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# Health and Wellness *DIRECTORY*





# Healthy Living Tips

Taking charge of your health starts with small, intentional steps.

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## Eat Healthy

- Balance your diet with plant-based foods, whole grains, proteins, and fruits.
- Avoid empty calories, high-fat foods, and added sugars.
- Limit alcohol to one drink per day.
- Drink eight 8-ounce glasses of water daily.
- Aim for lasting healthy eating habits, not just short-term changes.

## Get Plenty of Sleep

- Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep nightly.
- Maintain a consistent bedtime.
- Avoid screens one hour before bed.
- Remove the TV to keep the bedroom for rest.

## Focus on Yourself

- Women often put others first, but make time for yourself regularly.
- Do something that brings you joy every day.

## Exercise

- Aim for 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise weekly, focusing on strength, flexibility, and stress management.
- Short on time? Every bit counts! Schedule a lunch hour walk, use stairs, park farther away, or walk during your kids' activities.

## Manage Stress

- Eating right, exercising, and sleeping will help combat stress.
- Incorporate yoga or meditation for extra relief.
- It's OK to say no.
- Commit only to reasonable requests.

## Check Your Vaccinations

- Make sure you're current on all necessary vaccinations including tetanus and flu.

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# The link between sleep and healthy aging

A good night's rest can be just what the body needs to feel revitalized and ready to tackle a new day. Indeed, rest is important for people of all ages, including seniors.

The National Council on Aging notes the brain needs sleep to regulate the body, restore energy and repair damage. Recognition of that is vital for aging men and women, some of whom may be more vulnerable to sleeping problems than they realize. In addition to being more vulnerable to age-related health problems that can interrupt their sleep, thus affecting its quality, aging men and women may find their sleep routines change over time. For example, a 2019 study published in the journal BMC Geriatrics found that active elderly people reported it took them longer to fall asleep as they got older.

The NCOA says it's a misconception that older adults need more sleep than younger people, noting adults of all ages require the same amount of nightly rest. However, things may change for seniors in regard to how much time they



need to spend in bed. The NCOA notes this is because adults may be more likely to experience poor sleep quality and continuity. When that occurs, adults still need the recommended minimum of seven hours of nightly sleep, but they may need to spend more time in bed since it's taking them longer to fall asleep.

It's important that aging adults recognize that they can spend too much time sleeping as well. A 2019 study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society found that too much sleep is linked to the

same health problems as too little sleep, issues that include an elevated risk for heart disease and falls.

Sleep issues affecting older adults also may be a byproduct of various contributing factors. The NCOA notes that frequent contributors to sleep concerns include:

- Pain that affects the back, neck, or joints
- Mental health issues, including anxiety and depression
- Neurodegenerative disorders that are more frequent among aging populations, such

as dementia and Alzheimer's

- Sleep apnea or disordered breathing at night

Restless leg syndrome, a condition that tends to worsen with age and is characterized by an urge to move limbs often

- Nocturia, a condition marked by a need to urinate at night

- Stimulating medications or medication interactions

- Decreased exposure to sunlight

- Sedentary lifestyle

Aging men and women who are experiencing difficulty sleeping should know that such issues are treatable and not something that needs to be accepted as a normal part of growing older. For example, individuals whose sleep is routinely interrupted by a need to urinate can avoid certain beverages, including alcohol and caffeinated drinks.

Sleep and healthy aging go hand in hand. Aging adults experiencing difficulty sleeping can consult their physicians and visit [ncoa.org](http://ncoa.org) to learn more about overcoming sleep-related issues.

