet

the specific needs of your child. Are the accommodations and modifications appropriate? If you have questions or concerns, address them before the new year begins. This plan is the guide to help children gain independence. They will achieve this when they are taught the way they learn. The IEP is a clear path to reach this goal.

Parents, I strongly recommend that you subscribe to Wrightslaw. Knowledge of the law helps parents understand their rights. The laws protect children with disabilities and their parents. The law provides a free, appropriate, public education for these children and services that meet their unique needs.

Remember that the IEP is not a suggestion. It is a mandate. Our children have a right to an educational program that works for them. They are worth it!

Diane Fulves is an educator and advocate for children and parents who is located in Millbrook. She is director of Empowering Our Parents, which offers information and support to parents. She is the director of Nurture the Spirit and Shakespeare Odyssey, programs that enrich children with the magic of the arts. For more information, please contact her at dee076@verizon.net

Helping infants, families thrive

(StatePoint) A bipartisan package that recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, would expand the child tax credit (CTC). As the Senate decides whether to follow suit, advocates press that the CTC is a critical policy vehicle to help all infants, toddlers and their families thrive, and it should be implemented as soon as possible.

"Uplifting children out of poverty gives them better chances in life, so it's critical that families advocate for CTCs, as well as understand how they work," says Jacob Pinney-Johnson, trainer with the Early Childhood Investment Corporations, National Center for Family and Parent. "For families like mine that have struggled to make ends meet, a child tax

credit will make all the difference in helping them feed, clothe and house their child."

Studies show that inadequate housing, food insecurity and familial stress during the first three years of a child's life pose risks to their rapidly developing brain and body. These effects can have long-lasting impacts, impairing their ability to be healthy and thrive in adulthood.

If the House version of the federal CTC goes fully into effect, roughly 16 million children under age 17 will benefit in the first year, including nearly 3 million infants and toddlers, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. While more modest than the 2021 credit, the measure would lift hundreds of thousands of children above the poverty line in the first year, and include further increases in 2025, along with inflation adjustments in future years.

Given these figures, it's no

surprise that the measure is popular with parents across the political spectrum. In a November 2022 poll by the nonprofit Zero to Three, an overwhelming 85% of parents said it's important for Congress to reinstate Child Tax Credit reforms.

The National Collaborative for Infants & Toddlers, or NCIT, an education and advocacy movement committed to ensuring that children prenatal to 3 years old and their families have what they need to thrive, along with thousands of aligned organizations, is supporting strong CTCs that don't simultaneously exclude many families with onerous restrictions. To learn more, visit <https://www.ncit.org/CTC>.

Advocate stress that federal CTCs are critical, but state governments have a role as well. States can institute their own CTCs to help infants, toddlers and their families thrive now.



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Tips to support metabolic health

(StatePoint) Good metabolic health is the backbone of great overall health. Unfortunately, many Americans misunderstand what metabolic health is and are not aware of its importance.

A recent poll from Metavo/Harris Poll Study reveals that nearly three in four North Americans have experienced at least one issue related to metabolic health in the past year, while only 52% have heard, read or seen information on metabolic health issues.

What's more, only 30% of North Americans know that metabolic health is not the same as gut health, and many falsely believe that metabolic issues mostly occur in those who are overweight.

"This knowledge gap plays a factor in why many health issues related to metabolic health, such as brain fog, food cravings and energy slumps, often go unaddressed," says Dr. Paul Spagnuolo, associate professor in the Department of Food Science at the University of Guelph, whose research includes finding new ways for people to proactively support their metabolic health.

Issues related to metabolic health can take a toll on your mental wellbeing, your ability to perform your job, and even your social life and personal relationships, making it critical to nip them in the bud. To improve

your metabolic health and feel your best, consider these tips:

- Get active. Whether you're hitting up the gym for a weight training session or simply going for a longer walk during your day,



daily physical activity is recommended to support your metabolic health. Find activities, daily movement and workouts you enjoy and stick with them.

- Prioritize proper sleep. Maintaining proper sleeping habits can help to keep your insulin and hormone levels balanced.

- Fuel often. Fueling more

frequently can boost your metabolism. Being sure to eat smaller portions at regular, consistent times every day and drinking plenty of water can also help improve metabolic health. Set

alerts on your phone, or even use a hydration app, to help you remember to drink up.

- Explore supplements. Consider taking a daily supplement designed to support metabolic health and activate metabolism naturally, like Metavo. Featuring the proprietary avocado compound Avocatin B, also known as AvoB, Metavo Advanced

Glucose Metabolism Support activates your metabolism naturally at the cellular level.

"Having a flexible metabolism at the cellular level enables the body to properly metabolize fats, proteins and carbs to help improve insulin sensitivity, glucose tolerance and energy," says Dr. Spagnuolo, whose research led to the development of Metavo.

