

Senior Living



Comfort, Safety on the Road

For many seniors, driving represents independence and mobility. However, as we age, physical changes can make driving more challenging.

Fortunately, there are numerous ways older adults can adapt their vehicles and driving habits to stay safe and comfortable on the road.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that in 2022, about 9,100 older adults were killed in traffic crashes and more than 270,000 were treated in emergency rooms for crash injuries. Drivers aged 70 and over have higher crash death rates per 1,000 crashes than middle-aged drivers (aged 35-54). Causes, they say, include age-related changes in vision, physical functioning and the ability to reason and remember. Diseases and medications can also affect the driving abilities of older adults.

On the flip side, the CDC said that older adults are more likely to have safer driving behaviors than other groups.

ADAPTING VEHICLES FOR A BETTER FIT

Simple modifications can make a significant difference in driving comfort and safety. Seniors may find that adding seat cushions or lumbar



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supports improves posture and reduces strain. Steering wheel covers can enhance grip strength and larger rearview mirrors improve visibility. Pedal extenders can help those with limited reach maintain better control over braking and acceleration. Additionally, swivel seat cushions make getting in and out of the vehicle easier, reducing strain on joints and muscles.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends talking to an auto dealer about how to fit a car with new adaptive technologies. Alternatively, they say, seniors can consult with a driver rehabilitation specialist, especially after a stroke or the onset of a disability. A specialist can help explain what equipment might be needed now or in the future and point you in

the direction of public and private financial assistance.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VEHICLE

Selecting the right car can greatly affect ease of driving for older adults. Vehicles with higher seats, such as SUVs or crossovers, often provide easier entry and exit than lower sedans. Cars with wide door openings and adjustable

seating options can make a big difference in comfort and accessibility.

Models with advanced safety features like backup cameras, blind-spot monitoring and automatic emergency braking can provide added security and safer driving.

SAFETY ADVICE FOR OLDER DRIVERS

Regular health checkups are essential to ensure vision, hearing and reflexes are up to par. The AARP recommends that seniors consider taking refresher driving courses, which can help update skills and build confidence.

Avoiding driving in bad weather, heavy traffic or at night can reduce risks. Planning routes ahead of time and using GPS systems can minimize stress and confusion. Additionally, staying active and maintaining flexibility through exercise can help with reaction times and overall mobility while driving.

Other recommendations from the CDC include always wearing a seatbelt, driving when conditions are safest, never drinking and driving, reviewing how medications can interact with driving, leaving large distances between you and other cars and avoiding distractions.

For seniors who find driving increasingly difficult, alternative transportation options such as ride-sharing services, community shuttles and public transit can help maintain independence without the stress of driving.

Tracing Family Roots

Delving into family history can be a rewarding journey, especially for seniors looking to reconnect with their past and preserve their legacy for future generations.

Exploring ancestry and genealogy is more accessible than ever, thanks to online databases, historical records and DNA testing services.

WHY GENEALOGY MATTERS

Genealogy is more than just names and dates — it's about understanding where you come from and the events that shaped your family's journey. Learning about ancestors' lives, struggles and triumphs can provide a greater sense of identity and connection. For many seniors, tracing family roots can be an opportunity to pass down meaningful stories, traditions and values to children and grandchildren.

Starting your ancestry research doesn't require expert knowledge. Here are some simple steps to begin:

- **Gather family records.** Talk to relatives and collect old photos, letters and documents such as birth and marriage certificates.
- **Create a family tree.** Use a simple chart or an online tool to map out known family connections.
- **Use online resources.**



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Websites like Ancestry.com, FamilySearch.org and MyHeritage offer vast collections of historical records.

- **Explore public archives.** Local libraries, historical societies and government records provide valuable insights.

DNA testing has revolutionized genealogy, allowing individuals to uncover genetic connections, confirm heritage, and even discover unknown relatives. Services like 23andMe and AncestryDNA can provide ethnicity

estimates and link users with distant family members. While exciting, it's important to research the privacy policies of these companies before submitting DNA samples.

PRESERVING YOUR LEGACY

Once you've uncovered your family history, consider ways to document and share it:

- **Write a family history book.** Compile research findings, personal stories and

photographs into a book for future generations.

- **Record oral histories.** Use a smartphone or recording device to capture family members' stories in their own words.

- **Create a digital archive.** Store and organize family documents and photos online to ensure preservation.

- **Engage younger generations.** Encourage grandchildren and younger relatives to take an interest in their heritage through

storytelling and interactive projects.