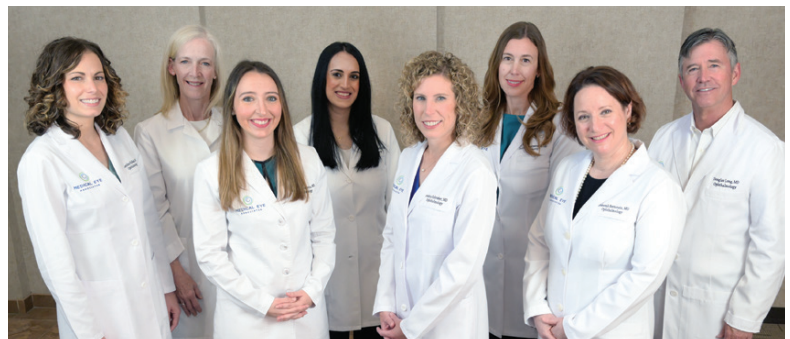


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# A comprehensive guide to gifting fitness fans

Physical activity is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Exercise guidelines supported by the medical community indicate most adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week, or at least 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week. Individuals can take several steps to be more active in their daily lives. Some become gym enthusiasts, while others congregate to yoga studios or other activities. Some still prefer to exercise at home or outdoors. When it comes time to shop for people with a fondness for fitness, gift givers can consider these ideas.

## Upgrade a membership

Do some research to learn where your fitness lover spends most time working out. If it is a traditional gym, a kick-boxing studio or a H.I.I.T establishment, speak with the staff to see if you can upgrade the member's plan to receive more perks. For example, a base gym membership may only include use of the floor machines and weights, but another may include all that as well as access to massage chairs, spa services and more.



## Massage or massage package

Working out muscles can lead to soreness each time a new milestone is reached. Help soothe those tired muscles with the gift of a neck, back and shoulder massager. Or go a step further and purchase a few sessions at a massage therapy location near the recipient's home.

## Insulated water bottle or tumbler

Staying hydrated is impor-

tant when working out. An insulated water bottle ensures that fitness fans can enjoy cold water or a sports drink throughout their exercise sessions. There's even a water bottle that self-cleans using UV light to kill bacteria in the bottle.

## Treadmill or stationary bike

If you know a loved one has had eyes on improving a home gym, a treadmill or stationary bike can bring the space to the next level. There is home equip-

ment for every budget.

## New kicks

Comfortable, supportive athletic shoes ensure workouts aren't hindered by sore feet. Since shoe fit and style is a personal choice, it might be a safer bet to give a gift card to a popular athletic store or online retailer rather than purchasing the footwear yourself.

## Fitness monitor or smart watch

It seems like everyone now has some sort of smart device, but if the person on your list still hasn't made the switch to a watch that tracks various health data, then that can make for a perfect gift. Smart watches and fitness trackers monitor steps and various health markers such as pulse, elevation climbed and distance, and can even detect if a user has a burgeoning health problem. When pairing the watch with popular fitness apps, users can log daily activities and their diets to get a bigger picture of their overall health.

Those who prioritize fitness can benefit from any number of health- and fitness-minded gifts this season.

# Effective ways to manage emotions

Every person experiences different emotions at various points in their lives. Emotions can be fleeting or exhibit some staying power. Emotional reactions are part of being human, but sometimes people may have trouble managing their emotions, particularly those that are considered unsavory.

It's possible to regulate emotions without suppressing them, and such an approach can positively affect mood, relationships and even decision-making. The following are some simple strategies to manage emotions.

- **Recognize that emotions develop for a reason.** Before being too hard on oneself, PsychCentral says it is important to understand that emotions happen for a reason. There's no such thing as a "bad" emotion, and it is important to find ways to accept your emotions when they come whether you like them or not.



- **Understand upbringing affects emotions.** People begin to learn how to manage their emotions during childhood, says Medical News Today. As babies are not able to self-regulate emotions, they learn from parents and other caregivers. Those who grew up in

unsupportive environments during childhood may have difficulties managing their emotions and more issues with self-regulation than those who were reared in supportive homes.

- **Practice self-care.** Self-care activities like exercising, getting adequate sleep, eating well, and engaging in hobbies can support emotional well-being and help tone down more intense emotions, says Verywell Mind.

- **Turn on some music or change scenery.** Focusing attention outward is a way to tap into something tangible to help manage emotions, as emotions themselves are intangible. Often simply directing focus off of the emotions themselves and onto something else can help reduce the intensity of one's feelings.

