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Steps to boost your *immunity* this winter

This winter, or as a goal heading into the New Year, one important thing many people should consider focusing on is what they can do to support a strong immune system.

"Building a strong immune system can improve and even extend your life," says Larry Robinson, Ph.D., and vice president of Scientific Affairs, Embria Health Sciences, a manufacturer of natural, science-based ingredients that support wellness and vitality.

For a healthier season and new year, Robinson and the experts at Embria are encouraging people to follow these health and wellness tips.

BE SOCIAL

It's easy to hole-up during these cold winter days, but it's not very good for your health or immune system. Research shows that people that have more human interactions are better at combating cold weather challenges.

Make sure to chat with your coworkers during the day and make plans with your friends after work, at least on a somewhat regular basis.

Not only will these steps boost your immunity, but social activities may also help reduce stress and depression, another area of concern for many especially during the winter.

REST AND RELAXATION

Rest and relaxation can go a long way toward supporting good health.

Ongoing sleep deficiency is linked to a number of major health problems and can impair the way your immune system responds, according to the National Institutes of Health.

What's more, too much stress can compromise immune response.

Whether it's spending time with



friends, going to a yoga class or taking a bath, make sure your schedule includes time for both sleep as well as stressreducing activities.

SUPPLEMENT

While a well-balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can support good health, getting the proper vitamins and nutrients in sufficient quantities every day can prove challenging.

Consider resolving to offer your

immune system targeted support with a supplement designed to boost healthy immune function.

One of the best immune strengthening ingredients is EpiCor fermentate, which has been clinically shown to support the body's ability to initiate the proper immune response when needed, support rapid immune response and maintain healthy immune function.

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Editor: Heather Ruenz

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A publication of Southern Lakes Newspapers LLC

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Advertising Director:

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Improve your health from the inside out, especially during the colder months, by focusing on boosting your immune system. In addition to taking supplements and setting aside time to relax, remaining social is also recommended – and can help reduce stress and depression.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior



Always talk with your healthcare professional or pharmacist about your medications and any possible side effects to watch for. Track possible side effects of medicines, especially when they are new or serious, and talk to your provider.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

How older adults can manage medications

As people age, their body's change, and so does their health care. People 65-yearsold and older are prescribed medications more frequently than any other group and they often require multiple medications to manage several health conditions at the same time.

Changes in how your body functions, however, can also increase the chances you'll experience side effects due to medication use. But you can lower your risk of problems with medications, according to a recent article from Health in Aging.

Keep the following tips in mind and ask questions of your healthcare professional or pharmacist.

MAKE A LIST

Keep a list of all the medications you take. This list should include prescriptions,



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over-the-counter (OTC) medications, herbal remedies, vitamins, and other supplements. Remember to also list medications that are not pills, such as patches, inhalers, injections, creams, and ointments.

Your list should contain the medication dosage and frequency of use, and what the medicines are for. Bring the list with you to all healthcare professional visits.

Write down any questions you have about your medicines so you can remember to ask during your appointment.

REVIEW YOUR MEDICATIONS REGULARLY

When you see your healthcare provider, go over your list of medications and questions with them. This is especially important after you've been in the hospital or have seen another provider.

This will help the provider know about any changes. They can also check for side effects and drug interactions.

Read all prescription labels carefully. You will find the following information:

- Directions for taking your medications
- What to take or not take with the medicines (e.g., food, drink, other

medicines)

Possible side effects and things to watch for

LOOK OUT FOR SIDE EFFECTS

Ask what side effects your medications can cause and watch for them. Tell your healthcare professional as soon as possible about any problems.

Don't stop taking a medication without first checking with your healthcare provider.

Ask about Over-the-Counter Medications

OTC medications are sold at pharmacies, grocery stores, gas stations, or discount stores. You can buy these medicines on your own without a prescription. Examples of OTC medications include:

- Tylenol (acetaminophen) for pain or fever
 - Allegra (fexofenadine) for allergies
- Tums (calcium carbonate) for heartburn or calcium supplement

Some OTC medications can make your condition worse, cause side effects, or may interact with other medicines making them less safe or effective.

Also, some OTC medication labels are for younger people and do not contain

warnings for older adults. Be sure to ask your pharmacist about the correct dose of OTC medications for your use and careful not to take too much.

