

WebMD[®]

FOCUS ON

HEALTHY AGING: MIND & BODY

FIRST PERSON

Actor

WENDELL PIERCE

on prioritizing
the healing power
of performance,
prevention, and
self-care for the soul

page 16

LIVING
HEALTHY

Your
health
after 60

page 9

DISCUSSION
GUIDE

RSV: How
to lower
your risk

page 11



COMPLIMENTARY COPY
TAKE ONE HOME



SCAN ME

Access this guide
online. Use your
smartphone
camera to activate
the QR code.

FALL 2025



Cover and Contents Images: Photography by Michele Crowe/CBS; Grooming by Andrea Fairweather of Fairweather Faces

WebMD Focus On is not responsible for advertising claims. WebMD Focus On (ISSN 1553-9946) is published by WebMD LLC and may not be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission of WebMD LLC. All rights reserved. All editorial content is reviewed by our board-certified physicians, is for informational purposes only, and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. WebMD does not endorse any specific product, service, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your health care provider with any questions regarding a medical condition and never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read in a WebMD publication. If you think you have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately. 2025 WebMD LLC. All rights reserved.

14 HEALTH SMARTS

Exploring the chronic toll of
COPD and diabetes

16 FIRST PERSON

Actor Wendell Pierce prioritizes
the healing power of performance,
prevention, and self-care for the soul

20 HEALTHY HABITS

Daily nutrition and exercise

22 CARING FOR YOU

Your mental health

24 QUIZ

Take our healthy aging test



9



20

THE LATEST ON HEALTHY AGING: MIND & BODY

BEAT THE BLUES: FIND JOY IN GIVING BACK

Older adults are more likely to have multiple risk factors for depression, such as medical conditions, sleep problems, social isolation, and physical limitations. But there's a fun and rewarding way you can reduce your risk for depression starting today: volunteer! In a study of 2,990 older adults who still drove and still lived in their homes, those who were involved in some type of volunteering were 43% less likely than others to have depression. Giving back has great rewards.

SOURCE: *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*

7 to 9 How many hours of sleep you need every night for optimum health.

SOURCE: National Institute on Aging

1 in 7

Number of people worldwide who will be over 60 by 2030.

SOURCE: WHO

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVE

That RSV vaccine that your doctor recommended really works. Based on data from the last RSV season, the vaccine is 80% effective against RSV-related hospitalization and death in older adults. That's a highly effective vaccine—even more effective than the flu shot. The results come from an analysis of more than 28,000 medical records of older adults from various backgrounds. The study also found that the shot was 77% effective against ER visits and 73% effective against hospital admission in people with compromised immune systems.

SOURCE: *The Lancet*

REMEMBER THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Are you nostalgic? New research shows that both younger and older adults who are nostalgic have more close friends and work harder to maintain their friendships over time. That matters because friendships are critical to your health and overall well-being. The laughter, support, and relief from social isolation that close friends provide truly does your body good. Don't think you're so nostalgic? You may find yourself growing more nostalgic as you age, the study found, which might remind you just how valuable your friends are, so keep them close.

SOURCE: *Cognition and Emotion*



OLIVER ROSSI/VIA GETTY IMAGES

STATS & FACTS

By Sonya Collins
Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD,
WebMD Chief Physician Editor



1 in 4

Number of adults over age 60 who got the RSV vaccine last season.

2

How many days per week you should do muscle-strengthening exercise.

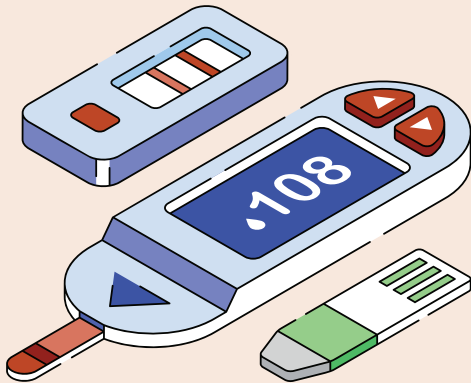


4 in 5

Number of adults over age 60 who have two or more chronic health conditions, such as COPD, heart disease, asthma, or diabetes.

3 in 4

Number of adults age 60 and over who say they are happy, making 60-plus the happiest age group.



