



Living **50** *Plus*

April 2017

A Special Supplement to

Frederick Press-Leader

*Manage Your
Mind*

**How seniors
can preserve the
health of their
brains**

*Hitting the
Road in Retirement*

**Money-saving
travel tips for
retirees**

Eating & Aging

**Eat healthy at 50
and beyond**

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Eat healthy at 50 and beyond



A balanced diet is an integral element of a healthy lifestyle for men, women and children alike. But while kids and young adults might be able to get away with an extra cheeseburger here or there, men and women approaching 50 have less leeway.

According to the National Institute on Aging, simply counting calories without regard for the foods being consumed is not enough for men and women 50 and older to maintain their long-term health. Rather, the NIA emphasizes the importance of choosing low-calorie foods that have a lot of the nutrients the body needs.

But counting calories can be an effective and simple way to maintain a healthy weight, provided those calories are coming from nutrient-rich foods. The NIA advises men and women over 50 adhere to the following daily calorie intake recommendations as they attempt to stay healthy into their golden years.

Women

- Not physically active: 1,600 calories
- Somewhat active: 1,800 calories
- Active lifestyle: between 2,000 and 2,200 calories

Men

- Not physically active: 2,000 calories
- Somewhat active: between 2,200 and 2,400 calories
- Active lifestyle: between 2,400 and 2,800 calories

When choosing foods to eat, the NIA recommends eating many different colors and types of vegetables and fruits. Phytochemicals are substances that occur naturally in plants, and there are thousands of these substances offering various benefits. The Produce for Better Health Foundation notes that a varied, colorful diet incorporates lots of different types of phytochemicals, which the PBH says have disease-preventing properties.

The NIA also advises that men and women over 50 make sure at least half the grains in their diets are whole grains. Numerous studies have discovered the various benefits of whole grains, which are loaded with protein, fiber, antioxidants and other nutrients. Whole grains have been shown to reduce the risk for diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

Another potential hurdle men and women over 50 may encounter is a change in their sense of smell and taste. A person's sense of smell may fade with age, and

because smell and taste are so closely related, foods enjoyed for years may no longer tantalize the taste buds. That can be problematic, as many people instinctually add more salt to foods they find bland. According to the U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, older adults should consume no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium per day. That equates to roughly 3/4 teaspoon of salt. Older men and women should resist the temptation to use salt to add flavor to foods, instead opting for healthy foods that they can still smell and taste. In addition, men and women should mention any loss of their sense of smell to their physicians, as such a loss may indicate the presence of Parkinson's disease or Alzheimer's disease.

Maintaining a healthy diet after 50 may require some hard work and discipline. But the long-term benefits of a healthy diet make the extra effort well worth it.

How seniors can preserve their brains



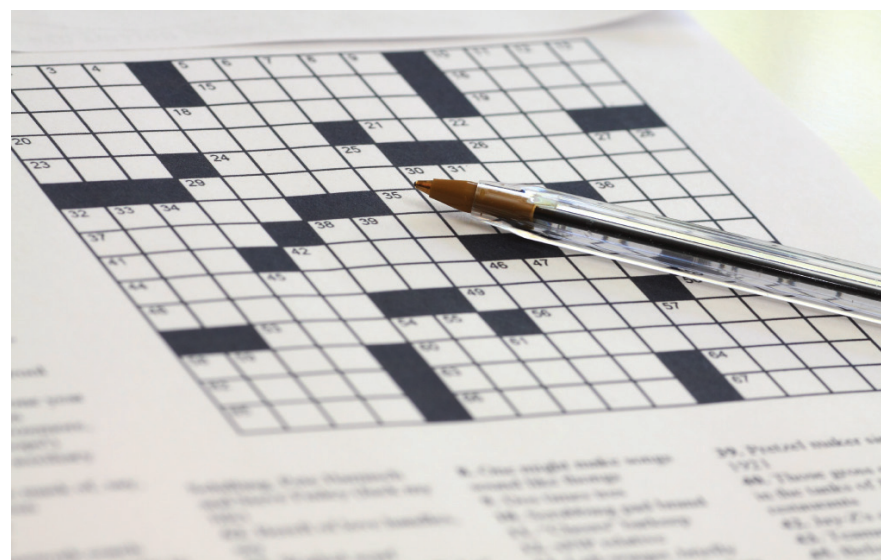
Physical activity and proper diet and nutrition can help people age 50 and older maintain their physical health. But there are also ways aging men and women can preserve brain health in an effort to prevent or delay the cognitive decline that affects millions of seniors across the globe.

