



Sandoval County Senior Program Administration

CENTER LOCATION

SEPTEMBER 2024

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Hours of Operation:
Monday—Friday 8-5pm

Sponsorship

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Non Metro New Mexico
Economic Development District
Area Agency on Aging

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All Sites individualize their newsletters to their local area information, activities calendars and games.

Health & Wellness

How to Support a Loved One with Chronic Pain



Chronic pain can affect daily activities, relationships, work, and well-being – even on less painful days. How can you support a loved one with chronic pain?

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: My spouse suffers from chronic pain after a back injury five years ago. The pain affects his ability to work and enjoy day-to-day activities with our family. Seeing him in pain and not knowing how to help is difficult for me. How can I support him on the challenging days when the pain is more severe and encourage him on the good days?

ANSWER: For millions of people, living with chronic pain can significantly affect their daily activities, relationships, work and well-being. Chronic pain is typically categorized based on the duration of pain experienced.

The pain or discomfort people feel while recovering from an injury or illness is considered acute or subacute. Pain lasting beyond usual recovery from a trauma-related event or surgery, typically 12 weeks, is considered chronic. Pain can transition from acute to chronic, depending on a person's recovery process.

Chronic pain can cause a person to avoid activities that cause further pain. This can lead to muscle weakness, joint problems and being more prone to injury. These avoidance behaviors also can lead to psychological isolation and stress. Moving the body and being physically active are crucial for long-term pain management. Encouragement from family, friends and caregivers to stay active and motivated is vital in improving physical health and psychological well-being for a person with chronic pain.

Central sensitization pain presents additional challenges, including mood changes and fatigue. Patients with central sensitization pain may experience heightened pain responses during physical activity.

It's important that loved ones understand the effect of chronic pain on a person's daily life.

Not being able to engage with family and friends can lead to mood symptoms, such as anxiety, helplessness and hopelessness.

It's beneficial to encourage people with chronic pain to maintain a sense of normalcy, remain involved in social activities and stick to a routine sleep schedule.

Health and Wellness continued

However, caregivers should balance encouraging activity and enabling passivity, as helping can exacerbate physical and psychological limitations and dependency.

When supporting a loved one with chronic pain, here are some ways to help:

- Understand the nature of chronic pain. Recognize that chronic pain differs from acute pain and can last beyond the expected recovery period. Be aware of the different types of chronic pain and their effect on your loved one's life.
- Encourage movement and physical activity. Motivate the person to do gentle exercises, stretching or physical therapy, even if it initially causes some discomfort. Gradually increasing activity levels can help improve pain and overall functioning.
- Support a balanced routine. Help establish a regular sleep schedule and ensure the person is exposed to daylight during the day. Encourage healthy habits, such as maintaining a nutritious diet and avoiding substances like drugs or smoking. Understand that someone with chronic pain may have fluctuating levels of pain. Encourage them to participate in social events and integrate into family meals or outings when they feel up to it.
- Provide emotional support. Chronic pain can take a toll on a person's mental health. Listen when needed, offer emotional support and encourage open communication about their feelings and experiences. Help them seek professional help if needed. Understand that chronic pain can be unpredictable, and the person may have good and bad days. Practice patience, flexibility and adaptability to accommodate their needs and limitations.
- Avoid enabling behaviors. While being empathetic is important, avoid reinforcing a sedentary or inactive lifestyle. Encourage independence and motivate the person to participate in their daily activities as much as possible.
- Stay informed and advocate for proper medical care. Educate yourself about the specific condition causing chronic pain, available treatments and strategies for managing pain. This knowledge will help you better understand and support the person's journey. Help the person find healthcare professionals who specialize in chronic pain management. Advocate for their needs and ensure they receive appropriate medical attention, including seeking second opinions if necessary.
- Encourage self-care. Remind the person to prioritize self-care, including practicing relaxation techniques, pursuing hobbies and engaging in activities that bring joy and reduce stress.

Remember, people's experience with chronic pain is unique to them, so it's essential to tailor your support to their needs.

Nutrition

Feeding Your Body, Feeding Your Brain

Contributors: Diane Welland, MS, RD

Being healthy means taking care of your brain as well as your body. This is especially important as we age because the risk of dementia increases over time. While Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia for adults, affecting more than 6 million Americans ages 65 and older, it isn't the only type.

Other illnesses and conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, alcoholism, stroke, multiple sclerosis (MS), amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and traumatic head injury, also can cause dementia. Additionally, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease can increase risk of dementia, so managing these conditions is important.