2 in 5

Number of adults over age 60 who have obesity, which raises your risk for many chronic health conditions like diabetes and heart disease.



1 in 4

Number of older adults who fall every year. Staying fit and active prevents falls.

150

Number of minutes of moderate physical activity adults over 60 need every week—that's 30 minutes a day, five days a week.



SOURCES: CDC, National Council on Aging, Ipsos Happiness Index, Healthy People 2030



Don't let **RSV** cut short your cherished moments.

Anyone can get RSV. But adults 50+ with certain underlying conditions are at increased risk of severe infection from RSV.

What is **RSV**?



RSV is a type of respiratory virus that can cause infections of the lungs and respiratory tract



RSV infection can cause serious complications such as **pneumonia**



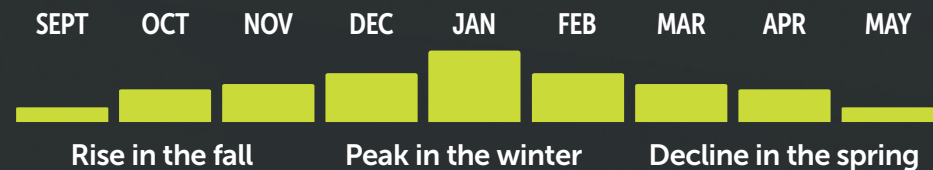
RSV infections can lead to **hospitalizations** for adults 50 and older with diabetes with complications, asthma, COPD, or CHF

COPD=chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
CHF=congestive heart failure; RSV=respiratory syncytial virus.

When is **RSV** season?

The seasonality of RSV can vary. Factors such as geographic location, population density, or even climate can impact RSV activity.

But for the majority of the United States, RSV cases tend to:



Don't take a chance. Ask your doctor today if you're at risk for severe RSV. See how to start the conversation on the next page. >



Learn about RSV prevention.
Scan the QR code to visit **RSVandMe.com**

50+ with certain underlying conditions?

It's time to talk to your
doctor about **RSV**.

GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED WITH THESE HELPFUL QUESTIONS:

- As someone 50+ with an underlying condition, should I be concerned about RSV?
- What is my risk of complications due to RSV?
- How could RSV impact my underlying condition?
- What can I do to help prevent RSV?



It only takes a minute. Discuss your risk and ask about RSV prevention at today's appointment.

Learn about RSV prevention.
Scan the QR code to visit **RSVandMe.com**



Trademarks are owned by or licensed to the GSK group of companies.

©2025 GSK or licensor.
NPUS-RVUJRNA250004 September 2025
Produced in USA.

GSK

YOUR HEALTH AFTER 60

These habits will keep you in top form for your next chapter

By Sonya Collins

Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

A healthy lifestyle is now more important than ever—to avoid chronic diseases or stay strong while living with one. These habits can go a long way in keeping you strong as you age. How many do you already practice?



DO CARDIO 3 TO 4 TIMES A WEEK

A cardio workout is anything that gets your heart pumping faster—brisk walking, biking, dancing. “Cardiovascular activity lowers blood pressure, reduces stroke risk, and improves mood,” says Kenneth Koncilja, MD, a geriatrician at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio.



DO RESISTANCE EXERCISE 3 TO 4 TIMES A WEEK

Resistance exercise means lifting weights or your own body weight, for example, with push-ups and squats. “This helps prevent muscle loss, loss of function, and eventually, loss of independence,” Koncilja says.



GET PLENTY OF PROTEIN

You need protein to help you hold on to muscle, too. Aim for at least 1 gram of protein per kilogram of body weight per day. If you weigh 150 pounds, that’s 68 kilograms, so you need 68 grams of protein. Focus on lean protein from a variety of sources.



MAKE DRINKING A RARE THING

Drinking and aging don’t mix. Both raise your risk for numerous health conditions. You can’t choose your age, but you can choose when to drink. “View it as a rare treat,” Koncilja says, “not a weekly or daily necessity.”



STREAMLINE YOUR MEDICATION LIST

Older adults are more likely to take medicines they no longer need. This can cause side effects or dangerous interactions with the prescriptions you do need. “Ask your doctor the plan for deprescribing unnecessary medications,” Koncilja says. “Both you and your provider should know why you are on each medication and the reason why you’d come off it in the future.”