- **Employ deep breathing.** Breathing techniques can help restore balance to emotions. A 2018 systemic review published

in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* found deep breathing activities activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps the body relax and restore balance. The "box breathing" method can help. Inhale slowly for four seconds. Hold your breath for four seconds, trying to avoid inhaling or exhaling. Then, slowly exhale through the mouth for four seconds. Hold your breath again for four seconds.

- **Keep a mood journal.** Writing things down can help people identify patterns of behavior or triggers that heighten emotions. Once triggers and patterns of emotions are established, people can take steps to elicit change, such as stepping away from hostile conversations.

Emotions are part of human behavior, and it is possible to better manage them for emotional and physical well-being.



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- Does the pain in your legs or feet keep you from enjoying a walk with your dog, spouse or friends?

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# The healing power of nature

Being in good health and avoiding various diseases often comes down to a combination of factors. Individuals may be aware that nutrition and exercise play important roles in personal well-being, but it appears that nature may provide its own medicinal benefits as well.

A number of studies have examined the potential healing components of being in nature. The World Health Organization released a report in 2023 titled "Green and Blue Spaces and Mental Health," which indicated that time in nature improves mood, mindsets and mental health. This occurs regardless of whether that nature was "country" regions or urban areas. The following are some of the ways nature can have a healing effect.

- **Immunity protection:** Trees and plants emit aromatic compounds called phytoncides. When inhaled, these compounds can ignite healthy biological changes similar to the concepts of aromatherapy. When people walk in forests or other green areas, they often



experience changes in the blood that are associated with protection against cancer, improved immunity and lower blood pressure, says Dr. Qing Li, a professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo.

- **Get a brain break:** When spending time in nature, attention is focused on the scenery, the animals and the rest of the environment. This may help quiet the rush of thoughts in

the head that clutters the ability to think freely.

- **Reduce stress:** Stress is a catalyst for a number of adverse health conditions. The Mayo Clinic says stress can cause headache, muscle tension, fatigue, changes in sex drive, and a weaker immune system, among other things. Being outside in nature and away from work and home responsibilities can help

reduce stress levels. Dr. Mathew McGlothlin, senior medical director with WellMed Medical Group, says being in nature provides stress relief.

- **Get vitamin D:** The body naturally produces vitamin D from sun exposure. The National Institutes of Health says it is optimal to have sun exposure for five to 30 minutes a day, most days a week, to absorb UVB rays and effectively make vitamin D. Vitamin D is a nutrient the body needs to build and maintain strong bones. Vitamin D also regulates many other cellular functions in the body, and may be able to prevent cognitive decline.

- **Inspires exercise:** People may be more inclined to be physically active while outdoors. Hiking, cycling, swimming, and even strolls in the park all make the outdoors more fun. Exercise promotes heart health and helps people maintain a healthy weight.

Nature can have a healing effect, and more time outdoors can promote mental and physical well-being.

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# Boost your diet with these powerhouse foods

A nutritious diet is a key component of a healthy lifestyle. That's an important thing to remember for people looking to turn over a healthier leaf and accomplish their long-term wellness goals.

Avoiding certain ingredients, like saturated fats and added sugars, and choosing foods known for their nutritional benefits is one way individuals can utilize diet to live healthier. Although such foods cannot entirely eliminate risk for certain diseases or make a person invincible, eating more of them certainly can benefit individuals' overall health.

- **Kale:** Kale long has had a place on healthy eating lists. Kale is a good source of vitamins A, C and K, and also contains alpha-linolenic acid, which is an omega-3 fatty acid.

According to Britannica, studies show kale can help combat heart disease and cancer, and also boost eye health by reducing risk for cataracts and macular degeneration. Kale is not the only dark, leafy green vegetable that has earned superstar status. Swiss chard, spinach, collard greens, and

turnip greens are equally beneficial.

- **Berries:** There is strong antioxidant capacity associated with berries that helps reduce the risk of heart disease and other inflammatory conditions, says Healthline. That's why blueberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, and cranberries are so revered by nutritionists. They're also great sources of fiber, vitamins and minerals.