Making healthful lifestyle choices, including getting regular physical activity, socializing, limiting alcohol intake and not smoking, can help to reduce your risk for dementia. Scientific evidence has shown that eating patterns such as the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet may be beneficial to your body as well as your brain, helping to protect against cognitive decline. Certain nutrients are especially important for brain health and may help maintain and improve cognitive function, including:

- ◆ **Omega-3 fatty acids** – About 60% of the brain is composed of polyunsaturated fatty acids. The most abundant type is DHA (docosahexaenoic acid), an omega-3 fatty acid. Some research suggests diets rich in omega-3s, combined with a low saturated fat intake, may lower the risk of cognitive decline.
- ◆ **B vitamins** – B vitamins, including B6, B12 and folate, are known for their role in metabolizing homocysteine, one of the amino acids in protein. High levels of this amino acid are considered a risk factor for cognitive impairment, such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. B vitamins are involved in many other aspects of brain function, and deficiencies may affect mental health and lead to cognitive decline. However, research on B vitamin supplementation and cognitive function remains unclear.
- ◆ **Antioxidants and Phytonutrients** – The brain is particularly susceptible to damage caused by free radicals, which are substances that attack healthy cells. Vitamins C and E, as well as the mineral selenium and phytonutrients such as lycopene, are antioxidants and are known to help minimize damage caused by chronic stress and free radicals. Other well-known phytonutrients — such as anthocyanins, which give certain fruits and vegetables their color — are thought to have a positive effect on brain function.
- ◆ **Vitamin D** – Vitamin D is found in nearly every cell in the body, so it's no surprise this vitamin is present in brain cells. Vitamin D is believed to have protective effects against cognitive decline, and research has suggested that low blood levels of vitamin D may affect brain health.

Nutrition continued

- ◆ **Choline** – Choline is an essential nutrient required for fat transport and metabolism. It is necessary for normal brain and nervous system function, muscle control and other functions.

Focusing on an overall healthy eating pattern that includes these nutrients from foods is important for good health. Get these nutrients from a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein foods and healthy fats, including:

- Berries, including strawberries and blueberries, citrus fruits, grapes and watermelon
- Dark, leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard greens and broccoli
- Whole-wheat bread, oats, quinoa and other whole grains
- Seafood including shellfish and fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, sardines and herring
- Nuts and seeds such as chia, flaxseed, walnuts and almonds
- Beans and lentils, including chickpeas, black beans and lima beans
- Whole eggs, skinless chicken and turkey
- Sources of unsaturated fat such as avocados and olive oil

Remember: While making healthful food choices is a vital part of a healthy lifestyle, other important factors that contribute to overall health include getting enough sleep, managing stress, staying hydrated and adding regular physical activity to your daily routine.

Volunteer

Each day, AmeriCorps Seniors, Senior Companion Volunteers are contributing to enhancing and protecting the lives of older adults. While encouraging health and well-being through social connections, enriching the lives of older adults and also serving as an indispensable lifeline, these volunteers equip other older adults to age in place. These vital connections promote well-being and can serve as a deterrent against elder abuse, which affects one out of 10 Americans annually. Additionally, Senior Companion Volunteers may qualify for a small stipend.

As individuals age, they may encounter various challenges that can increase their risk of social isolation and loneliness, particularly those who live alone or experience the loss of family and friends. Research shows that the average victims of elder abuse are women ages 75 to 80 who live alone. Older adults who live with chronic conditions or disabilities, reside in rural or remote areas, and have limited access to transportation or limited resources are even more vulnerable to social isolation, making them more susceptible to mistreatment and exploitation.

Volunteer Continued

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these vulnerabilities further, as many older adults were isolated with limited socialization. Consequentially, perpetrators seized this opportunity to exploit this isolation, leading to a surge in instances of elder abuse. The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that online scammers targeted older adults more frequently than other age groups, with losses of up to \$1 billion in 2020.

AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve to improve the lives of older adults by addressing elder abuse while championing tools that are combatting it. As reports of elder abuse continue to rise, initiatives like AmeriCorps Seniors serve as a beacon of hope, offering a pathway to support, empower, and safeguard older adults.

AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers exemplify the profound impact social connections and dedicated volunteerism can have on the lives of older adults, particularly in combating isolation and preventing elder abuse. Senior Companion Program volunteers are a lifeline for at-risk older adults, visiting them in their homes for 15 hours each week to provide support and companionship. Volunteers commitment to these individuals ensures that they can maintain their independence and continue living safely in their own homes.

Happy Birthday to our September Born Volunteers



- Alois J. Bamberg
- Peggy Barr
- Aimee Guinotte Benage
- Suzanne Martha Bishop
- Dee Yeager –Bovenzi
- Sandra J. Campanella
- Aulia Gies
- Judy Griffith
- Marc Liebert
- Barb McKinney
- Teresa Sanchez
- Raj Sudarsanam
- Dorothy Wood
- Betty Ziesmer

Staying Active

9 Benefits of Yoga

If you've done your "downward dog" yoga pose today, you're probably feeling more relaxed. Regardless of your level of yoga expertise, if you're practicing regularly, you can feel better from head to toe.