A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING

Exploring ancestry and genealogy can bring families closer together, spark meaningful conversations and provide a sense of fulfillment. Whether uncovering fascinating historical connections or simply preserving everyday family moments, the journey of tracing one's roots is a gift that can last for generations.

Stay Sharp with Brain Games

As people age, maintaining cognitive health becomes just as important as physical well-being.

Engaging in brain stimulating activities can help seniors enhance memory, improve critical thinking and support overall mental fitness. From puzzles to digital games, there are countless ways to keep the brain active and engaged.

Research has shown that regularly engaging in cognitive activities can slow cognitive decline and may reduce the risk of dementia. Activities that challenge the brain encourage neural connections, keeping the mind sharp. Games that require strategy, memory recall and problem-solving can help seniors stay mentally agile.

The World Health Organization in 2021 estimated more than 55 million people are living with dementia and they predict that will rise to 78 million in 2030 and 139 million in 2050.

The National Institutes of Health published a study showing that engaging in cognitive and social activities protected against age-related changes in mental functioning. However, that same study found that age and education are major factors in cognitive performance. Other studies from Rush University in Chicago for that engaging in cognitive activities can help



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fend off the development of Alzheimer's disease.

POPULAR BRAIN-BOOSTING ACTIVITIES

- **Crossword puzzles and sudoku.** These classic games challenge vocabulary and numerical skills while keeping the brain engaged.
- **Board games and card**

games. Strategy-based games like chess, Scrabble and bridge stimulate cognitive processes and enhance social interaction.

- **Jigsaw puzzles.** Completing puzzles helps with problem-solving skills, spatial awareness and patience.
- **Brain-training apps.** Digital platforms like Lumosity and

Elevate offer exercises targeting memory, attention and processing speed.

- **Learning a new skill.** Picking up a new language, musical instrument or hobby can create new neural pathways, keeping the brain flexible.

Texas A&M School of Public Health researchers

recommend engaging in these sort of brain activities at least three to four times a week. They found that people who engage in high levels of these activities have better memory, working memory, attention and processing speed than those who do not.

STAYING SOCIALLY AND MENTALLY ACTIVE

Seniors can benefit from group activities such as trivia nights, book clubs and discussion groups that stimulate thought and encourage social connections. Regular interaction with peers can reduce stress and contribute to emotional well-being, further supporting cognitive fitness.

Ways to incorporate these activities into daily life include:

- Set aside time each day for brain exercises.
- Play games with family or friends to enhance social engagement.
- Try new challenges to keep the mind adaptable and curious.
- Combine mental exercises with physical activity, such as learning dance routines or playing interactive video games.

Maintaining cognitive fitness doesn't have to be a chore — brain games can be enjoyable, social and rewarding. By incorporating mental exercises into daily routines, seniors can enhance their memory, boost problem-solving skills and support overall well-being. Keeping the mind engaged is a vital step in promoting a fulfilling and healthy lifestyle in later years.

Intergenerational Friendships

Age is just a number, and when it comes to friendships, meaningful connections can transcend generations.

Intergenerational friendships — relationships between people of different age groups — offer numerous benefits for seniors, enriching their lives in ways they may not have imagined.

In today's fast-paced, digital world, younger generations often interact differently than their older counterparts, but the value of human connection remains universal. By forging relationships with younger individuals, seniors can experience a renewed sense of purpose, mental stimulation and emotional fulfillment.

THE BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL FRIENDSHIPS

Research shows that intergenerational friendships can help combat loneliness and social isolation, both of which are common concerns for older adults. In 2023, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy released a report talking about the healing effects of social connection. It cited several physical benefits, including living longer and a lower incidence of such diseases as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, infectious diseases, reduced cognitive function, depression and anxiety and suicide or self-harm.

In an outgoing prescription at the end of his term, Murthy said, "Community is a place where we have relationships, help each other, and where we find purpose in each other. Those three elements are the core pillars of community. Community is also a place fueled by a core virtue: that's love, which



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manifests in generosity, kindnesses and courage. When you put these together, then you have a place where people find a sense of belonging and meaning."

Engaging with younger friends introduces fresh perspectives, new experiences and a sense of belonging. These relationships can provide cognitive benefits, as discussions with younger individuals often encourage seniors to stay mentally active and engaged.

For younger generations, these friendships offer invaluable wisdom and life lessons. Seniors bring experience, patience and historical knowledge, providing guidance that younger individuals may not find elsewhere. These bonds foster mutual respect and understanding, helping to bridge the generation gap and strengthen community ties.

The University of Florida lists five

benefits of intergenerational relationships that apply to all ages. They are establishing emotional support, gaining practical knowledge, building community ties, experiencing personal growth and preserving family traditions.