- **Honey:** This natural sweetener is a powerful ally to animals and insects. Honey is one of the most appreciated and valued natural products, according to the study "Honey and Health: A Review of Recent Clinical Research," published in 2017. Since ancient times, honey has been used therapeutically due to its antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and antiproliferative effects.

- **Walnuts:** Studies have found that those with higher nut consumption have improved cardiovascular risk factors and lower rates of cardiovascular disease. Nuts are an important part of the Mediter-



anean diet, which has been found to be heart healthy as well, according to Harvard Health. Walnuts are a particularly good choice for lowering LDL cholesterol, triglycerides and apoprotein B (a protein linked to cardiovascular disease).

- **Legumes:** Legumes, also known as pulses, include beans, lentils, peas, peanuts, and alfalfa. Legumes are full of nutrients, like minerals, protein, fiber, and B vitamins.

Healthline notes legumes also improve feelings of fullness, which may help people eat less at each meal.

- **Teff:** Not too many people have heard of teff, which is a very small grain that is a dietary staple in parts of eastern Africa. Teff is high in the nutrients iron, magnesium, zinc, calcium, and vitamin C. Teff also contains ample protein and fiber. Teff also is gluten-free, so it can be ground and used in place of other flours in cooking, says Britannica.

- **Kefir:** Fermented foods and beverages have garnered increased attention recently because of their effect on helping maintain gut health. Kefir is loaded with vitamins, minerals and nutrients, says the Cleveland Clinic. It is a fermented milk that boasts higher concentrations of probiotics than some other fermented foods, like yogurt. Kefir has approximately 12 active probiotic strains.

These nutrient-rich foods can make great additions to health-conscious individuals' diets.

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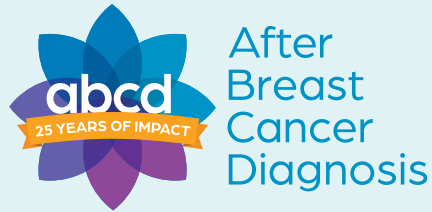
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# 6 ways to reduce stress

Stress is a significant public health challenge. The Ipsos Global Advisor survey for World Mental Health Day 2022 found that most Americans feel the United States health care system places less importance on mental health than physical health, and the majority of adults reported experiencing high levels of stress over the last two years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says mental health problems may occur as more adults deal with stress. In August 2022, more than 32 percent of adults in the U.S. reported having symptoms of anxiety or depression in the last two weeks.

The stress response gets a person through tough times, as the body rallies to evade a threat. Typically, when the danger subsides, the body can go back to business as usual. However, when stress is ongoing, it can cause harm like chronic inflammation. In addition, the constant activation of the immune system raises the risk for many adverse health effects, including heart disease and stroke.



Men and women experience stress differently. Debra Bangasser, Ph.D., and her colleagues at Temple University found that, in response to significant life stress, men are more likely than women to experience effects on the cognitive processes like memory. High job insecurity is a notable stress trigger for men.

It's key to keep stress at a minimum for personal well-being. These strategies can help.

**1. Get active:** Exercise will

not make stress disappear, but it can relieve some of the emotional responses and clear thoughts to let you deal with problems more readily.

**2. Use laughter:** Harvard Health says laughter reduces stress hormones and is a way to experience joy, optimism and hope.

**3. Reduce loud noises:** Sometimes loud noises can trigger a stress response. It can make it hard to think and take you away from being mindful. Avoiding loud scenarios or

wearing earplugs or noise-canceling headphones can help.

**4. Avoid unhealthy habits:** Some people turn to alcohol or smoking to deal with stress. Overall, these habits can exacerbate stress and lead to additional health problems.

**5. Meditate:** The Mayo Clinic says attention is focused to help calm the thoughts in the mind and give a sense of peace and calm. Meditation can include guided imagery, mindfulness and visualization exercises.

**6. Connect with others:** Meaningful relationships can create feelings of belonging. Feeling cared for and supported can help people cope with stress and be more resilient. Building connections involves reaching out to community, family or friends. Sometimes just talking things out with others as a sounding board can alleviate stress, especially when others share that they have experienced similar situations.