Yoga offers physical and mental health benefits for people of all ages. And, if you're going through an illness, recovering from surgery or living with a chronic condition, yoga can become an integral part of your treatment and potentially hasten healing.

A yoga therapist can work with patients and put together individualized plans that work together with their medical and surgical therapies. That way, yoga can support the healing process and help the person experience symptoms with more centeredness and less distress.

1. Yoga improves strength, balance and flexibility.

Slow movements and deep breathing increase blood flow and warm up muscles, while holding a pose can build strength.

Try it: Tree Pose

Balance on one foot, while holding the other foot to your calf or above the knee (but never on the knee) at a right angle. Try to focus on one spot in front of you, while you balance for one minute.

2. Yoga helps with back pain relief.

Yoga is as good as basic stretching for easing pain and improving mobility in people with lower back pain. The American College of Physicians recommends yoga as a first-line treatment for chronic low back pain.

Try it: Cat-Cow Pose

Get on all fours, placing your palms underneath your shoulders and your knees underneath your hips. First, inhale, as you let your stomach drop down toward the floor. Then, exhale, as you draw your navel toward your spine, arching your spine like a cat stretching.

3. Yoga can ease arthritis symptoms.

Gentle yoga has been shown to ease some of the discomfort of tender, swollen joints for people with arthritis, according to a Johns Hopkins review of 11 recent studies.

4. Yoga benefits heart health.

Regular yoga practice may reduce levels of stress and body-wide inflammation, contributing to healthier hearts. Several of the factors contributing to heart disease, including high blood pressure and excess weight, can also be addressed through yoga.

Staying Active

Try it: Downward Dog Pose

Get on all fours, then tuck your toes under and bring your sitting bones up, so that you make a triangle shape. Keep a slight bend in your knees, while lengthening your spine and tailbone.

5. Yoga relaxes you, to help you sleep better.

Research shows that a consistent bedtime yoga routine can help you get in the right mindset and prepare your body to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Try It: Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose

Sit with your left side against a wall, then gently turn right and lift your legs up to rest against the wall, keeping your back on the floor and your sitting bones close to the wall. You can remain in this position for 5 to 15 minutes.

6. Yoga can mean more energy and brighter moods.

You may feel increased mental and physical energy, a boost in alertness and enthusiasm, and fewer negative feelings after getting into a routine of practicing yoga.

7. Yoga helps you manage stress.

According to the National Institutes of Health, scientific evidence shows that yoga supports stress management, mental health, mindfulness, healthy eating, weight loss and quality sleep.

Try It: Corpse Pose (Savasana)

Lie down with your limbs gently stretched out, away from the body, with your palms facing up. Try to clear your mind while breathing deeply. You can hold this pose for 5 to 15 minutes.

8. Yoga connects you with a supportive community.

Participating in yoga classes can ease loneliness and provide an environment for group healing and support. Even during one-on-one sessions loneliness is reduced as one is acknowledged as a unique individual, being listened to and participating in the creation of a personalized yoga plan.

9. Yoga promotes better self-care.

Scientific Research on Yoga Benefits

The U.S. military, the National Institutes of Health and other large organizations are listening to — and incorporating — scientific validation of yoga's value in health care.

Numerous studies show yoga's benefits in arthritis, osteopenia, balance issues, oncology, women's health, chronic pain and other specialties.

Yoga Classes for Seniors

If you're new to yoga, it's good to sign up for a class so you can learn good form. We offer several classes at our senior centers and local gyms or yoga studios will offer classes being taught by a teacher trained to work with older people or those with physical limitations. Chair or seated yoga is a great option if your mobility or balance is limited.

New Mexico Senior Olympics

LOOKING FOR



INSTRUCTORS AND SUBS



WANTED! Fitness Instructors and Substitute Instructors, to support existing and new classes statewide, for older adults 60+. Fitness Certification and Insurance is required.

EnhanceFitness is an evidence-based, group fitness program designed for older adults. Training and Weights provided.

Instructor Requirements Include:

- One year commitment
- Be a Certified Fitness Instructor
- Lead a fitness class 3x a week for one hour for 24 participants.
- Compensation - \$35/hour
- CPR Certified
- Liability Insurance

IMMEDIATE TARGET CITIES:

Clovis	Roswell
Espanola	Ruidoso
Hobbs	Silver City
Las Vegas	Santa Fe
Rio Rancho	



New Mexico Senior Olympics, Inc, is funded in part by Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging for federal and state funds.

Components of Fitness

- ✓ Strength Training
- ✓ Flexibility & Balance
- ✓ Cardio Conditioning



If Interested:

Email Cecelia Acosta at ccacosta@nmseniorolympics.org
Please submit a Letter of Interest and a copy of your current Fitness Certification

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