HOW TO BUILD INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Seniors looking to expand their social circles can take advantage of several opportunities to connect with younger generations:

- **Community programs.** Many local organizations, libraries and senior centers offer intergenerational programs that pair seniors with young adults or children for shared activities such as reading, storytelling or mentoring.

- **Volunteering.** Getting involved with volunteer work can provide an opportunity to collaborate with younger

volunteers on meaningful projects.

- **Technology and social media.** Learning to use social media platforms or joining online groups can help seniors engage with younger individuals who share similar interests.

- **Faith-based groups.** Many churches and religious organizations encourage multigenerational participation in activities and community service projects.

- **Shared hobbies and classes.** Taking part in hobby groups, exercise classes or educational courses can introduce seniors to younger people who share their passions.

By embracing friendships that cross generational boundaries, seniors can enhance their emotional well-being, reduce feelings of isolation and find new ways to stay active and engaged. Building these relationships enriches individual lives and fosters a more inclusive and connected society.

Start a Business or Side Hustle

Retirement marks a new chapter in life, but for many seniors, it doesn't mean slowing down.

Instead, an increasing number of retirees are embracing entrepreneurship, starting businesses or side hustles that provide financial benefits, personal fulfillment and an opportunity to stay engaged.

There are many reasons why seniors choose to start a business or side hustle after retiring. Some do it for extra income, especially if they want to supplement their retirement savings. Others enjoy staying active, using their experience and skills in new ways. Entrepreneurship can turn lifelong passions into profit, whether it's crafting, consulting or writing.

For many people, staying in the work force after retirement isn't just about money. According to Luke Pittaway at Ohio University's College of Business, retired people are looking for a sense of purpose and the chance to engage in meaningful and fulfilling activities. He said that retirees "tend to bring more financial wealth, experience and personal networks to their startup efforts."

In 2019, 65% of Americans responding to an Inside Small Business survey said they want to open a business when they retire. More recently, a Fidelity Investments 2024 study found



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that nearly two-thirds of Americans are planning to work for pleasure during their retirement.

FINDING THE RIGHT BUSINESS IDEA

The best business ideas for seniors align with their skills, interests and lifestyle. Some popular options include:

- **Consulting or coaching.** Retired professionals can use their industry knowledge to

advise businesses or mentor younger professionals.

- **E-commerce and online sales.** Selling handmade crafts, vintage items or specialty goods on platforms like Etsy or eBay is a flexible way to earn money.

- **Freelancing.** Writing, graphic design or bookkeeping are just a few skills that can be monetized through freelance work.

- **Pet services.** Pet sitting,

dog walking or grooming can be fulfilling for animal lovers.

- **Teaching or tutoring.** Sharing knowledge through online or in-person tutoring, music lessons or educational workshops can be rewarding.

STEPS TO GET STARTED

Before launching a business, research your industry, identify your target audience and create a simple business plan.

Assess your finances to

develop a deep understanding of start-up costs and potential earnings. Many businesses can be started with minimal investment, but financial planning ensures a stable foundation.

Research legal considerations. You may need to register your business, set up a tax identification number, obtain necessary licenses and explore tax implications.

Leveraging social media, word-of-mouth and local advertising helps attract customers. Connecting with other entrepreneurs can provide support and insight. This can be done through local business groups or national associations.

Manage work-life balance carefully. Retirement should be enjoyable and a time to reap the rewards of a long life of working. Unlike traditional jobs, a side hustle or business allows for flexibility. Set boundaries to ensure you maintain a healthy balance between work and leisure.

THE REWARDS OF SENIOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Starting a business in retirement provides financial independence, mental stimulation and social interaction. Whether it's a small side hustle or a full-time endeavor, entrepreneurship can make retirement more fulfilling and rewarding. With the right approach, seniors can turn their experience and passions into successful ventures that enhance their golden years.

Develop a Green Thumb

Gardening is more than just a pastime. It offers a wealth of physical and mental benefits, especially for seniors.

Tending to plants provides gentle exercise, encourages time outdoors and fosters a sense of accomplishment, making it an ideal activity for retirees looking to stay active and engaged.

BENEFITS TO GARDENING

All Seniors Care Living Centers promotes gardening, citing the following benefits: it's a heart-healthy hobby that is considered a moderate form of cardiovascular exercise, it boosts confidence, it promotes relaxation, it grows a sense of community, it contributes to healthy eating habits and it is a form of therapy for those experiencing cognitive decline.