The brand also carries Metavo Advanced Weight Support, a supplement featuring clinically proven ingredients that help burn fat, support weight loss, and provide increased energy, as well as Metavo Advanced Weight Support Meal Replacement Powders, which are designed to be the perfect "metabolic" meal, with 20 grams of complete protein and whole food vitamins and minerals. These supplements can complement GLP-1, or other medications that treat obesity and diabetes. Plus, there is Metavo Glucose Metabolism Support with Berberine, which targets metabolic inflexibility to increase insulin sensitivity, support healthy glucose metabolism, cardiovascular support and more. To learn more, visit www.metavo.com.

When it comes to metabolic health, consistency is key. Make physical activity, healthy eating, proper sleep and the right supplements a regular part of your routine.

Everyday health habits can help protect against respiratory illness

(StatePoint) With only 8% of children and 21% of adults reporting receipt of the 2023-24 COVID-19 vaccine, less than half the population reporting receipt of a flu vaccine and just 20% of adults 60 and over reporting receipt of the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccine, it's no surprise that rates of respiratory illnesses are at elevated levels this season.

"Respiratory illness is all too common, particularly during colder months when people spend more time indoors and germs can spread more easily," says Dr. Albert Rizzo, chief medical officer, American Lung Association. "Fortunately, there are many strategies for staying healthy."

The American Lung Association is sharing everyday habits you can adopt to help avoid infection, along with information about available tools to help prevent severe illness:

- Wash your hands. Regularly wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water isn't

available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

- Cover your cough and sneeze. Stop the spread of infection by using a tissue to cover your mouth and nose when you cough and sneeze. You can use your elbow if a tissue is not available.

- Keep your distance. Close contact with a person who is sick increases exposure to respiratory droplets containing a virus. Maintain your distance whenever possible.

- Stay home. In addition to staying home when you are sick, try your best to keep your distance from household members to help prevent them from getting sick.

- Clean and disinfect. When someone is sick at home, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces is especially important to help prevent the spread of illness.

- Consider wearing a mask. Wearing a mask helps provide protection against circulating viruses, and can help protect

people at higher risk of serious illness. Effectiveness does vary depending on the virus and mask quality.

- Get up to date. Talk to your doctor to see if you and your family members are up to date on vaccinations. Flu vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. RSV vaccination is recommended for adults 60 years of age and older after having a discussion with their healthcare provider. Maternal RSV vaccination is recommended as an option to help prevent babies from developing severe RSV illness and is given during weeks 32-36 of pregnancy during September through January. COVID-19 vaccination is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older.

- Learn more about monoclonal antibodies. If you have an infant or are an expectant parent, ask your healthcare provider about a monoclonal antibody injection to help provide protection against severe RSV illness. This

preventative antibody is recommended for infants under 8 months of age and babies between 8-19 months at increased risk of severe RSV.

- Get tested, if needed. If you do get sick, testing can help your healthcare provider determine which virus you have, and inform next steps such as treatment. Talk to your healthcare provider about testing right away if you get sick, especially if you are at increased risk for severe illness.

- Seek treatment. Antiviral medications available for flu and COVID-19 may lower your risk of severe illness, hospitalization and death if started early and within the recommended treatment window.

For more resources, visit, lung.org/viruses.

To feel your best this season, adopt healthy habits. And if you do fall ill, take steps to get the right treatment.

Pneumococcal Pneumonia can be life-threatening - Here's what to know

(StatePoint) Pneumococcal pneumonia can disrupt your life for weeks and, in some cases, be serious or even life-threatening. To help adults understand how they can help protect themselves against pneumococcal pneumonia, the American Lung Association and Pfizer are partnering to share important information and patient insights about the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that this lung disease causes an estimated 150,000 hospitalizations annually nationwide. Symptoms include high fever, excessive sweating, shaking chills, coughing, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and chest pain. Some symptoms can appear quickly and without warning.

Risk Factors - The immune system naturally weakens with age, so even if you're healthy and active, being 65 or older puts you at increased risk for pneumococcal pneumonia. In fact, adults 65 and older are over 10 times more likely to be hospitalized with pneumococcal

pneumonia than those aged 18-49.

In adults 19 and older, certain factors increase pneumococcal pneumonia risk compared with healthy adults of the same age. These include smoking cigarettes, chronic lung diseases like asthma and COPD, chronic heart disease and diabetes.

Prevention

Pneumococcal pneumonia vaccination can help protect against the disease and is recommended for at-risk groups. For adults living with certain chronic health conditions and those 65 or older, vaccination helps protect against a potentially life-threatening illness.

