

How to Maintain Your Independence: Answers for Seniors

Presented by
Great Oaks Management

Independence is Key for Senior Adults

- * Today's senior adults value their independence more than any other generation in America.
- * Seniors feel that they need to be responsible for themselves and not a burden on others, especially their families.
- * Seniors feel a sense of duty to take care of themselves and remain independent.

What are the Biggest Threats to a Senior Adult's Independence?

- * Poor nutrition
- * Weight loss
- * Medication non compliance
- * Falls

Independence Threat: Poor Nutrition

- * Poor nutrition is much more common in senior adults affecting 20-50%
- * Causes of poor nutrition include: side effects of medications, dental or denture issues, financial issues, physical limitations, Cooking is too much trouble, decline in sense of smell and taste
- * Symptoms of poor nutrition: disoriented, increased forgetfulness, lightheadedness, lack of energy, weight loss

Independence Threat: Poor Nutrition

- * Eat at least three meals a day, or may eat 4-5 smaller meals rather than 3 large meals.
- * Don't eat empty calorie snacks, eat snacks high in protein
- * Weigh at least once monthly, weekly if losing weight
- * See your MD to see if any medications could be causing lack of appetite
- * Visit senior centers, sign up for meals on wheels or other meal support programs.

Independence Threat: Weight Loss

- * 15-20% of senior adults lose weight
- * Senior adults who lost 5% of their total body weight are 4 times more likely to develop serious health problem or die within 6 months of weight loss
- * Senior adults who lost 5% of their total body weight are 80% more likely to fall, resulting in hip or other fracture, or brain bleed

Independence Threat: Weight Loss

- * Causes of weight loss in senior adults: cardiac problems, gastrointestinal problems, depression, medication side effects.
- * Tips to fight weight loss: high protein snacks, small frequent meals, nutritional supplements, see MD to evaluate medications as cause, appetite stimulant.
- * Weigh every week, same time each time, report continued weight loss to MD

Independence Threat: Medication Noncompliance

- * Not taking medications correctly affects 30-60% of all senior adults.
- * Causes include; financial, insurance won't cover medications, confusion over directions, multiple MD's prescribing medications, memory loss.
- * Problems caused by medication non compliance: hospitalization due to worsening medical problems, falls, fractures, hospitalizations due to medication overdose

Independence Threat: Medication Noncompliance

- * Take a list of all medications to the MD each visit.
- * Have MD review list of all medications before prescribing new meds
- * Use the same pharmacy for all prescriptions
- * Use medication set up systems and have a friend or relative set up meds
- * Call 911 immediately if taking too much of any one medication

Independence Threat: Falls

- * One in three senior adults in America falls every year
- * In senior adults, falls are the leading cause for both fatal and non fatal injuries
- * 30% of senior adults who fall suffer serious injuries such as hip fractures, and traumatic brain injuries
- * Once a senior adult falls, the fear of another fall will limit mobility and activity level.
- * 95% of all hip fractures are caused by falls

Independence Threat: Falls

- * Ways to prevent falls:
 - * Maintain weight, weight loss leads to falls
 - * Exercise, even chair exercises helps maintain muscle mass
 - * Have eyes checked, wear glasses if needed
 - * Have MD check all medications and try to limit those which may cause dizziness
 - * Wear well fitting shoes, remove area rugs
 - * Keep all pathways in home clear of obstacles
 - * Use assistive devices (walker, cane) when ordered by MD