

# What doctors want older adults to know to manage their health

SEP 27, 2024



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As the population of older adults continues to grow, understanding how to manage health and well-being in later years has become increasingly important. Navigating the complexities of aging can be challenging, but with the right knowledge and resources, older adults can maintain a high quality of life. By taking proactive steps, older adults can continue to lead fulfilling lives and enjoy their golden years to the fullest.

The AMA's What Doctors Want Patients to Know™ series gives physicians a platform to share what they want patients to understand about today's health care headlines.

Here is a list of great articles drawn from this series to highlight what doctors want older adults to know to enhance their health and well-being.

## **1** Get screened for osteoporosis

Bone health is a critical aspect of overall well-being, yet millions worldwide grapple with a silent threat that weakens bones: osteoporosis. This condition, often undetected until a fracture occurs, poses a significant risk, particularly among older patients. Being aware of the condition and knowing what preventive measures to take are key.

Nancy Salloum Harrison, MD, a rheumatologist at Hattiesburg Clinic's The Arthritis Center–West, discusses what patients need to know about osteoporosis. Hattiesburg Clinic is a member of the [AMA Health](#)

[System Program](#), which provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

## 2 Understand how to prevent RSV

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. While most people recover in a week or two, RSV can be serious, especially for infants, older adults and adults with chronic medical conditions. That is why it is important, as an older adult, to get vaccinated against RSV. Two physicians share what to know about RSV infection.

## 3 Don't skip your flu shot

The flu season can be severe, but for the past couple of years it has been different. There still remains the looming threat of a combination of a severe flu season with COVID-19 and RSV. This year, with the availability of updated COVID-19 vaccines that more closely target currently circulating variants, along with vaccines to prevent influenza and RSV, medical experts have some cause for optimism. A family physician shares what patients need to know about the influenza vaccine to help clear up any misinformation.

## 4 Talk to your doctor about the shingles vaccine

If you were born before 1990, you might remember spending a week home from school with chickenpox. A sibling may have also stayed home with chickenpox at the same time. That's because a vaccine was not widely available until 1995.

And if you had chickenpox as a kid, that means that as an adult you are at risk of developing shingles, which is a painful condition caused by the reactivation of the virus that causes chickenpox. That is why it is important to take steps to protect yourself from the shingles virus. Learn more about what patients need

to know about shingles.

## 5 Keep these tips in mind to prevent falls

Picture a serene morning silence that is broken by the clatter of a coffee cup hitting the floor. For many older adults, such a simple mishap can signal the start of a life-changing event: a fall. These sudden, often unexpected incidents are more than just a slip or a stumble—they represent a significant threat to the health and independence of our aging population. Taking appropriate steps to prevent falls can ensure that older adults continue to live their golden years with the dignity, freedom and joy they deserve.

Jason Hill, MD, a hospitalist and innovation officer for Ochsner Health in New Orleans, discusses what patients and families should keep in mind to prevent falls. Ochsner Health is also a member of the AMA Health System Program.

## 6 Reach out if you feel socially isolated

In an increasingly connected world, a paradoxical crisis is silently gripping communities: social isolation. And it is casting a long shadow over public health, from older adults grappling with seclusion to the unexpected repercussions for younger generations. Two psychiatrists discuss what patients need to know about social isolation as a public health issue.

Also read about [what doctors want patients to know about identifying and addressing loneliness](#).

## 7 Manage your rheumatoid arthritis

Among chronic conditions, one stands out for its enigmatic nature and debilitating impact: rheumatoid arthritis. This condition presents an array of challenges and wreaks havoc on the lives of those who live with it. And while

there are effective treatments that can prevent or slow the progression of rheumatoid arthritis, many questions remain unanswered, leaving patients and their families searching for better strategies to manage this life-altering condition.

Amish J. Dave, MD, was one of two AMA members who outlined what patients need to know about managing rheumatoid arthritis. Dr. Dave is a rheumatologist at Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle. Virginia Mason Franciscan Health is also a member of the AMA Health System Program.

## 8 Find time to relax

Chronic stress is not part of a healthy lifestyle. It also doesn't help healthy aging either. That is why it is important to find ways to relax such as reading, going for walks, cooking, knitting, gardening or joining group activities. And while there are many factors that influence healthy aging, some of these—such as genetics—are not in our control. Discover more tips for healthy aging.

When it comes to effective patient-physician communication, it's important that both parties speak from a base of shared knowledge. The AMA's What Doctors Want Patients to Know series explores dozens of health topics, including [climate change](#), [inflammatory bowel disease](#) and [vertigo](#).