REVIEW MEDICATIONS WHILE IN THE HOSPITAL

If you are in the hospital, make sure the hospital care team knows about all the medicines you take at home. While in the hospital, this team will be responsible for giving you the medicines you need. Do not take any medications on your own.

Sometimes, you may get new medications during your hospital stay. Ask if you need to continue them and/or your home medicines after you leave the hospital.

WATCH FOR INAPPROPRIATE MEDICATIONS

Experts from the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) say that some medications may not be safe for older adults. So, older adults should avoid them or use them with caution

Whenever you or an older adult in your

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

care gets a new medication, ask why it's being prescribed. Ask if it is good for your age and health problems or if there might be a safer alternative.

Also talk with your healthcare professional about what to watch for while you use it.

"It's very important to remember that potentially inappropriate medications are just that – potentially inappropriate," said Dr. Donna Fick, a board certified gerontological clinical nurse specialist who has led expert panels with the American Geriatrics Society.

"They should be considered carefully, but that doesn't mean they're 'bad' in all cases or for all people. In fact, your health care providers are often in the best position to assess your medications, goals, preferences and health conditions to individualize what treatment options will work for you, so it's important to begin any decision-making process with them first," she added.

TAKE YOUR MEDICATION PROPERLY

As many as half of older adults don't follow their healthcare provider's recommendations about how to take their medications. For older adults, some issues include:

• Difficulty reading, understanding, or remembering directions on labels. The print may be too small or directions may be unclear.

• Healthcare providers not providing enough information about the importance of taking medications properly. For example, high blood pressure or cholesterol medicines are important to take, even though the conditions often don't have symptoms.

What to do: Talk with your pharmacist

about directions when you pick up your medications.

• Trouble opening medicine containers.

What to do: Your pharmacist can give you a medication cap that is easy to open.

Medications being too expensive to buy.

What to do: Some drug companies have a patient assistance program to help those who cannot afford their medicines. There may

also be government programs that can help. Ask your healthcare professional or pharmacist. If you have trouble taking your medication or care for an older adult who has difficulties, discuss it with the healthcare provider. They may have solutions for you.

ABOUT HEALTH IN AGING

HealthinAging.org is a trusted source for up-to-date information and advice on health and aging, created by the American Geriatrics Society's Health in Aging Foundation.

Through the Health in Aging Foundation, "we advance a commitment to helping older adults and caregivers maintain health, independence, and quality of life," the website states.

HealthinAging.org features education materials for older adults and caregivers, as well as information on finding a geriatrics healthcare professional in your area. "These tools have been reviewed by geriatrics healthcare professionals and members of the American Geriatrics Society – a community of experts in the care we all need as we age."

For information, visit healthinaging. org.

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Bond between grandparents, grandkids benefits both

What used to be the "golden years" of life for seniors is now turning into any opportunity to spend even more time with their youngest family members.

Nowadays, a growing number of grandparents are called on to provide childcare for their grandkids, many of whom are growing up in two-income households. Others are helping to raise grandkids while providing financial assistance for adult children who may not be able to live on their own.

This trend has been corroborated in several studies. Information from the Pew Research Center showed nearly 8 million children in the United States were living in the same household as one of their grandparents in recent years.

A University of Chicago analysis of a decade of data based on interviews with more than 13,000 grandparents, ages 50 and older, found that 61 percent of provided at least 50 hours of care for their grandchildren during any given year.

A recent study for the MetLife Mature Market Institute and the nonprofit Generations United, an intergenerational policy group, found that 74 percent of respondents provided weekly childcare or babysitting service for grandkids.

Grandparents often cite helping their own children financially as well as staying in touch with grandchildren as motivating factors behind providing care.

According to Generations United, maintaining a regular connection with grandkids can give seniors a feeling of selfworth and improve their overall health.

When spending so much time together, grandparents may develop special relationships with their grandchildren, who may benefit from the knowledge and wisdom offered by their elders.

The following are some lessons grandparents can share with youngsters.

Empathy – By sharing stories of how things were when they were younger, when opportunities may have been more scarce, grandparents can help teach grandchildren empathy.

Grandchildren may learn to be grateful for the things they have and the people around them, rather than taking what they have for granted.

Family history – Grandparents can tell grandchildren about family members, including youngsters' own parents, and shed light on the generations that came before them.

Looking through photos or watching old movies can provide the avenue by which to start conversations about family history and give children opportunities to ask questions.