"Having asthma can sometimes restrict me from doing things I love, so I really try to take proactive steps to help keep myself healthy, like avoiding my known asthma triggers and following my doctors' advice," says Catherine, a patient who was diagnosed with asthma in adulthood. "I didn't even think I was old enough to get vaccinated

for pneumococcal pneumonia, but when my doctor recommended it, I got it because I trust him. I like the comfort of knowing it's helping to protect me against this potentially serious lung disease."

In addition to being up to date on your vaccinations, washing your hands, and not smoking are all habits that can help prevent pneumococcal pneumonia. Those with chronic illnesses should also follow the care recommendations for their condition.

Disparities

The 2025 Vaccines National Strategic Plan has pneumococcal disease vaccination rate targets of 90% for people 65 years and older and 60% for adults with underlying health conditions at increased risk of disease. Unfortunately, current vaccination rates are falling far short of these goals – especially among Black and Hispanic/Latino communities. In 2021, pneumococcal vaccination coverage among all U.S. adults aged 65 and older was 70.1%. However, the rate was around 60% among the Black population and around 52% among the

Hispanic/Latino population of the same age group. Latino and Black adults are also at greater risk of developing certain chronic health conditions, such as asthma and diabetes, compared to individuals who are white. It's important that all adults at risk take steps to help protect themselves against infection.

What Should You Do?

If you're at increased risk for pneumococcal pneumonia, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about vaccination. Being an active part of your healthcare team, advocating for yourself and asking questions is important. Even if you've previously had a pneumonia vaccine, your healthcare provider may recommend additional vaccination for increased protection. You can learn more, as well as take a quiz to assess your risk, by visiting lung.org/pneumococcal.

Pneumococcal pneumonia can be serious. Talk to your healthcare provider about how to help prevent this lung disease.

Nine ways older adults can support mental wellness

(StatePoint) When it comes to overall wellness, focusing on mental health is critical, especially for older adults, according to experts.

"As people age, they may experience stressors such as serious illness, losing close friends and family members, managing life on a fixed income, and coping with concerns about their own mortality. While seniors may show resilience to these dimensions of vitality, when they're compounded, these losses and stressors can result in a myriad of behavioral health issues, including depression, anxiety, stress, and insomnia," says Dr. Lindsay Evans-Mitchell, board certified adult psychiatrist and behavioral health medical director for Cigna Healthcare's Medicare Advantage business.

Dementia, which includes memory loss and language difficulties, is another issue often more pronounced with age, and in earlier stages, it can often mimic some symptoms of depression.

Fortunately, Dr. Evans-Mitchell says making healthy choices can improve your quality of life,

including your overall mental well-being, and potentially reduce your risk of both depression and dementia:

Practice good nutrition: There is evidence that plant-based diets are associated with better health, including better emotional health. That's another reason to add more green, leafy vegetables to your diet.

Exercise: Regular exercise can positively affect cognitive ability. If you have a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan offering access to a fitness program at no extra cost, then make sure to take advantage of it. You can learn about Cigna Healthcare's MA plans at cignamedicareinformation.com.

Hydrate: Drink plenty of water. Dehydration can negatively affect cognitive performance. Even mild dehydration can drain energy and cause fatigue.

Enjoy some sunshine: Sunlight provides needed vitamin D. Getting sunshine may increase your serotonin and help you stave off depression caused by Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD. Also, according to the

Alzheimer's Association, exposure to vitamin D can lower dementia risk by as much as 40%. Of course, make sure to take proper precautions, such as wearing a hat, using sunscreen, and wearing eye protection that shields against UV light.

Get plenty of rest: Older adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night, according to the National Institutes of Health. People who get six hours of sleep or less a night are at greater risk of developing dementia later, the organization says. Additionally, poor sleep could be a sign of depression and should be discussed with your doctor.

Stay away from harmful substances: Dealing with behavioral health issues in unhealthy ways, such as abusing prescription or illicit drugs or alcohol, will only worsen the situation. According to the National Institutes for Health, research shows heavy alcohol use can increase the risk of both dementia and depression.

Pick up a hobby: Hobbies like gardening, cooking and solving puzzles can help improve your

memory and your physical and mental health.

Be social: Isolation can lead to depression, which only worsened for many during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reach out to friends and family in person, via video chat, or over the telephone.

Find help if you need it: Keep your regular medical appointments, and don't hesitate to seek additional help from your network, if you need it. This may take the form of a financial advisor, a clergy member, or a mental health professional. Medicare generally covers the cost of behavioral health services, including depression and addiction treatment, as well as talk therapy. Virtual services are often available to those living in rural areas. And if you're experiencing a crisis that includes suicidal thoughts, call 988 immediately.

"For some older adults, seeking help can be difficult," says Dr. Evans-Mitchell. "But getting help is a sign of strength, not weakness. There's no benefit to suffering in silence when help to improve your life is within reach."



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