It's easy to overlook the importance of keeping the brain healthy. However, a decline in brain function can result in poor concentration, memory loss and a host of other issues. Sometimes, by the time symptoms present themselves, it may be too late to reverse any damage.

Research suggests that a combination of nutrition and mental, social and physical

activities may have a greater impact with regard to maintaining and improving brain health than any single activity. Harvard Medical School also states that volunteering, caring for others and pursuing hobbies may benefit the brains of older adults.

A study published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry* found participants who reported higher levels of purpose in life exhibited superior cognitive function despite the accumulation of abnormal protein depositions (amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles) in the brain, a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. Having a purpose also may help those who do not have Alzheimer's disease.



Doing jigsaw and crossword puzzles can keep the brain sharp.

In addition to the suggestions mentioned above, those who want to boost brain health can consider these strategies.

Start exercising the brain early on.

A study published in 2012 in the *British Medical Journal* examined cognitive function in people ages 45 to 70. Researchers found evidence of cognitive decline in the 45-year-old participants as well as the older participants. It's never too early to put a brain health plan into motion.

Read more books. Reading can open individuals up to new vocabulary and scenarios that promote a stronger brain and recall ability. Enrolling in an education course at a local college, community center or online also may be beneficial.

Hit the gym. Several studies suggest an association between physical activity and

reduced risk of cognitive decline. This could be because exercise elevates heart rate, which pumps more blood to the brain and body.

Supplement with DHA. DHA is an omega-3 fatty acid that is dominant in the brain. Adhere to a Mediterranean diet, which is generally high in natural sources of omega-3, including fish and mono-unsaturated fats from olives, olive oil, nuts and seeds. Supplements also may help, but individuals should consult with their doctors about which products to take.

Challenge the mind. Men and women can engage in challenging activities that stray from their routines. Puzzles, strategic games, jigsaw puzzles, or difficult hobbies can benefit the brain.

Keep a close-knit group of friends. Regular conversation and social interaction is a key component of any brain health wellness plan.

Slowing cognitive decline and promoting greater brain health should be a priority for adults of all ages.

Did you know?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do to promote their long-term health. The CDC recommends that men and women age 65 or older who are generally fit and have no limiting health conditions need at least two hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, each week. In addition, such people should perform strength-training activities that

work all major muscle groups at least two days per week. While many fit older men and women with no preexisting health conditions are capable of these activities, those able to push themselves a little further can opt for 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, such as jogging or running, combined with the same strength-training regimen. A combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity coupled with strength training may also provide adequate physical activity for aging men and women. Before beginning a new exercise regimen, men and women should consult with their physicians to discuss any limitations they may have and how to manage those risks while still being physically active.

Older adults can overcome gym intimidation

Seniors can overcome feelings of apprehension about going to the gym.



Regular exercise and a nutritious diet are two of the best things seniors can do to maintain their health. Exercise can delay or prevent many of the health problems associated with aging, including weak bones and feelings of fatigue.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says a person age 65 or older who is generally fit with no limiting health conditions should try to get two hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, while also including weight training and muscle-strengthening activities in their routines on two or more days a week.

