



Health Guide for Seniors



Aging is a natural part of life, and while we can't control it happening, we can make strides to live a healthy life. On the other hand, if we ignore our health, or persist with habits that damage it, our later years can be filled with difficulty or even cut short. The good news is that many health problems can be prevented.



The **Health Guide for Seniors**

is all about helping you see what you can do in your home, community, and workplace to improve your health. Start taking responsibility for it today by paying attention not only to your physical well-being, but also to your emotional and spiritual sides—in short, your whole self.

Even though your good health is up to you, we get the most out of our efforts when we work in partnership with health providers, spiritual advisors, and those who love us. They can help us form good habits—and keep them.

Practicing good prevention does not mean giving up all of life's pleasures. How could it when enjoying life is an important part of being healthy? Simply put:

- ✓ Control what you eat to avoid obesity—see page 6.
- ✓ Mix exercise with leisure time—see page 9.
- ✓ Learn about preventing falls—see page 10.
- ✓ Have regular medical check-ups—see page 16.
- ✓ Do not smoke—see page 11.
- ✓ Be active socially.
- ✓ Form close relationships.



The information presented here is meant to be a guide. Discuss any questions about health care needs with your health care provider. We cannot accept responsibility for any problems that may develop from following these guidelines.

Personal Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone # _____

Date of Birth _____

Male Female

Allergies/Sensitivities _____

Emergency Contact

Name _____

Phone # _____

Name _____

Phone # _____

Yes, I Have Advance Directives:

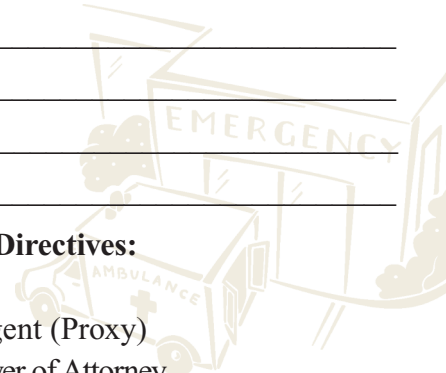
- Living Will
- Health Care Agent (Proxy)
- Health Care Power of Attorney
- 5 Wishes document

Document is kept at _____

Health Insurance Name _____

- Medicare
- Managed Medicare
- Supplemental Medicare
- Other Health Insurance
- Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Insurance

Prescription Discount Card: Yes No



Eating Well

The food we choose is one of the things affecting our health that we can control! To avoid gaining too much weight and to get good nutrition, consider these guidelines*:



- Eat 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables. Choose a variety of dark green, orange, legumes and starchy vegetables.
- Choose whole grain products each day.
- Make lean, low fat, or fat free choices of meat, poultry, and milk or milk products.
- Limit processed and red meats.
- Eat foods fortified with vitamin B12, also those fortified with Vitamin D.
- Limit saturated and trans fats. Keep cholesterol to less than 300 mg/day.
- Limit added sugar, salt, and alcohol—no more than 1–2 drinks per day.

To prevent gaining weight over time, gradually decrease the number of calories from food and beverages and increase physical activity. Look for foods that have good nutrition without the extra calories. Cut out refined and processed foods.

*Dietary Guidelines, US Dept. of HHS, 2005.

*American Cancer Society, 2009.

Keep Obesity and Diabetes from Your Door

Everyone should choose to eat healthy foods to reduce the risk of developing chronic problems such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Obesity is what they all have in common. Calorie counting, portion control, and exercise are the keys to losing weight and preventing weight gain.

If you are overweight, taking action to lose those extra pounds will benefit you in many ways. It doesn't mean being on a strict diet, but it does mean some basic changes:

- ✓ Lose about five to ten percent of your body weight—your doctor or a dietitian can help show you how.
- ✓ Eat a low-fat, low-calorie variety of foods and watch your portion sizes. If you make this a daily routine, you can always have treats or splurge—just get right back on track afterwards!
- ✓ Get thirty minutes of physical activity five times per week – see page 9.

Diabetes is a growing disease in America. The type 2 variety can be delayed or even prevented by following the guidelines on page 7.

If you have diabetes already, managing it includes:

- ✓ Monitoring your blood sugar levels to keep them within the normal range.
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy weight, as you are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke.
- ✓ Having regular health exams to find and prevent blindness, amputations, and kidney disease.
- ✓ Monitoring results of A1C, cholesterol, blood pressure, eye, and skin exams.
- ✓ Not smoking. People with diabetes who smoke are three times more likely to get heart disease or have a stroke than those who don't.



Stay Active

Try to get 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise on most days. Consider making small changes such as using the stairs instead of an elevator. Keep things fun. Include strength, endurance, and balance building activities in your day.

Daily Exercise:

- Helps protect you from heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and some forms of cancer.
- Reduces the risk of developing diabetes.
- Helps you control your weight.
- Reduces the risk of falling as you get older.
- Helps improve symptoms of depression or anxiety.

Safe Exercise

- Let your abilities guide your exercise choices.
- Start slowly. Work up to more intense activities as your body gets used to them.
- Exercise in a safe place such as your home or a shopping mall.
- Protect yourself from injury and falls.