Interests – Children may be excited about learning new skills or hobbies taught to them by their grandparents.

Anything from gardening to woodworking can be shared.

Respect – Children who grow up respecting their grandparents may have an increased tendency to respect authority figures outside their homes.

That, of course, may help kids grow up to be more courteous and kinder.

Grandchildren also offer benefits to their grandparents.

Companionship, new experiences and conversation can help keep grandparents' minds sharp and bodies active well into their golden years. (METRO CREATIVE)

While the older generation has a wealth of knowledge to impart on the youth of today, the relationship between grandparents and grandkids is far from one sided. Spending time with grandchildren can help keep grandparents connected and sharp well into their golden years.



How CARDIO benefits your body

Physical activity is a key component of a healthy lifestyle, and an effective fitness regimen is one that combines strength training with cardiovascular exercise.

Recommendations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services urge adults to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity each week.

Aerobic activity includes cardiovascular exercises like hiking, running, dancing, cycling, or other activities that increase the heart rate and improve cardio-respiratory fitness.

Though cardiovascular exercise is often discussed in terms of its heart healthy benefits, the Cleveland Clinic reports that aerobic activities benefit various parts of the body, including the heart but

VA Contracted

* * * * * * * * *

also the brain, the joints, skin, and muscles.

CARDIO AND YOUR HEART

Routine cardiovascular exercise leads to a decrease in resting blood pressure and heart rate. That's beneficial for the heart because it ensures the heart does not have to work unnecessarily hard.

Cardiovascular exercise also improves good cholesterol levels and lowers blood fats, each of which also helps to improve heart health.

CARDIO AND YOUR BRAIN

The Alzheimer's Society reports that studies have shown that exercise that increases heart rate in middle-aged or older adults has led to

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Healthy eating can ward off illness, improve wellbeing

Diet and exercise are the key components of maintaining a healthy weight and protecting against chronic disease, especially as we age.

According to the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, eating smart and being active have similar effects, including reducing risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, some cancers, and diabetes.

In addition, these healthy living strategies can improve personal appearance and improve overall wellbeing – helping people live longer and maintain their independence.

People may wonder how to eat better when faced with many diets, each of which promises great results. It can be confusing when navigating all of the options, and there is no magic formula to eating better.

Common sense can come into play when attempting to eat better, and individuals also can consider these strategies to make diet work for them as they seek to live healthier.

• Eat colorful, varied, nutritionally dense foods. Medical News Today says each meal should be 50 percent fruit and vegetables, 25 percent whole grains, and 25 percent protein.

Select an array of colorful foods that will provide most of the nutrients needed.

• Choose fiber-rich foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes are good sources of fiber.

Fiber helps people maintain digestive health and can help you to feel fuller longer, reducing the potential for overeating, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

• Note how you feel after eating. Create a food journal where you jot down notes about how you feel after eating certain foods. If you notice that certain foods or ingredients trigger adverse reactions, it may be worth avoiding that type of food or looking for an alternative.

Stomach upset or bloating after eating dairy, for example, may indicate an intolerance for lactose.

• Explore the Mediterranean diet. While you should avoid fad diets that often produce short-term but unsustainable results, a Mediterranean diet has stood the test of time.

According to the authors of a new study published in JAMA Network Open in October 2023, older adults with overweight or obesity and metabolic syndrome lost visceral fat (belly fat) and showed a greater reduction in the percentage of total fat while adhering to a Mediterranean diet. They also had delayed loss of lean body mass, which often comes with aging.

Mediterranean diets prioritize



Seniors can consider several strategies – such as choosing fiber-rich foods, controlling portion sizes, and keeping a food journal – to make diet work for them as they seek to live healthier and feel their best.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

legumes, seafood, vegetables, and "good" fats like olive oil.

• Control portion sizes. Sometimes it's not what you eat but how much you eat that affects health. Weighing and measuring food can help you control portions and understand how many calories you're consuming each day.

The National Institutes of Health says eating plans that favor 1,200 to 1,500

calories per day for women and 1,500 to 1,800 for men are good targets to lose weight at a healthy pace when combined with moderate exercise.

Balanced eating is a major component of a healthy lifestyle. While there are many fad diets, eating plans with a proven track record that are supported by the medical community may be your best bet.

(METRO CREATIVE)



If you or someone you love is dealing with a serious illness, it's important to know all of your options early - when it's a choice, not a necessity.