Individuals often find that gyms have the array of fitness equipment they need to stay healthy. But many people, including older men and women who have not exercised in some time, may be hesitant to join a gym for

fear of intimidation. Some seniors may avoid machines and classes believing they will not use the apparatus properly, or that they will be judged by other gym members. Some seniors may feel like gyms do not cater to their older clientele, creating an atmosphere that is dominated by younger members and loud music.

Such misconceptions are often unfounded, as many gyms welcome older members with open arms. But even if seniors find gyms intimidating, they should still sign up for memberships. In such situations, the following tips can help seniors shed their fears and adapt to their new gyms.

Start the process slowly. Shop around for a gym that makes you feel comfortable. Get fully informed about which classes are offered, and the benefits, if any, afforded to

older members.

Get a doctor's go-ahead. Make sure to clear exercise and gym membership with your doctor prior to purchasing a membership. He or she also may have a list of gyms where fellow senior patients have memberships.

Build up gradually. Begin with exercises you feel comfortable performing. Spend time walking on the treadmill while observing other gym members. Tour the circuit of machines and other equipment. Find out if you can sample a class to see if it might be a good fit.

Find a gym buddy. Working out with a partner in your age group may encourage you to keep going to the gym and increase your comfort level. You each can offer

support and enjoy a good laugh through the learning process.

Don't get discouraged. Anyone working out for the first time, regardless of age, will feel somewhat out of place until exercise becomes part of a routine. Give it some time before throwing in the towel. Once you catch on, you may discover you enjoy working out.

Choose a senior-friendly gym. Some gyms cater to senior members. They may offer "SilverSneakers" classes at their facility. Other niche gyms may only accept members of a certain age group. Investigate these gyms if working out with a younger crowd is proving too great a deterrent.

Fitness is important for healthy seniors. It can prolong life, help seniors maintain healthy weights and reduce their risk of injury.

Some benefits of growing older



Many people are quick to think of growing older in a negative light. Although there certainly are some side effects of aging that one may wish to avoid, people may find that the benefits of growing older outweigh the negatives.

Seniors are a rapidly growing segment of the population. In the United States, the Administration on Aging states that the older population — persons 65 years or older — numbered 46.2 million in 2014 (the latest year for which data is available). Statistics Canada reports that, in July 2015, estimates indicated that there were more persons aged 65 years and older in Canada than children aged 0 to 14 years for the first time in the country's history. Nearly one in six Canadians (16.1%) was at least 65 years old.

With so many people living longer, it's time to celebrate the perks of getting older rather than the drawbacks. Here are some great benefits to growing old.

Higher self-esteem: The insecurities of youth give way as one ages, and older people have less negativity and higher self-esteem. A University of Basel study of people ranging in ages from 18 to 89 found that regardless of demographic and social status, the older one gets the higher self-esteem climbs. Qualities like self-control and altruism can contribute to happiness.

Financial perks: Seniors are entitled to discounts on meals, museum entry

fees, movies, and other entertainment if they're willing to disclose their ages. Discounts are available through an array of venues if one speaks up. Seniors also can enjoy travel perks, with slashed prices on resorts, plane tickets and more. The U.S. National Park Service offers citizens age 62 and older lifetime passes to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites for just \$10 in person (\$20 online or via mail).

Reasoning and problem-solving skills: Brain scans reveal that older adults are more likely to use both hemispheres of their brains simultaneously — something called lateralization. This can sharpen reasoning skills. For example, in a University of Illinois study, older air traffic controllers excelled at their cognitively taxing jobs, despite some losses in short-term memory and visual spatial processing. Older controllers proved to be experts at navigating, juggling multiple aircrafts simultaneously and avoiding collisions.

Less stress: As people grow older, they are able to differentiate their needs from wants and focus on more important goals. This can alleviate worry over things that are beyond one's control. Seniors may realize how little the opinions of others truly mean in the larger picture, thereby feeling less stress about what others think of them.

Growing older may involve gray hair or wrinkling skin, but there are many positive things associated with aging.



Many people are now embracing their naturally graying hair.

