



Steps to Taking Charge of Your Health



If you ask people what's most important in life, usually good health is near the top of the list. Yet it's easy to take good health for granted, especially when we're young. As we get older, staying healthy can become more of a challenge. But there are plenty of things we can do to maintain good health over a lifetime. Things like getting enough exercise, getting regular checkups and tests, using medications wisely, and reducing health care costs allow us to take charge of our health and protect our wellness.

In fact, good health is all about taking charge. It's about taking those positive steps toward staying healthy and active to prevent disease and to manage your overall health. AARP has online tools and resources to keep you on track so you can maintain a healthy lifestyle, reduce health care costs, and ultimately maintain your independence as you age. Start now—visit www.aarp.org/health and www.aarp.org/family.

Take Charge of Your Health With These Steps:

- Make Physical Activity a Priority
- Get Regular Checkups and Screenings
- Use Medications Wisely
- Care for Yourself While Caring for Others
- Plan for Your Long-Term Care
- Maximize Your Medicare Benefits
- Subscribe to Receive Legislative Alerts and Other Information
- Sign Up to Receive Regular Updates on Health Issues
- Get Involved to Help in Your Community

Make Physical Activity a Priority

Your body is made to move, and walking is a great way to get going. Walking has many benefits for your health, such as reducing your risks for cardiovascular disease and diabetes and managing your weight. The federal government's *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* suggests that adults do two and a half hours of moderate-intensity activity a week. Brisk walking is a simple way to meet that goal and reap health benefits.

- **Make exercise a priority in your life.** Use AARP's *Physical Activity Workbook*, www.aarp.org/healthorderform, to help you incorporate physical activity into your daily life.
- **Clip on a step counter, choose an Internet trail, and start walking.** Track your steps along one of four famous virtual American trails—Lewis and Clark, Alaska Highway, Highway 50, or the Appalachian Trail—with AARP's online walking program *Step Up to Better Health*: www.aarp.org/health. Or try *Get Fit on Route 66*, a free online physical activity adventure that will inspire you to be more active. Convert your exercise minutes to miles on a virtual journey along America's most famous highway: www.aarp.org/health.
- **Count your steps.** Research shows that people who walk using a pedometer (or step counter), walk a greater distance and are able to maintain their level of activity longer than those who do not wear one. Order a step counter at www.aarp.org/walking.

Hit the road! Make walking a part of your daily routine and use a step counter to help keep track of your total steps.



Get Regular Checkups and Screenings

In addition to being physically active, another key to preventing illness and disease is to get screened regularly for conditions you may be at risk for as you age. The longer we live, the greater our chances of developing a chronic illness or disease, such as arthritis, osteoporosis, heart disease, and cancer. More than 90 million people in the U.S. live with at least one chronic condition, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Identifying and managing these chronic conditions is the best way to preserve your health and independence.

- **Prevent illness and manage your health.** Find information on symptoms, diseases and conditions, injuries, tests, surgeries, and more through the Health Encyclopedia: www.aarp.org/healthencyclopedia.
- **Get regular checkups.** Work with your doctor to be sure you get regular checkups and all the necessary health tests and screenings depending on your age, health history, and family medical history.
- **Find out about the steps you need to take for good health,** including what screening tests you need and when to get them. Order *Men Stay Healthy at 50+: Checklists for Your Health*, www.aarp.org/menchecklist and *Women Stay Healthy at 50+: Checklists for Your Health*, www.aarp.org/womenchecklist.



Use Medications Wisely

Before you go in for a screening or checkup, be sure you have a list of medications to give to your health professional. According to the Institute of Medicine, approximately 1.5 million Americans suffer preventable illness, injury, or death each year because of mistakes made in prescribing, dispensing, and taking prescription drugs. Even more troubling is that the average adult over 45 takes four medicines daily. You can reduce your chances for dangerous drug reactions or harmful side effects by keeping an updated personal medication record. Be sure to:


- **Ask your doctor and pharmacist questions about your medications**, such as, “What is the name of the medicine and what does it do? What are the side effects? Is there another drug that is as safe and effective that costs less?” Find the information you need to use your medications wisely at www.aarp.org/usingmeds.
- **Keep a list of your medications**. Download a personal medication record at www.aarp.org/medicationrecord.
- **Know how to avoid dangerous interactions between medications you are taking**. Look up your drugs and find out what side effects and interactions you need to be aware of by using AARP’s drug checker at www.aarp.org/drugsearch.



Care for Yourself While Caring for Others

Maintaining physical health and tracking your progress through checkups is important, but it is only part of the picture. Caring for each other is an important part of being a family, and caring for yourself will keep you healthy so you can continue to care for others. More than 44 million Americans care for an adult family member or friend. If you are caring for an older relative or friend, it is essential to involve others, take care of yourself, and prepare for future needs.

- **Hold a family meeting** to involve everyone in the conversation, decision-making, and responsibilities of caregiving. Manage your stress as a caregiver through AARP's online Caregiver Tool Kit at www.aarp.org/caregivers.
- **Find support** with caregiving at www.aarp.org/caregiving.
- **Join our online community** and share caregiving tips and stories with others through AARP Online Communities at www.aarp.org/community.



Make your health a priority!
Take charge of your health
and see the difference it
can make in your life.

Plan for Your Long-Term Care

Family caregivers make it possible for older adults to remain independent as they age. And it is equally important for caregivers to plan for their own eventual care in order to maintain an independent lifestyle. About 10 million people age 18 or over need help from others to perform everyday activities, either at home or in a facility. Planning ahead for changes such as home modifications, transportation, and help at home can make it possible for you to get the care you need in the setting of your choice.

- **Start planning for your own long-term care.** Use AARP's long-term care tools and resources to get started at www.aarp.org/health/longtermcare.
- **Calculate estimated costs** for long-term care at www.aarp.org/longtermcarecosts.
- **See if you qualify for benefits** that will help reduce the costs of health and long-term care through the AARP Foundation's Benefits QuickLINK, www.aarp.org/quicklink.

Take care! Plan ahead for your long-term care now to help maintain an independent lifestyle in the future.



Maximize Your Medicare Benefits

Health care coverage plays a major role in promoting good health and reducing your overall health care costs. Medicare, the federal health insurance program for people age 65 and over and some younger people with disabilities, pays for certain health care costs in three broad areas: hospital/home care, doctor/outpatient and prescription drugs. You have a choice of how you get Medicare, and there are several different plan options. Your decisions about which plan you choose are important because they affect how much you pay for your health care and what is covered.

- **Find out what options are available** to you and what is covered under the Medicare program at www.aarp.org/medicare.
- **Maximize your Medicare choices** by using the Medicare Interactive Tool to find answers to your questions at www.aarp.org/medicareinteractive.
- **Compare Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Coverage plans** online: visit www.medicare.gov, click on “Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder.”



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Stay informed on health issues by signing up for AARP's online Health Newsletter. Subscribe at www.aarp.org/health.

Get Involved to Help in Your Community

AARP can help you to “create the good” in your own community by doing simple things to help your family, other people or yourself. Learn about easy things you can do at www.aarp.org/makeadifference.



To learn more about AARP or to become a member
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