Nothing matters more at the end of life than having the time to say the things that need to be said, and do the things that need to be done.

The end of life is not a failed medical event. It is a special opportunity to care for the ones who have filled our lives with love and memories.

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Helping seniors maintain their independence

For most older adults, the ability to live independently is associated with the ability to drive. That's one reason the prospect of eventually "giving up the keys" can be a frightening one.

While about 600,000 older adults stop driving each year, many more modify their driving habits. Giving up the car keys greatly limits older adults' access to medical care, shopping and opportunities for socialization.

Older adults with access to public transportation often choose not to use it for various reasons, including distance to transit stops and concerns about safety.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing the mobility needs of older adults. Rather, community efforts must encompass a variety of approaches, including mobility management and travel counseling, safe driving programs and travel training, volunteer and assisted transportation programs, dial-a-ride and paratransit options.

To help, the experts on aging at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) developed a brochure called "Before You Give Up the Keys: Create a Roadmap for Transportation Independence."

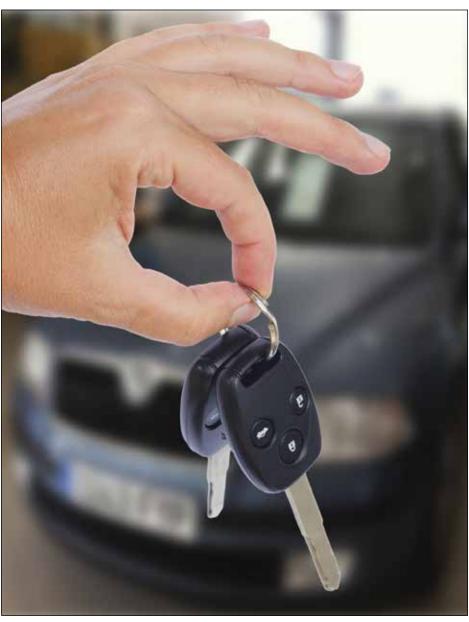
It includes tips on how to lessen those fears by empowering older adults to evaluate their mobility needs, identify the transportation options in their community and develop a plan customized to their unique circumstances.

"A too-familiar scenario is that older adults wait until they're involved in some sort of emergency, like a traffic accident, before they really think about their driving ability and the other transportation options available to them in their community," said n4a CEO Sandy Markwood.

"Our goal is to shed light on a critical issue that will likely affect most families with an older loved one who may need to limit or eliminate their driving, and to provide a catalyst for discussion, and hopefully, action," Markwood noted.

The n4a represents America's national network of hundreds of Area Agencies on Aging. It helps older adults and people with disabilities live with dignity and choices in their homes and communities for as long as possible.

To that end, it created the Eldercare Locator. This serves as an essential, trusted gateway to help older adults, caregivers and health professionals navigate the maze of aging programs and services, as well as to assist them in identifying and accessing the resources



Many older Americans fear giving up their car keys means giving up their independence, but this can be overcome.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

that match their needs best.

The National Call Center operates five days a week and can be reached at 1-800-677-1116 or eldercare.gov.

According to research by the Federal Transit Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, n4a and the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, the rise in the 65-plus population – some 45 million and growing – has triggered a corresponding spike in the number of non-drivers of more than 1.1 million in a recent 8-year period.

"This is a major issue for older adults because when they lack access to transportation, they can't get to the doctor, the grocery store or see friends and family as much, which means their overall wellbeing is likely to suffer," representatives said.

More resources

For more information and access to additional resources, visit usaging.org. To reach an Eldercare Locator, call 1-800-677-1116 or visit eldercare.gov.

CARDIO • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

improvements in thinking and memory and lower rates of dementia.

The Cleveland Clinic notes that cardio also decreases stroke risk by increasing blood flow to the brain.

CARDIO AND YOUR JOINTS

Osteoporosis is a condition in which bones become brittle and fragile from a loss of tissue. That tissue loss can be a side effect of aging, but even though the National Osteoporosis Foundation estimates that half of all women over 50 will develop osteoporosis, older adults are not helpless against the condition.

Cardiovascular exercise can help fight osteoporosis and reduce risk for hip fractures, according to experts. It's also important to note that men are not immune to osteoporosis, which has long been considered a more significant concern for women than men.