Grow gray hair out gracefully

For some people, gray hair comes with age. Both men and women have spent much time, money and energy covering their gray heads of hair with various hair dyes. But now there's a growing trend among people with gray hair to embrace the gray.

Gray hair — especially hair close to the temples — tends to be coarser and more resistant to absorbing hair color than other hair. It can be difficult to cover the gray hairs, and then once it is dyed, gray hair may end up showing through prematurely. As a result, many men and women have discovered it is more cost-effective to embrace their gray hair.

Just like any other hair change, whether growing out a short hairstyle or growing out bangs, it can take time to adjust to a head full of gray hair.

Prepare mentally for gray hair. Hair does not generally turn gray overnight. Therefore, people must expect to live with the gradual change and insecurities that arise as hair starts to turn gray. This requires a certain measure of strength and perseverance. Some may even desire to give up on the process altogether by coloring their hair or, for men, shaving their heads. But sticking it out allows adults to maintain their natural hair,

and many men and women even like their hair once it turns gray.

Work with a stylist. Hair colorists and stylists can make the transition to gray hair a bit easier. With careful placement of highlights, stylists can blur the lines of the graying hair from the other colors. A good stylist also may be able to suggest a cut that will draw attention away from graying roots.

Consider a major haircut. Sometimes the process can be sped along with a dramatic hair cut that removes much of the dead ends and hair that has not yet turned gray.

Stop using color-care shampoos. Certain shampoos are designed to lock color in place. Those who want to go gray can use regular shampoos or clarifying shampoos that strip old hair dye from the hair shaft. Switch over to a toning shampoo that leaves a bit of pigment to counteract brassiness in gray hair.

Consider a makeup swap, too. Transition makeup color to give the face a warmer, rosier glow. Avoid dark eye shadows, which can wash out a complexion.

With a few simple techniques, men and women can naturally transition to gray hair.

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What is a silent stroke?

Silent stroke may not exhibit any symptoms, making it more difficult to detect.

The brain is a complex organ responsible for controlling many different bodily functions. When working at optimal capacity, the brain is a wonder to behold. When illness or trauma affects the brain, various parts of the body may not work as they should.

One of the more devastating things that can affect the brain is stroke. Stroke describes a sudden stoppage of blood from reaching the brain. Harvard Medical School states that if a large number of brain cells are starved of blood supply, they can die. With their demise, a person's memory and ability to speak and move can be compromised.

While many strokes come on suddenly, certain factors may indicate a person is at risk. Such factors may include prior heart attacks, genetics, high blood pressure, smoking, or a prior stroke. However, in a particular type of stroke — a "silent stroke" — symptoms are far more subtle and difficult to spot.

Silent cerebral infarction, often referred to as "SCI" or "silent stroke," is a brain injury likely caused by a blood clot interrupting blood flow to the brain, offers the American Stroke Association. Silent strokes increase risk for other strokes and can be a sign of progressive brain damage. A silent stroke is typically only noticed as a side component of an MRI of the brain. Many times patients do not recall having a stroke and never felt any symptoms. Silent strokes should not be mistaken for mini-strokes. Mini-stroke is a brief but discrete and memorable event, with symptoms appearing for a few minutes or a few hours.

According to a study on silent stroke titled "Functional and Cognitive Consequences of Silent Stroke Discovered Using Brain Magnetic Resonance Imaging in an Elderly Population" and published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, silent strokes are quite common and can have serious consequences. Researchers have found that silent

stroke is associated with impairments in tests of cognitive function rather than movement-oriented performance tests like rising from a chair. Almost 50 percent of studied silent strokes affected frontal circuit components of the brain, such as the frontal cortex, basal ganglia and thalamus. Lesions in these brain structures compromised executive functions and were related to vascular dementia. Another study showed associations between silent stroke and visual field deficits, weakness in walking on heels, history of memory loss, migraines, and lower scores in cognitive function tests.