RETHINK SCREEN TIME

While screen time might seem like a harmless pastime, Koncilja says, “It’s more likely to sedate rather than activate the brain.” Try to swap some screen time for more stimulating activities like reading a book or taking a walk.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY CARE

**Your first stop for treating
and preventing illness**

By Rachel Reiff Ellis

Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

You wake up with a fever and a sore throat. Who do you call? Answer: Your primary care physician. A few months later, it's time for your annual physical, flu shot, and prostate exam. Now who do you call? You guessed it—also your primary care physician.

A primary care physician (PCP) is the “point person” for your overall health. You see them for annual checkups, immunizations, and for treatment for illness and injury.

“Primary care is your first contact of care,” says Kathleen N. Mueller, MD, an integrative medicine specialist and board member of the American Academy of Family Physicians. “It's the person you should go to first to find out what's going on with you and also for prevention and wellness promotion.”

THE ROLE OF THE PCP

PCPs can provide a broad range of care, from diabetes to thyroid issues, orthopedic injuries, skin problems, depression, and more. And if your issue needs more specialized care, they know who to refer you to.

Another bonus to PCP care is accessibility, says Yul D. Ejnes, MD, an internal medicine doctor at Brown Health Medical Group in Rhode Island and board member of the American Board of Internal Medicine.

“We make sure our practices are set up so that people can get access to us in a relatively quick amount of time, as opposed to having to wait weeks or months to get seen,” Ejnes says.

A PCP's job is to continually steer you toward your healthiest you, either by treating illness or providing preventative care to

keep you from getting sick. And the benefits of this model are big.

“We know that people who have a primary care provider have longer lives,” Mueller says. “There's less maternal mortality, less infant mortality, less use of emergency rooms and urgent cares, and overall, generally better health.”

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Medical care from a PCP is particularly valuable because—ideally—they learn your lifestyle and health patterns over time.

“It's having that knowledge, not just about your medical conditions, but what you do for a living or how well off you are in terms of economics,” Ejnes says. “You learn a lot about people seeing them for a blood pressure check every six months.”

The relationship you build with your PCP, especially if it's long term, goes beyond a medical knowledge of lab results and supports whole health.

“If I know your history, if I know your mom, or I take care of your dad and I know your family history and I know you and what you need from me, it's going to be way easier for me to help guide you through the system and also give you the most appropriate care,” Mueller says. “It's that trusted relationship that really helps people to make a change to be healthier.”

WHO ARE PCPs?

**These are some of the doctors you
might see for primary care:**

- + Internal medicine doctors (adults)
- + Family medicine doctors (all ages)
- + Pediatricians (birth to 21)
- + Geriatricians (65 and older)
- + Obstetricians/gynecologists (women's health, pregnancy)

RSV: HOW TO LOWER YOUR RISK

Learn what you can do to prevent severe respiratory illness

By Kendall K. Morgan

Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor



Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common cause of respiratory infection. You've probably had RSV without knowing it before. But the risks that come with RSV infection grow as you get older.

"While many people think RSV only affects babies, it certainly can affect all ages, particularly older adults should be aware that it can potentially cause serious illnesses," says Anthony Leung, DO, an infectious disease specialist at Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. "For adults over age 60, particularly those with underlying chronic conditions such as heart and lung diseases, RSV can exacerbate these conditions and make them worse. Many people are

hospitalized, and some cases could be fatal."

PREVENTIVE TIPS

There are many simple steps you can take to protect yourself against RSV and other viruses that may be going around. Wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, and steer clear of other people when they're sick as much as you can. Leung also recommends cleaning "high touch" surfaces often, including doorknobs, countertops, switches, and handles.

GET VACCINATED

It's always a good idea to stay up to date on your vaccines. The CDC now recommends the RSV vaccine for people starting at age 50. It's especially important to get it if you are 60 or older and have more risk for severe RSV. Studies have shown the RSV vaccine can prevent more severe illness and hospitalization related to RSV in adults age 60 and up.

"Do not underestimate RSV," Leung says. "Even mild cold-like symptoms can progress to severe illness and exacerbate one's underlying conditions. Discuss with your health care provider and see if the vaccine is right for you."