Stress can be detrimental to men's overall health. Taking steps to reduce stress can improve quality of life.

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# The good, the bad and the confusing about cholesterol

Cholesterol can be a complicated subject that many people might admit they do not fully understand.

Most people have been taught that cholesterol is a bad thing. And for a while it was thought that dietary cholesterol, which is the cholesterol found in food, had a big impact on raising cholesterol in the blood. However, Healthline reports that more recent science indicates this is not the case for most people. Is it any wonder that cholesterol is still a mystery to so many?

## What is cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a fat-like, waxy substance that occurs naturally in the body. Although widely believed to be harmful, cholesterol is actually necessary for the body to function. Healthline says the body needs it to make hormones and vitamin D, and cholesterol contributes to the membrane structure of every cell in the body.

## What are lipoproteins?

When people talk about heart health and cholesterol, they're really speaking about lipoproteins and not about cholesterol itself. Lipoproteins are structures that carry cholesterol through the blood. There are two main types of lipoproteins: high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein (LDL). HDL is typically called the "good" cholesterol, because it moves extra cholesterol from the bloodstream to the liver where it is cleaned out, says the Cleveland Clinic. LDL is the "bad" cholesterol because, when amounts of it are excessive, that contributes to plaque buildup in the arteries. You need some LDL to carry cholesterol to the body's cells, but having too much can be troublesome. HDL carries some LDL away from the arteries but other steps are needed to lower HDL. Another lipid in the blood includes triglyceride, which is a type of fat. High levels of triglycerides also can put a person at risk for heart issues, including atherosclerosis, which is a hardening of the blood vessels.

## Dietary cholesterol vs. blood cholesterol

The amount of cholesterol in the blood and the amount in



one's diet are two different things. Typically, eating foods that contain cholesterol does not directly correspond to an elevated blood cholesterol level. Blood cholesterol is mainly determined by the amount of fats and carbohydrates in the diet, as well as genetics. Some people are simply genetically prone to high cholesterol levels. Even for people whose blood cholesterol is affected by dietary cholesterol (hyperresponders), research shows dietary cholesterol only moderately increases LDL, and in these cases it does not seem to increase their risk of heart disease, offers Healthline.

## How to maintain good cholesterol health?

According to Piedmont Healthcare, there are ways to control cholesterol and lipoproteins so they are beneficial to the body.

- Choose foods lower in saturated fat and be mindful of foods that can impact blood sugar levels.
- Quit smoking
- Reduce stress levels, which may help you avoid eating high-fat foods as a coping mechanism.
- Exercise regularly
- Weight loss can both increase HDL and lower LDL
- Choose low-fat or nonfat dairy products and lean meats

• Incorporate more fiber into your diet, which will help remove excess LDL.

There is much confusion about cholesterol among the

general public. But learning the basics of cholesterol can help individuals make more informed decisions about their diet and overall health.



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# How to reduce your risk for soft-tissue injuries

Soft-tissue injuries are a notable concern for anyone engaged in routine physical activity. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons notes that such injuries affect muscles, tendons and ligaments and often occur while engaged in physical activities like sports and exercise.

Soft-tissue injuries run the gamut from acute problems like sprains and contusions to more lasting conditions like tendinitis and bursitis that tend to arise from overuse. Seasoned athletes may see soft-tissue injuries as an unwanted yet unavoidable consequence. However, the AAOS notes that many such injuries can be prevented with proper conditioning and training.

- **Wear appropriate attire:** The AAOS recommends replacing athletic footwear as they wear out and wearing comfortable, loose-fitting clothing that allows for free movements and the release of body heat.

- **Avoid overdoing it with any one type of workout:** A well-balanced workout regimen is not only a pathway to overall



health but also a great way to prevent soft-tissue injuries. The AAOS advises individuals to adhere to a fitness regimen that balances cardiovascular exercise, flexibility and strength training. Limit each workout session to no more than one or two activities.