The "silent" part of a silent stroke also refers to the areas of the brain that the stroke affects. Experts at Harvard Medical School explain that, during a silent stroke, an interruption in blood flow destroys areas of cells in a part of the brain that is "silent," meaning that it doesn't control any vital functions. Researchers say that, over time, the damage from silent strokes can accumulate, leading to more and more problems with memory. Collectively, silent strokes become silent no longer.

There are certain ways to reduce the risk of any type of stroke. These include:

- managing high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels
- quitting smoking
- reducing the risk of diabetes and effectively treat the condition if it is present
- losing weight to prevent obesity
- exercising and avoid a sedentary lifestyle
- taking a low-dose aspirin or a drug that prevents blood clots.

Silent strokes largely go unrecognized but can lead to significant brain injury. Getting the facts can help men and women reduce their risk for silent stroke.

Seniors and exercise: Tips to avoid injuries, get healthy

Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Daily exercise can improve mood, promote an active lifestyle and reduce a person's risk for a host of ailments, including diabetes and heart disease.

Despite the importance of exercise, many people live sedentary lifestyles into their golden years. Seniors who want to embrace a healthier way of life and get more physically active should first consult with their physicians before beginning an exercise regimen. Certain medications may limit just how far seniors can push themselves, while preexisting conditions may make specific types of exercise off limits. After discussing their limitations with their physicians and developing a safe exercise routine, seniors can heed the following tips to avoid injury but still get healthy.

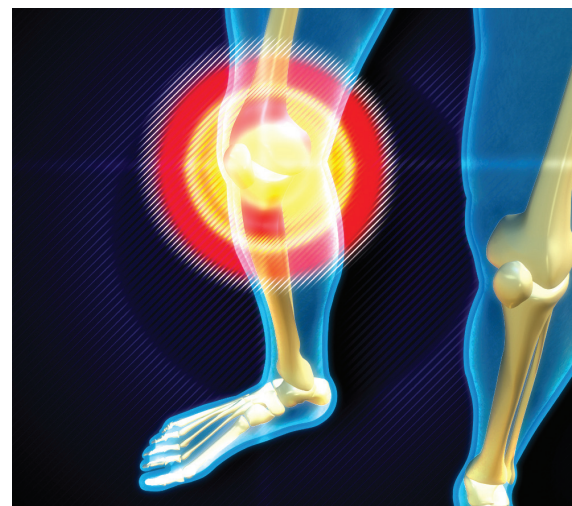
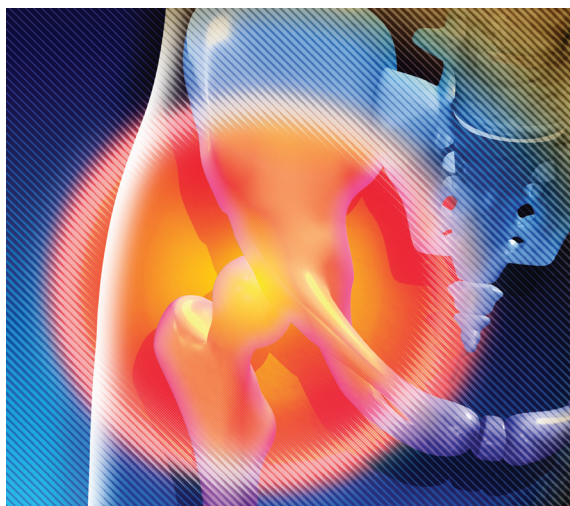
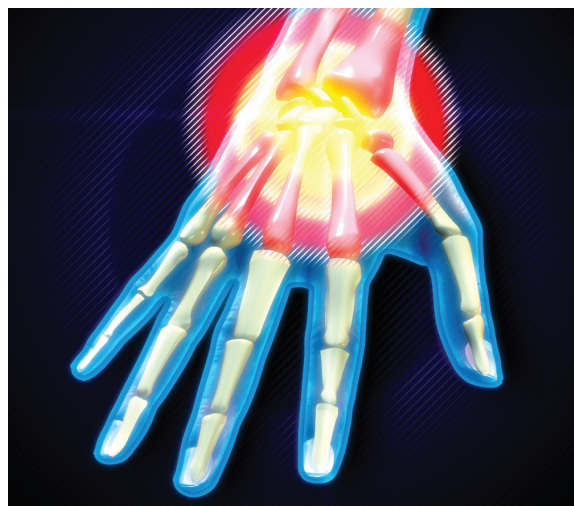
Pick a partner. Whether it's a spouse or a friend who is physically active or wants to be, try exercising with a partner, at least initially. Doing so can provide the motivation you need and partners can serve as safety nets should you need assistance completing an exercise or suffer an injury and require medical attention. Personal trainers can serve as your partner, and many gyms offer discounts to seniors on personal training services.