PRIORITIZE YOUR PROTECTION

It's especially important to get an RSV vaccine when you have a compromised immune system or other chronic conditions, such as:

- + Chronic cardiovascular disease, including heart failure or coronary artery disease
- + Chronic lung or respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, or asthma
- + Advanced kidney disease
- + Diabetes with complications
- + Neurologic or neuromuscular conditions that make it harder to clear your airways
- + Chronic liver disease
- + Severe obesity
- + Chronic blood conditions, such as sickle cell disease or thalassemia

BE PROACTIVE WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Make health a priority as you age

By Rachel Reiff Ellis **Reviewed by** Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

Nearly 95% of Americans ages 60 and older have at least one chronic condition, while 79% have two or more. Luckily, there are preventative habits and smart management practices you can start today to help you age well, even with chronic conditions.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

According to the National Council on Aging, the most common chronic condition in older adults is high blood pressure (hypertension). High cholesterol is close behind. Obesity, arthritis, heart and kidney disease, diabetes, heart failure, depression, and dementia (including Alzheimer's disease) round out the top 10.

"All of these medical issues can snowball into bigger problems without regular check-in with a health care provider," says Tanya Gure, MD, section chief of geriatrics at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center in Columbus.

If you haven't already, now's the time to hone your diet, move your body, get good sleep, and practice stress-relief strategies.

"I recommend maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats," says Maria Teresa Anton, MD, an endocrinologist at Pritikin Longevity Center in Miami, FL.

Your body needs specific activities to stay strong and healthy, including cardio (walking, swimming), strength training, and balance and stretching moves.

"The importance of having a regular exercise routine

cannot be overstated," Gure says. "It is the magic bullet in preventive care and essential to successful aging."

CATCH ISSUES BEFORE THEY START

Make an appointment for an annual physical with your doctor and stick to it. Many of the most common chronic conditions start slowly with warning signs you may not notice or recognize. Regular screenings at these exams can find issues early and help you course correct with lifestyle changes or treatment.

Your doctor will keep tabs on your blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes at these visits. Other clinics will be key for eye care, ear care, and cancer screenings, too.

"Cancer screenings are vital for aging patients as the risk of developing certain cancers increases with age," Anton says. "Early detection through regular screenings—colonoscopy, mammogram, Pap smear, lung cancer screening, prostate screening—can identify cancer at more treatable stages, improving the chances of successful outcomes."

You should see an eye doctor every other year before 65 and at least once a year after that.

Common eye conditions that crop up with age include glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration.

Screening for hearing loss not only helps catch problems early but also helps prevent other issues hearing loss can lead to, such as depression, Anton says.

"Hearing screening is crucial for aging patients as it helps detect early hearing loss, which can improve com-



PEAKSTOCK/VIA GETTY IMAGES

munication, prevent social isolation, and enhance overall quality of life,” she says.

Women over 50 should also focus attention on their bone health to help prevent osteoporosis.

“Bone density screening may start in middle age for women and men if there are risk factors that might cause increased bone loss, like smoking, steroid use, or hormone problems that can affect bone metabolism,” Gure says.

AT RISK

Tanya Gure, MD, shares factors that increase your chances of worsening chronic conditions—or getting one.

- + **Obesity**
- + **Poor diet**
- + **Sedentary lifestyle**
- + **Misuse of alcohol, marijuana, or illegal drugs**
- + **Using tobacco**
- + **Lack of preventative care**