Safety = No Falls

Falling at home happens too often, causing serious injuries with long-lasting problems! Check your home to find and address safety hazards:

- ✓ No loose rugs on the floor
- ✓ Electrical cords not across the floor
- ✓ Good lighting in stairways and halls
- ✓ Steps have handrails and non-skid surfaces
- ✓ Grab rails near toilet and tub
- ✓ Non- skid surfaces in tub and shower
- ✓ Clear pathway from bed to bathroom
- ✓ Nightlights used

Factors that affect our chances of falling as we age include:

- Weakness
- Balance changes
- Fear of falling
- Home and outdoor hazards
- Vision
- Medications
- Alcohol misuse

Daily activity that involves strength and balance can help prevent falls.

Smoking Stinks!

*The largest preventable cause of disability and early death is smoking.** It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting reduces your risk of lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, and lung diseases. Tobacco causes most cancers of the lung, mouth, and throat and increases the risk for many other cancers.

You probably know you shouldn't smoke. It may seem impossible to quit—but it can be done:

- ✓ Admit the problem to yourself and those around you.
- ✓ Keep track of when and why you smoke.
- ✓ Set a quit date.
- ✓ Limit the time you spend with people who smoke.
- ✓ Talk to your doctor about treatment options.
- ✓ Medicare may cover counseling to quit smoking.
- ✓ Call the National Quitline 1-800-QUIT-NOW.



Secondhand smoke is also a health hazard. Nonsmokers who are exposed to it can develop some of the same diseases that smokers do. Always avoid places where secondhand smoke is present.

Asthma Answers

Understanding this health issue is the key to preventing it from becoming a big problem. Some people confuse their asthma symptoms with other causes and don't seek help. Some medications may cause asthma symptoms.

Managing asthma means:

1. Know what triggers your symptoms.
2. Know your early warning signs.
3. Have a plan if your symptoms get serious.
4. Understand your treatment and teach those around you.

Heart Disease

Diseases of the heart and blood vessels cause more deaths than all other diseases combined.

Risk factors include:

- Smoking
- Not exercising
- Being overweight
- Having diabetes
- Having high blood pressure
This is also known as the silent killer because you may not have any symptoms.
- Eating a diet high in cholesterol and saturated fat



Ask your doctor about taking aspirin to prevent heart attack and stroke.

Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke

A heart attack occurs when the blood vessels of the heart become blocked. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is blocked.

Warning signs of heart attack include:

- Pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back.
- Pain that spreads to the shoulders, neck, or arms.
- Chest pain with dizziness, fainting, sweating, nausea, or shortness of breath.

Women may have less common warning signs of heart attack:

- Atypical chest pain, stomach, or abdominal pain.
- Pain that radiates into the jaw.
- Nausea, dizziness, or trouble breathing (without chest pain).
- Unexplained anxiety, weakness, or fatigue.
- Rapid heartbeats, cold sweat, or paleness.

Warning signs of stroke include:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm, or leg.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden confusion, trouble talking, or understanding.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance.

**If you have signs of heart attack or stroke,
DON'T WAIT CALL 911**

Cancer Control

Lung cancer is the most common cancer killer. Cigarette smoking causes 90% of those deaths. Quit smoking to improve your health and prevent lung cancer.

Breast cancer is the 2nd most common cancer in women. The earlier breast cancer is found, the better your chance for survival.

- Breast cancer risk increases with age.
- Mammogram screening every year for women age 40 and older. This exam can often detect a breast lump before you can feel it.
- Clinical breast exams by a doctor or nurse help to find changes in your breasts.
- Be aware of what your breasts normally feel like and look like. Tell your health care provider right away if you notice any changes.

Prostate cancer is the 2nd most common cause of cancer-related death in men. It's important to find a prostate problem early, when it is most treatable. Talk to your doctor about getting screening exams.

Health Exams & Screenings

		Date/ Results
Weight/BMI	*Periodically	
Blood Pressure	*Every 1-2 years	
Cholesterol or Lipid Panel TOTAL HDL	*Discuss with your doctor or nurse	
Blood Sugar	*Discuss with your doctor or nurse	
Eye Exam/Glaucoma	*Every year	
Dental	*1-2 times every year	
Hearing	*First test by age 60, then every 3 years	

* Check with your doctor for recommendations

Write the date and results when you have these exams.

Date/ Results	Date/ Results	Date/ Results	Date/ Results

based on your **age**, **health**, and medical **history**.

Health Exams & Screenings

Sexually Transmitted Infections	*Per risk	
Colorectal Screening	*Every 4-10 years	
Mammogram	*Every 1-2 years	
Pap Test/Pelvic Exam	*Every 1-3 years	
Prostate PSA DRE	*Discuss with your doctor or nurse	
Bone Mass	*Per risk	
Depression Screening	*Periodically	
Screening Ultrasound	*Once per risk	

* Check with your doctor for recommendations

Write the date and results when you have these exams.

based on your **age, health, and medical history.**

*Immunizations

Pneumonia and flu together are the 5th leading cause of death among older adults. These diseases can be prevented with vaccines.

