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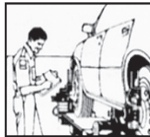
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# 3 fun and effective outdoor exercises for seniors



The benefits of spending time in the great outdoors are significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, spending time outdoors may improve mental health and help to reduce stress, and the vitamin D the body absorbs while outside can have a positive effect on blood cells and the immune system.

Seniors can benefit from the great outdoors as much as anyone. Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, which strengthens bones. That's especially beneficial for seniors, as the National Council on Aging notes that bone density often decreases after age 50, which can increase the risk of fractures. That's especially so in women over the age of 50, as a 2021 report from Amgen, Inc., indicated women can lose up to 20 percent of their bone density

within five to seven years of menopause.

Spending time in the great outdoors also provides a social benefit, encouraging individuals from all walks of life, including seniors, to get out of their homes and spend time with other people.

With so much to gain from spending time outside, seniors can consider these three outdoor exercises as they seek to maintain or improve their overall health.

**1. Walking:** Walking is free and effective. In fact, WebMD notes that a brisk 30-minute walk can improve blood flow, contribute to a stronger heart, strengthen bones, and even help people sleep better at night. In addition, a 2022 study published in the journal *JAMA Neurology* found that people between the ages of 40 and 79 who walked about 9,800 steps per day were 51 percent less likely to develop dementia than people who didn't walk much at all.

**2. Cycling:** Riding a bike is both fun and a great form of outdoor exercise. Though many studies regarding the health effects of cycling have looked at the value of riding a bike to work, a scenario that does not apply to retirees, the results of such studies still offer insight into just how valuable it can be to ride a bike. For example, a 2020 study published in the journal *The Lancet* found that people who cycled to work were 24 percent less likely to die of heart disease and 11 percent less likely to develop cancer. Seniors, whether they are still working or retired, can incorporate cycling into their daily routines and enjoy all the fun and health benefits that riding a bike provides.

**3. Hiking:** Hiking is a bit more strenuous than walking, particularly when individuals choose to traverse steep and/or rocky terrain. WebMD notes that hiking after age 60 can help people reduce their risk of falls and fractures; lower their risk for a host of ailments, including coronary heart disease, colon cancer and diabetes; reduce blood pressure, even in adults who have already been diagnosed with hypertension; and maintain healthy bones and joints. Hiking is not a one-size-fits-all activity, so seniors, especially those who would characterize themselves as novice hikers, are urged to speak with their physicians prior to hiking trails that are not flat.

Seniors can consider these three fun activities and others as they answer the call of the great outdoors. Walking, cycling and hiking offer a great reason to get out of the house and reap the health-related benefits of spending time outside.



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# Engaging hobbies for seniors

The value of hobbies is undeniable. A 2014 study published in the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology found that employees who engaged in creative hobbies outside of work were more creative on work projects and had a better attitude on the job, while a separate study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine* in 2009 reported that individuals who engaged in enjoyable leisure activities had lower blood pressure and a smaller waist circumference. The myriad benefits of hobbies is good news for seniors, many of whom have ample time for leisure activities. Whether seniors are retired or still working but free from the responsibilities of parenting, the following are some fun and engaging hobbies to fill that free time.

**• Cooking:** Years spent hustling and bustling through the daily grind of personal and professional obligations might have forced individuals to embrace cooking that emphasized convenience over culinary skill. Now that there's more time to embrace one's inner Emeril, seniors can look to cooking classes or take the self-taught route and purchase a new cookbook filled with delicious recipes. A well-cooked homemade meal can provide a sense of

accomplishment and affords seniors an opportunity to control the ingredients in the foods they eat, which can be important for individuals with health-related dietary restrictions.

**• Writing:** Many successful individuals have penned their memoirs after long, notable careers and lives. While individuals needn't follow suit with the goal of making their memoirs public, writing can be a great way for seniors to document their own lives and the lives of their families. Interest in genealogy has risen considerably in recent years, as easily accessible websites like Ancestry.com and 23andMe.com have made it easier than ever for individuals to learn where they came from. Seniors can contextualize the information provided by genealogy websites by writing about their personal experiences and sharing what they know about the lives of their parents, siblings, grandparents, and other family members.

**• Gardening:** Seniors looking for hobbies that get them out in the great outdoors need look no further than their own backyards. Gardening can benefit the body in myriad ways. According to the Mayo Clinic Health System, gardening can burn as many calories as working out in the



gym. In addition, the MCHS notes that individuals who grow their own fruits and vegetables are more likely to include those foods in their own diets, thus saving them money at the grocery store and also increasing their intake of nutrient-rich foods.