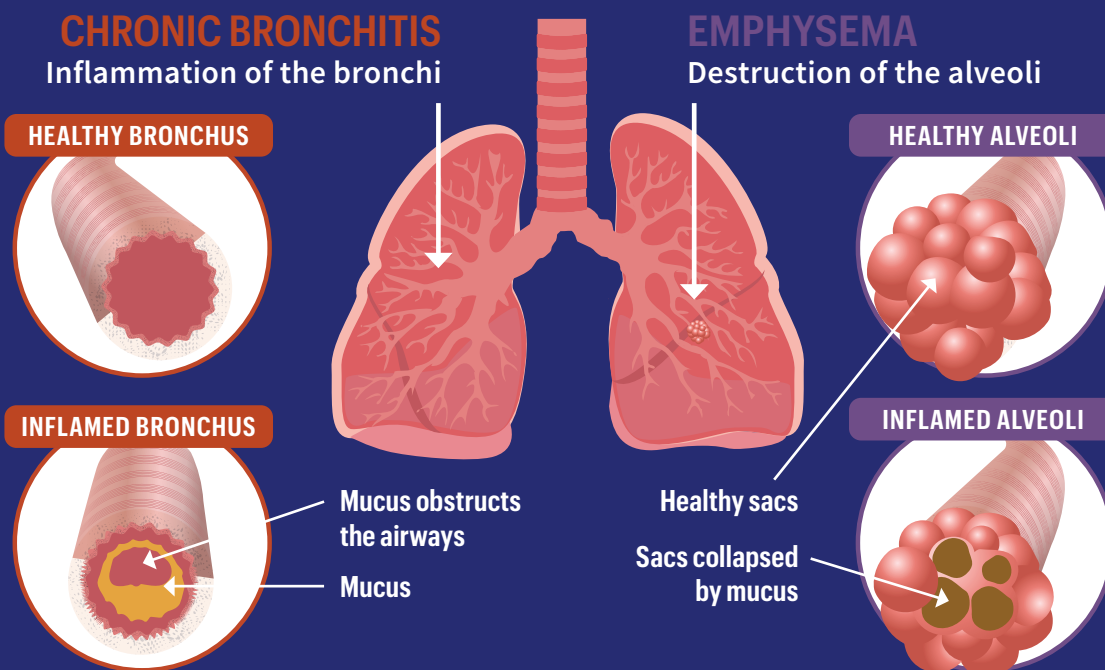
AN INSIDE LOOK

Exploring the chronic toll of COPD and diabetes

By Rachel Reiff Ellis Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

WHAT IS COPD?

Learn more about this damaging lung disease.



SYMPTOMS

Swelling and irritation block (obstruct) your airways. These symptoms typically get worse over time, especially if you still smoke or are exposed to triggers. The most common include:

- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Cough that produces mucus
- Swelling in feet and ankles

PREVENTION

- Stop smoking
- Avoid pollutants
- Get vaccinated

HOW COPD BLOCKS AIRWAYS

The two main types of COPD are emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

- Emphysema damages air sacs (alveoli) in the lungs enough that they eventually rupture, reducing the area available for oxygen/carbon dioxide exchange during breathing. Old air gets trapped, making it hard for new air to enter.
- Chronic bronchitis causes irritation and inflammation in your airways and makes excess mucus that causes persistent coughing for several months of the year. You're at a higher risk of lung infection when you have chronic bronchitis.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF DIABETES

How poorly managed blood sugar can harm your health over time and lead to chronic conditions.



BRAIN

Over time, diabetes can narrow your blood vessels, increasing your risk of stroke.



EYES

Diabetes damages blood vessels in the eye, increasing your chances of cataracts, glaucoma, and even blindness.



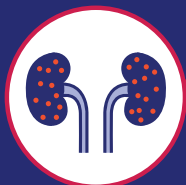
HEART

You're more likely to have coronary heart disease, angina (chest pain), and a heart attack if you have diabetes.



ORAL HEALTH

The most common oral complication of diabetes is gum disease.



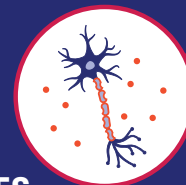
KIDNEYS

Diabetes harms the filtering system in your kidneys that gets rid of waste in your blood, making kidney problems a concern.



BLOOD VESSELS

High blood glucose levels cause fatty deposits to form inside blood vessels, which over time make them narrow and hard, slowing blood flow.



NERVES

Diabetic neuropathy is the term used for nerves damaged by diabetes, and it's most common in legs and feet.



FEET

Damaged nerves and poor blood flow can cause foot complications such as pain, ulcers, and weak bones.

FIT for the ROLE

Wendell Pierce on nourishing
body and spirit, and the healing
power of performance

By Rachel Reiff Ellis

Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

Name any genre and Wendell Pierce has embodied it on either stage or screen. From the comedic Captain Wagner in the CBS sitcom hit *Elsbeth*, which just returned for its third season, to the heroic Perry White in this past summer's blockbuster *Superman*, to the tragic Othello in the Washington D.C. Shakespeare Theatre Company's *Othello* next year, his list of credits is as deep and dynamic as ever.

