

Living 50 Plus

News and Information for Nash County Seniors

Safe ways seniors can lose weight

The prevalence of obesity among adults 60 and older is significant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 39 percent of adults 60 and over met the criteria for obesity over a two-year period between August 2021 and August 2023.

The National Council on Aging notes the importance of maintaining a healthy weight as you age. Seniors who qualify as obese, which occurs when a person's body accumulates and stores excessive amounts of body fat, carry a higher risk of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer. The NCOA also notes that excess body weight puts a strain on the joints, increasing the risk

for osteoarthritis and making daily movements more difficult. People with obesity also are more likely to develop asthma and sleep apnea.

Seniors diagnosed with obesity are urged to seek safe and healthy ways to lose weight. Fad diets and other means to quick weight loss can be dangerous, but the NCOA notes simple lifestyle changes and healthy habits can help seniors safely lose weight.

- Consume nutrient-dense foods. Lean proteins, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables offer plenty of vitamins, minerals and fiber but tend to be low in calories. That makes them ideal options for people looking to lose weight, as they contribute to feelings of full-



ness without consuming a lot of calories.

- Incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. Exercise can pose problems for older adults who qualify as obese. The joint issues that can affect older adults with obesity can make traditional exer-

cise regimens that incorporate strength training and moderate to vigorous aerobic activity very difficult, and maybe even dangerous. But the NCOA notes that exercise need not be intense to be effective. Walking is a great physical activity for older adults. Swimming

also is excellent, as it provides a full-body workout that's easy on the joints. Seniors are urged to speak with their physicians about physical activities they can handle.

- Don't sleep on sleep. Sleep can be an effective ally for seniors looking to lose weight. The NCOA notes that seven to nine hours of sleep per night helps support a healthy metabolism and regulate hunger. Seniors who have trouble falling asleep at night can try various strategies, from avoiding caffeine from the afternoon on to avoiding screens after dinner, to prepare their bodies to get better rest at night.

- Work to combat stress. The NCOA reports that stress is a contributor to

weight gain. And stress and disorders linked to it are perhaps more common among adults 60 and over than people realize. In fact, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders, which are a notable source of ongoing stress, are the most widespread mental health condition among older adults. Sufficient sleep, meditation and deep breathing exercises can help seniors combat stress, and that in turn may help older adults avoid excess weight gain.

Obesity is a problem among older adults. Finding safe ways to lose weight can have a profound effect on seniors' short- and long-term health.

Tips on working out after age 50

Exercise is an important component of healthy living at any age. Physical activity helps to maintain a healthy body weight and offers mental benefits like reduced stress and the potential to reduce risk for cognitive decline. But it's important to point out that appropriate exercise for a person at age 20 may look quite different from the right exercise regimen for someone who is 50 or older.

WebMD says exercise is important for quality of life as one ages and is a key to independence. It is important to think of exercise as a tool, and as with all tools, the right ones should be used with a goal to avoid in-

jury. Fitness after 50 should prioritize some practices and avoid others.

- Focus on resistance training. Cardiovascular exercise is important for heart health and general health, but strength training also is essential to counter some of the normal effects of aging. Continuum Care, a private duty home care service, says aging results in a decline in bone density and muscle mass. Resistance exercise performed several times each week can help combat muscle loss and bone density decline.

- Opt for low-impact activities. Low-impact exercises that involve less jumping and pounding will

be easier on the joints. A doctor, physical therapist or athletic trainer can help to customize or adapt activities based on a person's limitations or medical conditions.