Start slowly. Seniors who have not been physically active for some time should take a gradual approach to exercise. Instead of heading right for the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine, start walking every day. When it rains, find a treadmill you can walk on. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends seniors begin by determining how many steps they can take in a day and then gradually working toward 10,000 to 15,000 steps per day. Utilize step counting apps on your smartphone to track your progress. Apply the same slow approach to strength training exercises, lifting only very light weights at first before gradually increasing weight as your body acclimates to the exercises.

Stretch. Bodies that have been inactive for lengthy periods of time are inflexible, and lack of flexibility increases your risk for injury. The AAOS recommends that seniors warm up their bodies before stretching with five to 10 minutes of low-intensity activity such as walking. Then stretch gently, remembering to relax and breathe during each stretch.

Switch things up. When strength training, do not work the same muscle group two days in a row. Muscles need time to recover. If you prefer circuit strength training where you exercise various muscle groups in one day, do not strength train on back-to-back days, leaving at least one day in between strength training sessions so muscles have ample time to recover.

Understanding, preventing and managing osteoarthritis



The most common chronic condition of the joints in both the United States and Canada, osteoarthritis affects roughly 30 million people in just those two countries alone.

While osteoarthritis, or OA, can affect people of all ages, it's most common in men and women over the age of 65. Understanding osteoarthritis and how to prevent and manage the disease can help men and women over the age of 50 reduce their risk and live more comfortably even if they develop OA.

What is osteoarthritis?

According to the Arthritis Foundation, healthy joints are covered by cartilage, a flexible connective tissue that covers the end of each bone. Cartilage facilitates motion of the joints and serves as a cushion between the bones. When a person has OA, cartilage breaks down, causing swelling and pain and affecting the mobility of the joint. Over time, OA can worsen and cause bones to break down and develop bone spurs, which form when bones meet each other in the

joints. OA can even advance to a point where cartilage wears away and bone rubs against bone, creating even more pain while damaging the joints even further.

What causes osteoarthritis?

Once considered a byproduct of the wear and tear the human body naturally endures over a lifetime, OA is now viewed as a disease, notes the AF. The following are some potential causes of OA.

- **Genes:** The AF notes that certain genetic traits can increase a person's likelihood of developing OA. Collagen is a protein that makes up cartilage, and, while rare, a genetic defect that affects the body's production of cartilage can lead to OA occurring in people as young as 20 years old. Researchers have also noted that the gene FAAH is more commonly found in people with OA of the knee than in people who don't have the disease. FAAH has been previously linked with pain sensitivity.
- **Weight:** Being overweight increases a

person's risk for a host of ailments and diseases, and OA can be counted among them. Extra weight puts additional pressure on hips and joints, and over time those extra pounds can cause cartilage to break down more quickly than it would if the body was not carrying extra weight.

