

It's a new year and a time many of us set some new goals for ourselves. If you age 65 or older, your goals to eat better, exercise more, and over all get healthier may be similar to goals you have set in years past. However, you may be looking at a different way to achieve those goals. HealthinAging.org has provided a few tips including:

- Eating better. In later life you still need healthy foods, but fewer calories. Look at the USDA's Choose My Plate program to help you make better choices. Consult with your health care provider to ensure a proper diet.
- Be active. Physical activity can be safe and healthy for older adults – even if you have heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis. In fact, many of these conditions get better with mild to moderate physical activity. Exercises such as tai chi, water aerobics, walking, and stretching can also help you control your weight, build muscles and bones, and improve balance, posture, and mood. Check with your insurance plan to see if you are eligible for the Silver Sneakers program which can provide access to local fitness centers and online classes. Watch for the Fit and Fall Proof exercises class to begin again in the Spring. Visit EIPH.idaho.gov for more information.
- See your provider regularly. You should schedule an annual Medicare wellness visit with your healthcare provider. Schedule it around your birthday month so it is easy to remember and discuss health screenings and any changes in your advance directives. Remember to talk to your provider about all the medications you are taking and if you still need them. Find out if you should be getting any new or booster immunizations/vaccines.
- Quit smoking. It's never too late to quit. You can still reduce your risk of many health problems, breath easier, have more energy, and sleep better if you quit smoking. Visit mypathidaho.org to find a local quit specialist to help you at no cost to you.
- Toast with smaller glasses. Excessive drinking can make you feel depressed, increase your chances of falling, cause trouble sleeping, interact with your medications, and can contribute to other health problems. The recommended limit for older men is no more than 14 drinks per week and for older women, no more than 7 per week.

- Guard against falls. One in every three older adults falls each year and falls are a leading cause of injuries and death among older adults. Exercises such as walking or working out with an elastic band can increase your strength, balance, and flexibility and help you avoid falls. Eliminate items in your home that are easy to trip over, like throw rugs. Insert grab bars in your bathtub or shower and install night lights so it's easier to see at night.
- Give your brain a workout. The more you use your mind, the better it will work. Reading is a good choice. Socializing also gives your brain a boost. Look for community education courses – some offer free classes for adults 65 and older.
- Speak up when you feel down or anxious. About 1 in 5 older adults suffers from depression or anxiety. Some possible signs of depression can be lingering sadness, tiredness, loss of appetite or pleasure in doing things you once enjoyed. You may also have difficulty sleeping, worry, irritability, and wanting to be alone. If you have any of these signs for more than two weeks, talk to your healthcare provider and reach out to family and friends.
- Get enough sleep. Older adults need at least 7 or 8 hours of sleep a night. Avoid daytime naps, which can keep you up in the evening. Visit the National Sleep Foundation's website for more tips on how to sleep better.
- Reconsider vitamins. Many older adults do not need vitamins and nutrition supplements. Consult your healthcare provider if you have any issues or concerns about your health.

Decide on one or two of the items listed and start working toward a healthier 2021.