Though women's risk for osteoporosis is greater than men's, medical experts report that between 20 and 25 percent of all hip fractures occur in men.

CARDIO AND YOUR SKIN

Physical activity increases circulation, which the Cleveland Clinic reports leads to clearer, healthier skin. Cardio promotes



The Cleveland Clinic reports that aerobic activities benefit various parts of the body, including the heart but also the brain, the joints, skin and muscles. During the cold weather months, seniors are encouraged to look into places that offer indoor exercise options such as water aerobics.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

better blood flow to the skin cells on the face, which can reduce signs of aging and improve complexion.

CARDIO AND YOUR MUSCLES

Cardio increases oxygen supply to the entire body, and the Cleveland Clinic notes that allows muscles throughout the body to work harder and more efficiently.

In addition, routine cardiovascular exercise allows muscles to adapt to an increased workload, which can improve daily life by making routine physical activities easier.

Cardiovascular exercise is a key component of an effective fitness regimen. By committing to cardio, adults can benefit various parts of their bodies.

(METRO CREATIVE)



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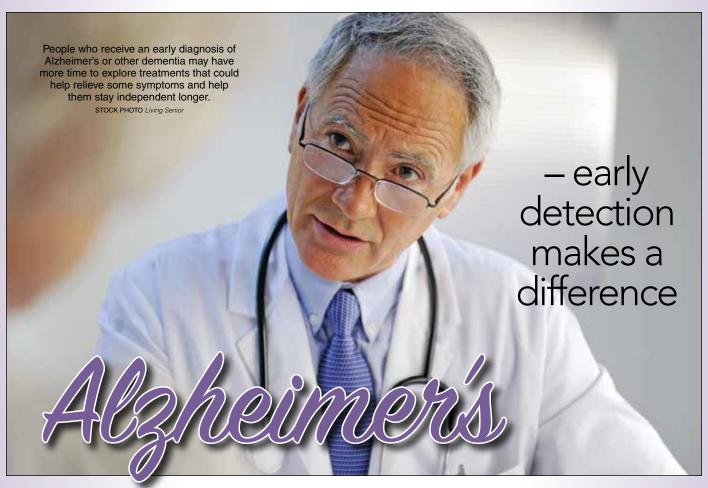
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It's the sixth-leading cause of death in the United States, affects millions of Americans and one out of every three seniors will die from it. Yet misconceptions surround Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

Contrary to what many people think about, it's not a normal part of growing older. And while there's not yet a way to prevent, cure or even slow the progression of the disease, people with Alzheimer's can benefit from early detection.

"Misunderstanding crucial facts about the disease can have consequences that can lead to stigma, delayed medical attention and inadequate support for caregivers," said Ruth Drew, of the Alzheimer's Association.

"Greater understanding of Alzheimer's is urgently needed given the dramatic impact of the disease. It devastates too many families for it to remain a mystery. We need everyone to know the truth about Alzheimer's so we can bridge current gaps and build greater support toward advancing treatments and finding a cure."

Common myths

Alzheimer's is most often associated with memory loss, but the truth is the disease can appear through a variety of signs and symptoms.

À progressive and fatal disease, Alzheimer's attacks the brain, killing nerve cells and brain tissue, which affects a person's ability to remember, think and plan. While the majority of people who have Alzheimer's are seniors, it can also affect people in their 30s, 40s and 50s – a form of the disease known as young-onset Alzheimer's. About 5 percent of people with the disease have younger-onset Alzheimer's.

Everyone, technically, is at risk of developing Alzheimer's, but certain groups have elevated risks; African-Americans are twice as likely as whites and Hispanics are one and a half times as likely to develop Alzheimer's.

Empowering information

Every 66 seconds, someone in the U.S. develops Alzheimer's, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Detecting the disease early may help the person with Alzheimer's, caregivers and loved ones in multiple ways.

People who receive an early diagnosis may have more time to explore treatments that could help relieve some symptoms and help them stay independent longer. They may be able to participate in a clinical drug trial to help advance Alzheimer's research.

Detecting Alzheimer's early can also give people with the disease, as well as their caregivers and loved ones more time to plan for the future.