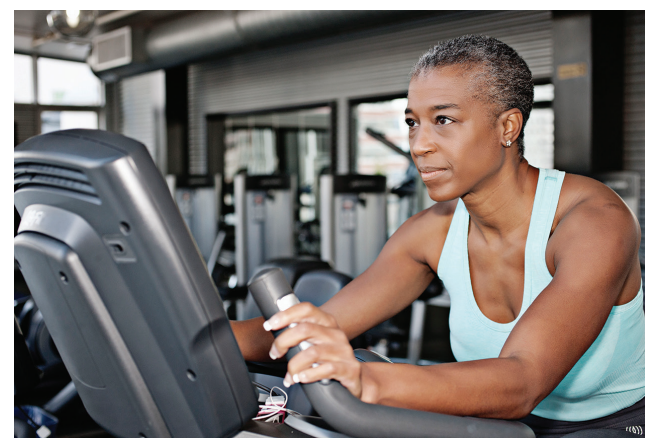
- Warm up before working out. Older adults are advised to warm up muscles before exercising to avoid injury, particularly if it has been some time since you last exercised. Harvard Medical School recommends five minutes of brisk walking or time on an elliptical machine to get blood flowing to muscles and make them pliable. After working out, it's advisable to stretch afterwards.

- Switch to interval train-

ing. Interval training, which alternates between intense exercises and less demanding "rest" periods, offers greater benefits compared to a consistent exercise pace. Interval training helps burn extra calories and maximizes oxygen consumption. Interval training may allow for shorter workouts as well.

- Increase the number of rest days. Focusing on recovery after age 50 is important. Tissue takes more time to recover as the body ages, and that may require longer rest periods between workouts.

- Pay attention to what your body is saying. Scripps Health says that even with



a doctor or professional trainer guiding workouts, an individual is the best judge if physical activity is too much or too little. Everyone should pay attention to signs of overexertion, such as dizziness, excessive fatigue or chest pain. Other signs of discomfort, such

as joint pain, may mean the intensity needs to be dialed down or other exercises chosen.

An exercise regimen may need a reboot after a person turns 50. Modified activities and a slowing of pace can promote a healthy, injury-free lifestyle.

How to manage multiple medications

Polypharmacy, or the practice of managing multiple medications, is a part of life for a significant percentage of seniors. Many prescription and over-the-counter drugs are essential for maintaining health and managing chronic conditions. However, the chemical complexity of mixing so many drugs can lead to dangerous outcomes if one isn't careful.

Older adults take more medications than any other age group. A report conducted by Age Wave and The John A. Hartford Foundation found that the average senior takes four medications, but more than 15 percent take eight or more. Some medications can create further conditions or worsen existing conditions. Data from the Agency for Healthcare Research Quality show that 15.9 percent of older adults use inappropriate medication.

Structured medication management is essential for seniors' safety. Here's how to safely navigate taking multiple medications at once.

- Conduct a medication audit. Take all of the medications and supplements you use to a primary care physician or pharmacist to discuss potential interactions and if any prescriptions can be canceled. Research from Clarest Health indicates that patients taking five to nine medications have a 50 percent chance of experiencing a significant adverse drug event.

- Talk about deprescribing. Speak with a doctor about the process of tapering off medications that may no longer be necessary or are resulting in more harm than benefit.

- Use one pharmacy. Always fill prescriptions from the same pharmacy. Modern systems are equipped

with safeguards to flag certain drug-to-drug interactions automatically. Also, the pharmacist is often an underutilized resource. Ask questions and figure out if he or she can conduct a medication review to ensure a regimen for taking medications is as complication-free as possible.

- Utilize smart systems. Rely on smart pill dispensers that unlock only at the correct time to manage high-risk medications. Other pill organizers and digital apps can set reminders to take medications at the appropriate times. An app like Medisafe will notify family members if a dose is missed.

- Link doses to actions. Make medications an automatic part of your day by linking them to activities, like morning pills taken

with a cup of coffee or evening pills when you eat dinner.

- Use visual cues. Keep pill organizers in a visible spot so you remember to take the medication.

- Ask for help. If managing medications has become a tall order, ask a friend, family member or a visiting nurse or aide to assist with medication management.

- Update your list. Al-

ways maintain a current list of the medications and supplements you are taking, and bring it along to every new medical appointment for further review.

Managing medications becomes more complex as seniors typically take multiple drugs and supplements to maintain health.

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