With a career that spans four decades and counting, the Juilliard-trained actor shows no signs of slowing his roll—or roles. With Marvel's *Thunderbolts*, *Jubilee*, a musical based on Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*, and Spike Lee's *Highest 2 Lowest* in his rearview mirror, 2025 was a “summer of movies and a season of theater.” He takes great pride in his diversity and breadth of work, which he has carefully cultivated with intention.

“I never work just to work,” Pierce says. “It has to bring some fulfillment in my mind. That’s the career and the body of work that you want to create.”

At 61, Pierce has not only talent but experience on his side in these creative pursuits. And while that experience brings a deeper sense of purpose and self, Pierce will be the first to admit that these attributes don’t eradicate doubt or prevent crises of faith.

Courage is acting in the face of fear, not in the absence of it,” Pierce says. “So while I may sometimes wonder if my best days may be behind me, I also challenge myself to make sure that they aren’t.”

MEETING THE PHYSICAL CHALLENGE OF THE CRAFT

Playing a wide range of roles demands a high level of emotional and physical commitment. Theater roles are a great workout, Pierce says—one where you leave with more energy than you started with.

People say, ‘Man, after those three hours on the stage, I can’t believe you’re not fatigued,’” he says. “But even though you expend an incredible amount of physical and mental effort during the



Wendell Pierce and his partner, actress Erika Woods, are seen in 2024 at the Critics Choice Association's 7th Annual Celebration of Black Cinema & Television in Los Angeles.

show, you have this electric energy and excitement afterward, no matter how depressing the plot may have been. It fills you.”

As he ages, he hopes to care well for the body, mind, and soul that allow him to be filled in that way again and again.

Routine and consistency with his physical activity help him stay in shape while juggling a “quixotic and ever-changing” schedule, he says. In 2025 alone, his work has taken him to Dubai, London, Anguilla, Los Angeles, and New York.

“It actually is advantageous for me to travel because when I travel, I am much more active—I hike and I swim,” Pierce says. “Activity is built into my schedule. I always feel so healthy.”

He tries to maintain that active spirit during his stretches at home in New Orleans, where he turns to group sports. Pierce says he loves to search out a pickup basketball game or a partner for tennis. But even when he can’t find a workout buddy, there’s one type of movement he’s regimented about: stretching.

“When it comes to aging, I find the stretching of my muscles and joints to be one of the most important habits I have,” Pierce says. “I’m more consistent with that than anything.”

**“When it comes to aging,
I find the stretching of my
muscles and joints to be one of
the most important habits
I have. I’m more consistent with
that than anything.”**

—Wendell Pierce



PRIORITIZING PREVENTION

Pierce cites his parents as great role models in his life, but in one aspect he also learned what not to do as he ages: sit still. His father, who died just shy of his 99th birthday, spent many of his later years sedentary.

“When my father retired, he said, ‘I’ve been working since I was 14 years old, and now I’m going to sit down and I’m not going to do anything,’ and he lived up to that,” Pierce says. “But I understood then that if someone didn’t have the resources that I had to help give him care around

the clock, he wouldn’t have lived as long as he had. It’s important to move.”

Nutrition plays a major role in his healthy living routine, too. Pierce says he finds he’s most nutritious when he cooks for himself with fresh fish and vegetables from the grocery store and isn’t eating out all the time.

“The act of cooking helps me eat better—and eat less,” Pierce says. “It’s a classic move. The chef is satisfied by the time the meal is prepared and others are eating. I taste as I cook, and I serve the meal satisfied.”



PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN; GROOMING BY ANDREA FAIRWEATHER OF FAIRWEATHER FACES

TENDING TO SPIRIT AND SOUL

As an actor, Pierce says he never subscribed to the idea of “putting a character away” so that his personal life would be kept separate from a character’s life. Until *Death of a Salesman*. As the protagonist, Broadway’s first Black Willy Loman, Pierce says he was faced with a new mental hurdle.

“It was an exploration of psyche that I had never experienced before,” he says. “It made me realize the importance of self-care.”

The practice of prioritizing his emotional well-being has continued to serve him in the different chapters of his life since. This past spring while filming the action-packed *Jack Ryan* in London, Pierce says he realized he felt better than he had in months. The physical demands of the role and the exercise they provided were only part of it—he noticed that his stress was lower than usual.