- **Injury:** Men and women who have suffered injuries to their joints may be at greater risk of developing OA than those with no such injury history.
- **Overuse:** Overuse of joints, tendons and ligaments can accelerate the breakdown of cartilage and increase a person's risk of developing OA. Cartilage also can break down more quickly in the bodies of athletes and people whose careers require them to stand for extended periods of time, bend over frequently and/or lift heavy items.
- **Preexisting conditions:** Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, hemochromatosis and acromegaly may also contribute to the development of OA among people diagnosed with such disorders.

Prevention and management of OA

Men and women who maintain healthy weights and exercise regularly and appropriately may be able to prevent the onset of OA. Appropriate exercises include strength training that focuses on building muscles around the joints, even if those joints are already affected by OA. Strong muscles around the joints can reduce the pain associated with OA, while range-of-motion exercises can improve flexibility of the joints and reduce stiffness. Aerobic exercise also helps men and women maintain healthy weights while facilitating weight loss for those who are already overweight.

Those already diagnosed with OA should speak with their physicians before beginning an exercise regimen, and such conversations can also include discussions about the various medications that can be used to reduce symptoms of OA.

More information about OA is available at www.arthritis.org.

Make vacations and travel a key component of retirement

When the time comes to bid farewell to conference calls, meetings and daily commutes, retirees have open schedules to fill with whichever activities they choose. Travel is one exciting way to pass the time.

Traveling can be a rewarding prospect for active seniors, particularly those who successfully preplanned for retirement and have the income to fund various excursions. Many seniors, both in the United States and Canada, find that travel tops their to-do lists once they retire. According to *Senior Travel* magazine, new travel options are emerging for newly minted retirees looking for something a little different from the status quo.

The list of destinations retirees have at their disposal is limitless. The following ideas are some of the more popular ways retirees choose to travel.

Road trips rule. Taking to the highways and byways is an excellent way to see the country. Seniors can customize their routes depending on which places they want to visit. RV travel can be as comfortable or as rustic as travelers prefer. Many seniors spend months traveling in their campers, which offer many of the same amenities of home. Campsites and special RV hook-up sites offer the other necessities of traveling the open road.

Genealogical tourism is popular. People hoping to trace their ancestry and visit their ancestral homelands are one of the fastest-growing travel segments. Visiting an old church in Europe where ancestors were married or buying food from a market in



which a great aunt or uncle once worked leads retirees on many international adventures. Such trips provide travelers with a unique opportunity to understand their roots up close and personal while enjoying some international travel along the way.

Exotic tours can be exciting destinations. History buffs or adventure-seeking couples may be particularly attracted to exotic travel destinations that are slightly off of the beaten path. Travel tours may take vacationers to destinations such as excavation sites or backpacking through the rainforest. With passport in hand, seniors can go just about anywhere their desires take them.

Enjoy a relaxing seaside trip. A seaside vacation can be the perfect trip for seniors who want to put their feet up and sip some cocktails while watching

the waves lap the shores. Many beach resorts offer all-inclusive packages for different age groups. Meals, excursions and hotel rooms can be bundled into one affordable, confusion-free price.

Go cruising. Speaking of all-inclusive vacationing, cruising seems tailor-made for those ages 50 and older because it offers the convenience of accommodations, food, entertainment, and transportation all in one. The various activities offered on the ship mean travelers can find ways to spend their time how they see fit. Cruising couples can opt to spend all of their time on the ship enjoying carefully prepared meals and entertainment or disembark and explore the various ports of call along the way.

Now that they have more free time, retirees can gear up for travel adventures to remember.

3 money-saving travel tips for retirees

Though a transient lifestyle is something few people aspire to during much of their lives, come retirement, the idea of staying in a place for only a short time has more appeal.

According to a 2014 study from the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies, 36 percent of baby boomers want to spend their retirements traveling. Many are succeeding in doing just that, as a study from the luxury travel network Virtuoso found that today's seniors spent an average of just over \$11,000 per year on travel. That was more than any other generation, highlighting just how much older adults like to get out and explore the world.