**• Swimming:** Swimming is an ideal exercise for seniors, as it's low-impact but still a great way to utilize the entire body. A 2007 study published in the journal

*Quality of Life Research* found that water-based exercise improves older adults' quality of life and decreases disability. A separate study published in 2008 in *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* found that water-based exercise can improve or help to maintain bone health in post-menopausal women. These are just a few of the many hobbies seniors can pursue as they look for positive and fun ways to spend their free time.



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Travel was once a key component of the picture working professionals created of their ideal retirements.

While the COVID-19 pandemic put many retirement travel plans on hold in recent years, jetting off to distant locales is once again on retirees' radars.

A 2022 survey from AARP found that individuals 50 and over were poised to not only get back on the road, but also spend significantly more money on travel. **Prior to the pandemic, Americans 50 and over spent \$7,314 annually on travel, according to data from AARP. By spring 2022, individuals in that same age bracket indicated a readiness to spend \$8,369 on travel.**

Eagerness to get back on the road, in the air or on the high seas could make it easy to overlook some principles of safe travel. However, such an oversight could lead to complications that could make it hard to enjoy time away from home. The following tips can reduce the likelihood that seniors encounter trouble while traveling.

• **Determine if any health issues are affecting your desired destinations.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a website devoted to travel vaccines ([cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines)), and that page can be an invaluable resource for individuals planning a vacation. What's

more, the CDC even provides a specific list of destinations and the latest travel health notices for each of those nations. That list, accessible at [cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list) can help seniors determine if there are any health-related safety issues in countries they hope to visit.

• **Speak to your physician.** A pre-trip consultation with a physician can uncover any issues that might arise while you're away. Such issues may be easily managed for domestic travelers who are not planning to visit any especially remote locations, but they will not necessarily be as easily navigated when traveling overseas. Physicians can recommend certain vaccinations or measures to ensure your health while away. In addition, a pre-trip doctor visit is a great time to refill prescriptions that you will need while you're away.

• **Take financial precautions as well.** Of course, not all travel-related concerns are medical. Finances also require some pre-trip attention. Inflation has caused a sharp spike in the price of various commodities since the start of 2022, so travelers should study up on the cost of food and attractions at their destination to ensure they have enough money to enjoy themselves. Baggage costs have risen significantly in

# Tips to help seniors travel safely



recent years, so seniors traveling on a budget may want to pack less and do laundry while traveling in an effort to save money. In addition, the unpredictable nature of travel since the onset of the pandemic has underscored the utility of travel insurance. Seniors can look into travel insurance that could reimburse them in the case of delays or cancellations.

• **Privately share your itinerary.** Prior to departing, share your itinerary with friends and family. Avoid sharing the itinerary on

social media platforms, which can make you a target for criminals at home and at your destination. The itinerary should include where you're staying, the dates you're visiting certain locations and the dates of activities you'll be engaging in on your trip.

Seniors rediscovering the joy of traveling can take various measures to make their trips more safe.

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# Dating later in life



People are living longer, a reality that can be traced to a number of factors, including advancements in medicine and greater dissemination of information regarding preventive health care. **According to data from the United Nations Population Division, the average life expectancy in the United States is 81.65 for women and 76.61 for men. Canada has even higher life expectancies, at 84.74 for women and 81.15 for men.**

As people live longer, some may outlive their significant others and ultimately find themselves once again interested in sharing experiences with a special someone. Seniors ready to re-enter the dating pool may find that things are quite different from what they experienced as naïve teenagers or young adults. Dating used to be about hanging out with friends and meeting people at shared events, such as school dances or work parties or even while enjoying a night out with friends. Nowadays, dating often begins in cyberspace. This can be confusing and anxiety-inducing for adults who didn't grow up with technology guiding their every move. According to a report in The Atlantic, more than one-third of baby boomers are not currently married, and this generation has had higher rates of separation and divorce and lower rates of marriage than the generations that preceded them. Many boomers have years ahead of them to devote to new relationships. Here's what they may want to know before navigating

twenty-first century dating waters.

• **You're not in this alone.** While online dating may be portrayed as a young person's game, plenty of older adults are now finding connections online. In fact, many different dating apps are geared toward the senior set, including SeniorMatch, eHarmony, Singles50, OKCupid, and Silver Singles, among others.

• **You have more time for fun.** As a senior, you may have more time to devote to recreation and leisure. This can be a great opportunity to get out and meet someone who shares your passions and interests.

• **Online dating has its advantages.** While online dating apps and websites may have certain things working against them, particularly if their algorithms for pairing people are not fine-tuned, they also can be helpful. Online dating can expand social circles beyond local neighborhoods or even states, provinces or countries. You're casting your net over a much larger body of water. Furthermore, dating app profiles typically spell out exactly what another person is seeking, which can save seniors from having to revisit awkward dating moments from years past.

Seniors may have to navigate new waters in modern dating. But with a good mindset and a little persistence, it is possible for seniors to find a special someone in cyberspace.



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