“I was relaxed, going to the theater every night, and no longer in the midst of the political turmoil of America,” Pierce says. “That’s when I truly understood what stress does to your body—how it raises cortisol. I now prioritize stress relief as part of my health.”

As a native New Orleanian, Pierce knows that nourishing your mental health doesn’t mean avoiding grief or pain, but instead holding fast to your center so you can act with compassion for yourself and others.

After Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Pierce had one of his most powerful artistic experiences: On a stage in the devastated Lower Ninth Ward of his beloved New Orleans, he performed *Waiting for Godot*.

“I stood on that hallowed ground and said the lines, ‘So at this place, in this moment of time, all mankind is us. Let us do something while we have the chance before it’s too late,’” Pierce says. “It was cathartic. That line was emblematic of where we were—and it helped me and my community

to rebuild our community of Pontchartrain Park, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Brick by brick, house by house, block by block, we did it. That’s the power of art. It inspired us to rebuild.”

Those experiences have helped Pierce see what to focus on and what to move away from as he gets older.

“It’s easier for me now to put healthy aging into work with better nutrition, more discipline when it comes to physicality, and a healthy mental journey, which is vitally important with aging,” he says, “whether you get that through your faith, or a solid understanding of where you are, or a better understanding of what the important things in life are. For me, I don’t let the day end without saying, ‘What is it that you want to do in this moment?’ And then I do it.”

WENDELL’S TIPS

How to keep your health at the forefront as you age.

- + **Keep up with screenings.** Now that I’m in my 60s, I’m deliberate and disciplined about blood work and checkups.
- + **Find a doctor you trust.** For many Black men, that means finding someone within your community who will see you and listen to you.
- + **Listen to your body.** You know what affects your body and how, so pay attention and make choices based on what it’s telling you.

DAILY NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

How to support your health and stay strong as the years go by

By Kendall K. Morgan **Reviewed by** Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

As you get older, staying active and eating well helps you stick to a healthy weight, lower your health risks, and generally feel better. Studies show many benefits of exercise with age, says Luigi Ferrucci, MD, a geriatrician and epidemiologist at the National Institute on Aging in Bethesda, MD.

“Those who exercise not only have better physical function, better balance, and less risk of falls, but they also tend to have less chronic disease” such as heart disease and diabetes, he says. “They have less decline of their muscle strength. So, really, exercise is key to healthy aging.”

EXERCISE GUIDELINES

CDC guidelines advise at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. Be sure to include a range of activities to get your heart and breathing rate up while also working your muscles and improving your balance.

It's OK to start small, Ferrucci says. Just taking a trip to the grocery store or working in the garden is better than sitting in the house all day, he says.

MAINTAINING YOUR STRENGTH

To stay up and about, good nutrition is essential. Pay special attention to how much protein you're getting, says Amanda Beaver, a registered dietitian nutritionist at Houston Methodist in Texas.

“When we get older, we tend to lose skeletal muscle each decade of our life,” Beaver says. “Newer research and a lot of nutrition experts are recommending a higher level of protein intake for older adults to help maintain the muscle that they have paired with strength training. Both of those really help us to hang on to the skeletal muscle that we have because it's so easy to lose it.”

BOOSTING B12

You've likely heard about the importance of calcium and vitamin D for bone health, Beaver says. But, she says, vitamin B12 doesn't get the attention it deserves.

“As we get older, our stomach doesn't produce as much stomach acid, and we

EXERCISES TO TRY

Some activities combine aerobics, muscle strengthening, and balance in one. Examples include:

+ Dancing

+ Yoga

+ Tai chi

+ Gardening

need that stomach acid to help us absorb vitamin B12,” Beaver says. “You might need a supplement to help ensure that your vitamin B12 levels don't get too low because you're absorbing less of it [from your diet] than when you were younger.”

When vitamin B12 levels drop too low, you may get anemia. Over time, it also can put your brain function at risk, she says. You get vitamin B12 in your diet in animal products, including meats, fish, eggs, and yogurt.



TAILORED ADVICE

Older people also tend to lose their sense of thirst, Beaver notes. Make sure you're drinking water often even if you don't feel thirsty. To learn more about your unique nutritional needs as you get older and the best ways to fill them, Beaver recommends seeing a registered dietitian or nutritionist.

"We've gone to school to understand vitamins and minerals and supplements, and we really do have an expertise in that area," she says.