Signs and symptoms

Only a doctor can accurately diagnose the disease, but the Alzheimer's Association has

developed 10 warning signs and symptoms that may help decide it's time to consult a physician, including the following:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
- Challenges in planning and solving problems.
 - Difficulty completing familiar tasks.
 - Confusion over time or place.
- Trouble understanding visual images or spatial relationships.
- New problems with spoken or written words.
- Misplacing things and not being able to find them by retracing movements.
 - Decreased or poor judgment.
- Withdrawal from others at work or in social situations.
 - Changes in mood or personality.

"If a person is having trouble doing something that they routinely did for years or they demonstrate a significant shift in personality that lasts over time – those are warning signs that need to be explored," Drew said.

"Too often people dismiss these changes as stress or having too much to do, but when they persist over time, it's best to get it checked out. Ignoring the situation is the worst way of handling it."

To learn more about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, including resources for caregivers, families as well as people living with the disease, visit the Alzheimer's Association website at www.alz.org.

Consider a home suited for retirement

Homes can be designed, renovated to better suit later years

When it's time to retire, do baby boomers just sit back and watch life pass them by? Not anymore. Boomers are known for getting involved in their communities, enjoying the outdoors and starting new – or restarting former – hobbies. They also love spending time with family.

This active lifestyle means boomers might not want to take care of the large homes they lived in for years while raising children. And if they do want to stay there, a renovation can at the very least make the space work better for this stage in life.

But many are ready to downsize, and want to design, or choose, their next home to be exactly what they need for their retirement years.

Downsizing into a new home – one that can adapt to boomers' changing needs as well as accommodate their occasional desire to entertain guests – is a great way to enjoy retirement in comfort and style.

And with the customizable features available, they likely won't regret downsizing at all.

Boomers can choose among a neverending list of features specifically designed for the active boomer. This will allow them to continue entertain – and enjoy their home space – throughout their prime years.

Consider the following customizable features available in homes today.

BRAGGING WALL

Every parent and grandparent loves to show off photos of their children and grandchildren.

A wall designed specifically for hanging photos, awards and other proud mementos gives parents and grandparents the perfect opportunity to share stories with visitors.

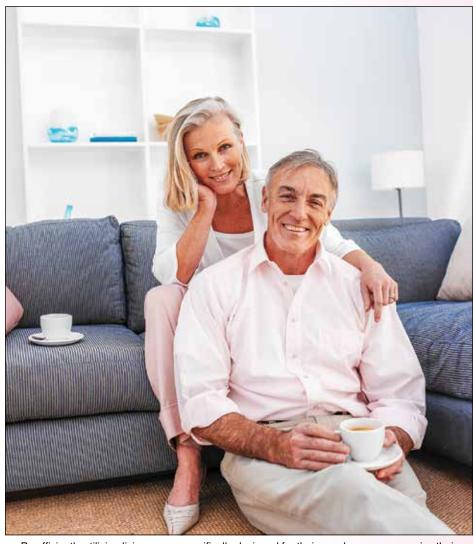
HIDDEN ENTERTAINMENT

When friends and family come over, consider how efficient it would be to have a built-in cabinet that flips open to serve as a beverage station, or opens to reveal an entertainment center.

It'll save space because when visitors are not around, tucking the beverage station or TV into a designated place will make the home more open.

ACCESSIBLE LAUNDRY

Placing laundry facilities close to the bedroom is great for baby boomers. The space doesn't need to be large, but



By efficiently utilizing living space specifically designed for their use, boomers can enjoy their retirement years in a home built to suit their new active lifestyles. And if remaining in their current home, a renovation can help make the space work better for their current lifestyle.

STOCK PHOTO Living Senior

sometimes when a small space is designed for laundry, you lose out on those wonderful additional features, such as drying racks.

Home builders have alleviated this issue by installing pull-out hanging racks or builtin storage above the machines and off the floor.

BEDROOM LUXURY

Enjoy a home that segregates the master bedroom and bath from the entertaining areas of the home.

One way to make this private space perfect is to install a beauty bar featuring a vanity station in the bedroom with a large mirror and chair so one can comfortably prep for the day without constantly standing.

FUN SPACE

Many retirees finally have the time to enjoy their hobbies to their full potential, and they'll need to designate a space in their new home to accommodate the activity.

Maybe they're interested in physical fitness and need a place for equipment.

Sometimes a craft room is required so the grandkids can come over and put their creativity to good use.

If entertaining is something they want to do, and having a separate room near the kitchen for those types of gatherings might just what's needed.

When considering your retirement home, there are many options available to have it built – or remodeled – to work best for your lifestyle.



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