- **Warm up before each workout:** According to the Mayo Clinic, cold muscles are vulnerable to injury, so a body that goes from full resting position to one suddenly in the throes of a demanding workout is more likely to suffer a soft-tissue injury than one that gradually makes that transi-

tion. The AAOS advises warming up by running in place for a few minutes and breathing slowly and deeply before gently rehearsing the motions of the exercises to come. Warmup sessions increase athletes' heart rates and promote blood flow that helps to loosen muscles, tendons, ligaments, and joints.

- **Hydrate:** Drinking enough water to prevent dehydration, heat exhaustion and heat stroke is another way for physically active individuals to reduce their risk for soft-tissue injuries. The AAOS notes that proper hydration involves drinking water before, during and after a workout. A pint of water 15 minutes before a workout and another after cooling down is recommended. In addition, the AAOS recommends having a drink of water every 20 minutes or so while exercising.

- **Cool down after a workout:** Cooling down for a period of roughly 10 minutes before fully stopping a workout can reduce risk for soft-tissue injuries. The AAOS recommends slowing motions and reducing the intensity of move-

ments during a cooling down session.

- **Stretch:** Cooling down and stretching are not one and the same. After cooling down, slowly and carefully stretch until reaching a point of muscle tension, holding each stretch for between 10 and 20 seconds. Inhale before a stretch and exhale as the stretch is released. The AAOS recommends performing each stretch only once and advises against stretching to the point of pain.

- **Know when to rest:** Rest is vital for recovery, which is equally important for avoiding injuries. The AAOS notes that fatigue and pain are sufficient reasons to take a day off.

- **Commit to routine exercise:** Make exercise part of your daily routine, and not just something you do on weekends. Off days are vital, but exercising only on weekends can increase a person's risk for soft-tissue injuries.

Soft-tissue injuries sideline many athletes every day. Taking steps to prevent such injuries can help individuals stay the course with their fitness goals.



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# Exercise good for the brain

It is well documented that physical activity can be beneficial for the body, but what about the effects of exercise on the brain? Exercise enthusiasts will be glad to learn there are some notable ways that physical activity can benefit the brain.

A 2018 study published in *Frontiers in Psychology* indicated that much evidence shows that physical exercise is a strong gene modulator that causes structural and functional changes in the brain that can benefit cognitive functioning and well-being. Exercise also seems to be a protective factor against neurodegeneration.

Dr. Scott McGinnis, an instructor in neurology at Harvard Medical School, says there is a lot of science behind exercise boosting memory and thinking skills. Exercise can encourage production of growth factors, which are chemicals that affect the growth of new blood vessels in the brain and even the number of brain cells and their ability to thrive. Various studies point to exercise causing growth in the parts of the brain that con-

trol thinking and memory. The World Health Organization even notes that about two hours of moderate activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week can help improve thinking and memory skills.

Although many health professionals agree that exercise is good for the brain, the amount of exercise and where it takes place also may play a role in cognitive health. A 2023 study published in *Scientific Reports* found that time spent in natural outdoor environments led to increases in cognition similar to those resulting from acute exercises. Researchers found that when exercise and nature are combined, the impact on cognition is magnified.

Researchers have not pinpointed whether one exercise is better than another for improving brain health. Walking is one way to start, as it is accessible for people of all ages and requires little to no equipment. Anyone beginning an exercise regimen should discuss plans with a doctor and speak about their exercise goals.



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## Ways to Prevent a Fall

*Every 11 seconds, an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury. Many falls are preventable.*

***Stay safe with these tips!***



### ***Find a good balance and exercise program:***

**Look to build balance, strength, and flexibility. Contact your local ADRC for referrals. Find a program you like and take a friend.**

### ***Talk to your health care provider:***

**Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.**

### ***Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist:***

**Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling. Take medications only as prescribed.**

### ***Get vision and hearing check annually and update your eyeglasses:***

**Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.**

### ***Keep your home safe:***

**Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe, and install grab bars in key areas.**

### ***Talk to your family members:***

**Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors' issue.**

**AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER (ADRC) OF WAUKESHA COUNTY**

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