Influenza (flu) is very infectious. It is spread by a virus in the air or by contact with an infected person. Help prevent the flu:

- ✓ Stay at home when you are sick.
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ Clean your hands.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Flu shots help prevent severe flu, hospitalization, and death but are not perfect for preventing all flu symptoms. The flu virus changes from year to year. October or November is the best time to get a flu shot every year. Medicare covers the flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Getting the **pneumonia** vaccine will help prevent severe pneumonia, hospitalization, and death.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – National Immunization Program

Immunization Record

Vaccine	Date	Health Professional (Sign and Date)			
Influenza After age 50					
Pneumonia After age 65					
Tetanus/ Diphtheria Every 10 years					
Zoster After age 60					
MMR Per risk					
Varicella Per risk					
Hepatitis A Per risk					
Hepatitis B Per risk					
Meningococcal Per risk					

Health Care Visits

There's a lot you can do to get the most out of your time with the doctor.

✓ Ask Questions

1. What is my main problem?

- Repeat back what you think you heard to be sure it is correct.
- Have him/her explain new terms.

2. What do I need to do?

- What are the treatment options? What are the risks and benefits with each?
- Do I need to see another health professional or specialist?
- Do I need a follow-up visit?
- Take notes and ask for written instructions. Find out about any medicines you will take. (See page 26.)

3. Why is it important for me to do this?

- ✓ Ask about the Preventive Physical Exam that Medicare covers.
- ✓ Bring someone along to help you ask questions and understand the answers.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to talk about embarrassing problems.

Health Care Team

Name/Specialty

Phone

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Medical Visit Tracker

Visit Date	Health Care Provider	Reason for Visit Services & Tests Performed

Medical Visit Tracker

Visit Date	Health Care Provider	Reason for Visit Services & Tests Performed

Medication Safety

Questions to Ask About Your Medicine

1. What is the name of the medicine and what is it for?
2. Is a generic version of this medicine available?
3. How and when do I take it—and for how long?
4. What foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
5. When should I expect the medicine to begin to work? How will I know if it is working?
6. Are there any side effects? What are they? What do I do if they occur?
7. Will this medicine work safely with all the other medicines I am taking?
8. Can I get a refill? If so, when?
9. How should I store this medicine?



Tell your health care provider if you cannot afford your medicine.

Avoiding Drug Reactions

Guard against taking medications that should not be combined.

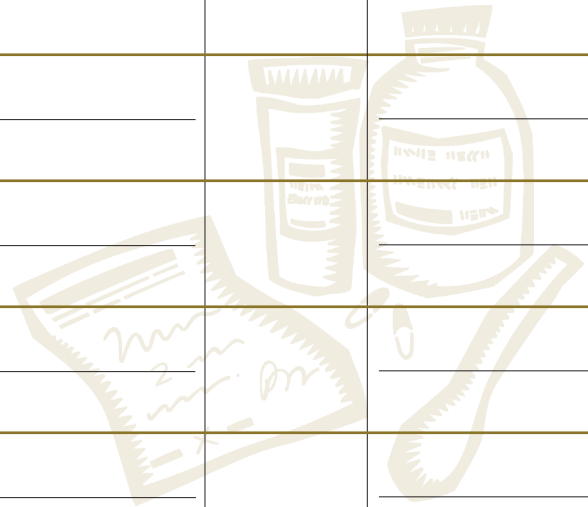
- Gather all of your current prescription medicines. Show them to your doctor or pharmacist. He or she can check for any expired medicines and possible problem reactions.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist about non-prescription medicines, herbs, and vitamin supplements you use.
- Keep a list with you of all your medicines.
- If you notice any new symptom, ask your doctor right away if it might be related to any medicine you are taking.



Medication Record and Drug Allergies

Pharmacy		Phone #
_____		_____
Pharmacy Drug Plan		
Drug Allergies		
Drug	Reaction	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
_____	_____	
<p>List medications, herbal and dietary supplements, and vitamins you are taking. Place a line through those you no longer take and note the date when stopped.</p>		
<u>Medication</u> Dose	<u>How</u> Often	<u>Purpose</u> Prescribed by:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

<u>Medication</u> Dose	<u>How</u> Often	<u>Purpose</u> Prescribed by:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____



More Help & Information



Administration on Aging

www.aoa.gov

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900 www.alz.org

American Cancer Society

800-227-2345 www.cancer.org

American Diabetes Association

800-342-2383 www.diabetes.org

American Heart Association

800-242-8721 www.americanheart.org

Arthritis Foundation

800-283-7800 www.arthritis.org

Benefits Check Up—find benefits and programs

www.benefitscheckup.org

Eldercare Locator—to find community help

800-677-1116 www.eldercare.gov

Family Caregiver Alliance

www.caregiver.org

Medicare

1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)

www.medicare.gov

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging

www.n4a.org

National Council on the Aging

202-479-1200 www.ncoa.org

National Family Caregivers Association

800-896-3650 www.thefamilycaregiver.org



1 Cameron Hill Circle | Chattanooga, TN 37402 | bcbst-medicare.com

A health plan with a Medicare contract

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, Inc., an Independent Licensee
of the BlueCross BlueShield Association

This document has been classified as public information

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