Retirees who fear they cannot afford to travel can explore the various ways for seniors to cut costs and still satisfy their wanderlust during retirement.

1. Take advantage of age-related discounts.

Some adults prefer to hide their ages, but when it comes time to travel during retirement, honesty is the best policy. Many businesses that cater to travelers offer discounts to seniors. Car rental agencies, hotels, travel agencies, and cruise lines may offer direct discounts to customers 65 and older, while membership in organizations such as AAA and AARP may make seniors eligible for additional discounts. Discounts on lodging and airfare might net the biggest savings, but even discounts on various smaller expenses can add up to big savings.

2. Don't overlook travel agencies.

While many prospective travelers' first instincts are now to visit various travel websites in an effort to find the most affordable trips, it's important that travelers not overlook travel agencies when planning trips. Travel websites, though a valuable resource, only list the hotels and airlines that agree to be included on their sites. While many participate, some do not, and those that do not may instead work independent of travel websites or partner with travel agencies. Travel agencies have access to the latest information, and many specialize in certain countries, knowing all the attractions visitors to their countries want to see. Travel agencies may offer packages that include admissions to popular attractions, which can be more affordable than planning a trip a la carte.

3. Travel as part of a group.

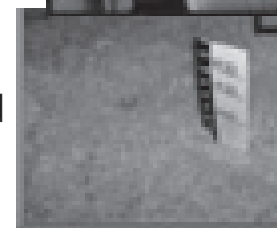
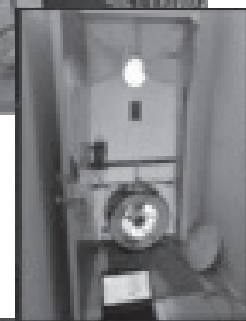
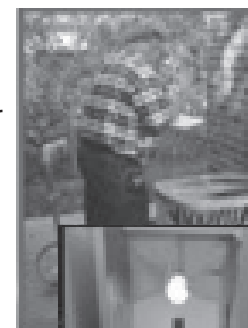
Group travel may not appeal to everyone, but it should appeal to older, budget-conscious travelers. Retirees who are uncomfortable driving at home will likely be even less comfortable driving in foreign countries where the rules of the road are not the same. Traveling in groups, whether it's with a retirement community, religious organization or another program, can save travelers substantial amounts of money. Many hotels and tourist attractions offer steep discounts for group tours, which can even be arranged through travel agencies. A hidden benefit of signing up for a group tour is the chance to meet new people and develop new relationships with fellow globetrotters.

Many working professionals hope to spend the bulk of their retirement traveling the globe. While such a goal is potentially costly, there are various ways to save and still see the world.

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Two newer epilepsy drugs may not harm the thinking skills or IQs of school-aged children whose mothers took them while pregnant-but an older drug is linked to cognitive problems in children, especially if their mothers took high doses, according to new research from The University of Manchester. Valproate, one of the most commonly prescribed antiepileptic medications, has been associated in the past with birth defects and developmental problems. However, two newer drugs - levetiracetam and topiramate - have had little or no investigations into their developmental impact until this latest research, published in *Neurology*[®], the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

A year's course of benralizumab injections has led to a significant decrease in the frequency of asthma exacerbations--cutting the rate of exacerbations by a third to a half compared with placebo among people with the most severe form of asthma, according to two studies published in *The Lancet*. Asthma affects an estimated 315 million people worldwide, approximately 10% of whom have severe or uncontrolled asthma. Patients with severe asthma require treatment with high-dose inhaled corticosteroids (ISC) and long acting beta agonists (LABA) to control the illness-both are delivered in the form of inhalers. However, for some patients, current treatments fail to control their asthma.

Benzodiazepines are drugs typically prescribed for the treatment of neurological and/or psychological conditions, including anxiety, insomnia and seizure disorders. Both classes of drugs depress the central nervous system (CNS depressants); however, each has unique pharmacology, safety risks, and labeling information related to its use.

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