NUTRITION DOS AND DON'TS

For older adults, USDA dietary guidelines suggest limiting:

+ **Added sugar** + **Saturated fat** + **Salt**

But make sure you're getting enough:

+ **Potassium** + **Vitamin D** + **Dietary fiber**
+ **Calcium** + **Vitamin B12**

YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Stay connected and reach out for help

By Kendall K. Morgan Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

Many people ages 60 and up have at least one mental health disorder. Those mental health conditions, including depression and anxiety, come with more risk for disability and declining physical health as you age, says Judith A. Neugroschl, MD, a psychiatrist at Mount Sinai's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in New York City.

"Depression and anxiety are the most common mental health concerns in older adults, with major depression affecting somewhere between 4% and 14.5% of older U.S. adults," Neugroschl says. "But the prevalence of more mild depression is probably much, much higher."

In addition, about 1 in 3 older adults will have experienced significant anxiety, she says. Dementia or other cognitive disorders affect a growing percentage of adults over age 60, too.

REDUCING RISKS

To lower your risk for mental health concerns as you get older, take steps to improve your overall health, she says. This includes eating a balanced diet, exercising, and getting enough sleep.

Neugroschl says it's important to see your doctor regularly to catch any issues that may affect your health and mood early. For instance, she says, a "sluggish thyroid" can lead to mood changes.



SEEK SUPPORT

Don't underestimate the importance of keeping yourself socially connected and engaged with the world around you.

"Going to classes, volunteering for a cause, or pursuing a hobby can all be ways to meet new like-minded people or give your time more structure and

meaning," Neugroschl says.

When times are tough or you're feeling lonely, "don't hesitate to get some help," Neugroschl says. "Therapy, support groups, even talking to family and friends or spiritual counselors can help you get through difficult times."

ONLINE RESOURCES

For information and help with mental health concerns as you get older, explore resources at:

+ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) www.samhsa.gov/communities/older-adults

+ National Council on Aging (NCOA) www.ncoa.org/older-adults/health/behavioral-health/

+ National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/older-adults-and-mental-health

If you're in crisis, call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat anytime in English or Spanish at [chat.988Lifeline.org](https://chat.988lifeline.org).

Inclusion of these organizations does not constitute an endorsement by WebMD and no endorsement is implied.

looking to
STAY WELL
every day



Fuel Your Body with Good for You Ingredients



ECHINACEA

Beautiful flower traditionally thought to help your body's defenses



ROSE HIPS

Tart and tasty herb commonly used to help support your well-being

LEMONGRASS

Tasty herb commonly thought to be a supportive hand to your overall health



ELDERFLOWERS

Light colored flower traditionally considered to help support a healthy lifestyle



BIGELOW
BENEFITS

Redefining Wellness
EVERY DAY

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

Take our healthy aging test to find out

By Kendall K. Morgan

Reviewed by Neha Pathak, MD, WebMD Chief Physician Editor

1. As you get older, exercise can protect you from heart disease, osteoporosis, respiratory illnesses, and depression.

☐ True

☐ False

2. Age 60 is a good time to get a vaccine to protect you against RSV, a common respiratory virus that's more dangerous for older people.

☐ True

☐ False

3. Hearing aids could lower your risk for dementia.

☐ True

☐ False

4. Staying meaningfully engaged with other people may be one of the best ways to protect your health as you get older.

☐ True

☐ False

5. Car accidents are the leading cause of injury and injury-related death for adults age 65 and up.

☐ True

☐ False



ANSWERS:

1. TRUE. Studies have shown a wide range of benefits from exercise in older people. Aim for a blend of aerobics, strength training, and balance exercises.

2. TRUE. The RSV vaccine is recommended for all adults starting at age 60. It's an especially good idea to get it promptly when other chronic health conditions increase your risk for severe RSV illness.

3. TRUE. Studies in older adults have shown hearing loss makes dementia more likely, and hearing aids can slow the decline.

4. TRUE. Social isolation and loneliness come with more risk for high blood pressure, obesity, depression, dementia, and more. Staying socially connected is key to healthy aging.

5. FALSE. Among older people, falls are the No. 1 cause of injury and injury death. Talk to your doctor about ways to protect yourself from falling.

MASKOT/VIA GETTY IMAGES