Digging, planting and watering help improve mobility and strength, reducing the risk of osteoporosis and arthritis-related stiffness. Regular movement promotes cardiovascular health, and exposure to sunlight increases vitamin D levels, which support bone strength and immune function. Even small-scale gardening, such as tending to potted plants or raised beds, offers these advantages while minimizing strain.



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Beyond physical health, gardening provides therapeutic benefits for mental well-being. Engaging with nature has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression. The act of nurturing plants and watching them grow fosters a sense of purpose, which is particularly beneficial for seniors seeking fulfillment in retirement. Additionally, the rhythmic, repetitive nature of gardening can have a calming effect, similar to meditation,

helping to improve focus and mood.

Gardening is a great way to stay socially connected. Many communities offer gardening clubs, allowing seniors to share tips, swap plants and form friendships. Working in a community garden or volunteering at a local botanical center provides additional opportunities for interaction, reinforcing a sense of belonging.

Gardening can be

financially rewarding. Growing fruits, vegetables and herbs can help reduce grocery bills while ensuring access to fresh, organic produce. Many seniors find joy in sharing their harvest with family and friends, creating an added layer of satisfaction.

MAKING GARDENING MORE ACCESSIBLE

For those with limited mobility, adaptive tools and modified gardening setups

make it possible to enjoy the benefits of horticulture without excessive strain. Raised garden beds, lightweight tools and ergonomic designs cater to seniors with arthritis or other physical limitations, ensuring that gardening remains accessible.

All Seniors Care offers several other suggestions including using containers on castors to make movable and elevated garden beds and using vertical planting such as wall and trellis spaces. They also recommend making sure any chairs or tables used are stable and comfortable. Follow sun-safe practices by wearing sunscreen, hat and gloves and providing shaded areas to work in.

Barb Kreski, director of horticulture services at the Chicago Botanic Garden said that gardening can be complicated by physical limitations but, "We accommodate these changes by adding some helpful tools or altering how we go about tasks."

The Chicago Botanic Garden has a Buehler Enabling Garden that encourages people with physical limitations and older adults to garden. They use such things as hanging baskets that are rigged on pulley systems. Gates and faucets have levers rather than knobs. They choose plants that are low-maintenance. Some tools that Kreski recommends include soaker hoses and drip-irrigation systems. A good garden cart can help an older gardener haul tools and supplies.

Home Modifications

As people age, their living spaces need to evolve to meet their changing needs.

Creating an age-friendly home ensures safety, comfort and independence, allowing seniors to remain in their homes longer. Simple modifications can make a significant difference in preventing accidents and improving daily living.

One of the most effective ways to make a home age-friendly is by improving accessibility. Start with entrances — installing ramps or handrails can make it easier to navigate steps. Widening doorways accommodates walkers or wheelchairs, and lever-style door handles are easier to operate than traditional knobs.

Vision changes with age, making adequate lighting essential for safety. Increase brightness in hallways, staircases and entryways to prevent trips and falls. Motion-sensor lights in key areas like bathrooms and kitchens add convenience, while nightlights in bedrooms and hallways provide guidance in the dark.

Falls are a leading cause of injury among seniors, but modifications can significantly lower the risk. Secure rugs with non-slip pads or remove them altogether. Install grab bars in bathrooms near toilets and showers. Non-slip mats and shower seats enhance bathroom safety. For added security, consider installing a walk-in



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tub or a curbless shower with a handheld showerhead.

A well-organized kitchen improves functionality and minimizes strain. Pull-out shelves, lazy susans and drawer organizers reduce the need for excessive bending and reaching. Relocating frequently used items to waist-height cabinets prevents unnecessary stretching. Consider installing anti-scald devices on faucets to regulate water temperature and prevent burns.

Flooring choices affect mobility and fall prevention. Low-pile carpeting, cork and vinyl flooring provide good traction while being easier on joints. Avoid glossy or slick surfaces that increase slip hazards. If using rugs, secure edges to the floor or opt for wall-to-wall carpeting for added stability.

Adjusting furniture arrangements can promote easier movement throughout the home. Opt for sturdy chairs with firm cushions and

armrests that provide support when sitting and standing. Recliners with remote controls and adjustable beds offer additional comfort and convenience.

Technology can enhance security and convenience. Smart home devices such as voice-activated assistants, medical alert systems and security cameras provide peace of mind. Automated thermostats, smart doorbells and remote-controlled lighting

make everyday tasks easier and safer.

Simple modifications can transform any home into a safer, more comfortable space for aging in place. By taking proactive steps, seniors can maintain their independence and enjoy a secure, welcoming living environment. Whether making small adjustments or larger renovations, creating an age-friendly home fosters a better quality of life for older adults.