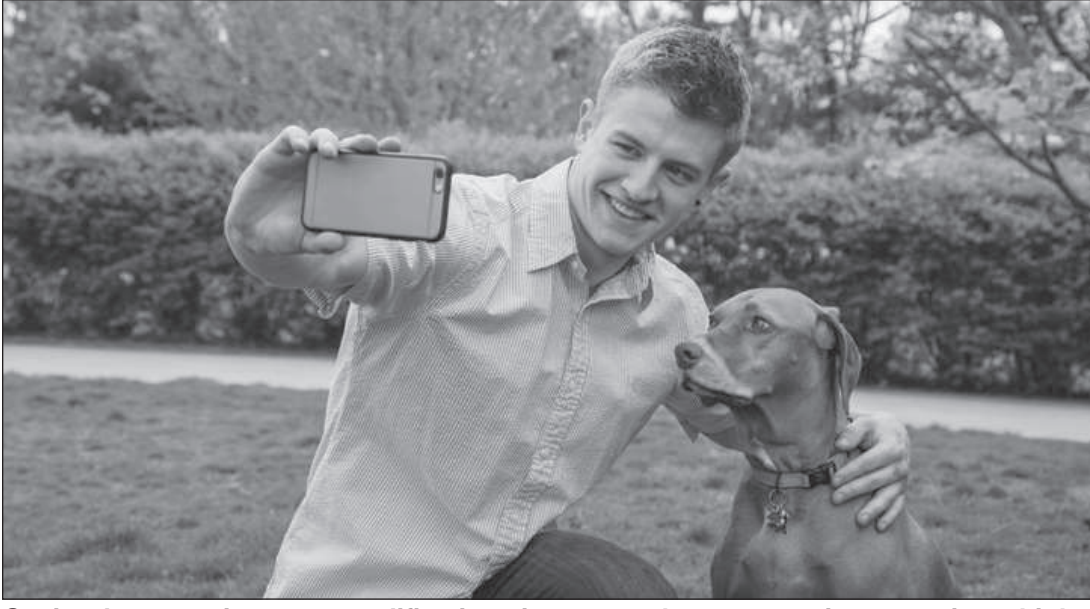


Living 50 Plus

How to care for your senior dog



Senior dogs require some modifications in care so they can continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

Dogs mature at faster rates than human beings. While many have heard the rule that every human year equals seven dog years, the reality isn't so cut and dry. Size and breed play roles in determining a dog's age equivalent. According to the pets division of WebMD, the first year of life for a dog may be roughly equivalent to 15 years for a human. Dog food manufacturer Purina says that by its tenth year alive, a small, medium and large dog is 56, 60 and 66 in human years, respectively.

Thanks to advancements in veterinary care, dogs are living longer lives. Pet owners may have to adapt their care and exercise regimen to accommodate the changes in their pets. Senior dogs show some distinctive signs of aging that are on par with what humans experience. These include cloudy eyes, gray hair (in dogs this starts around the muzzle and spreads to other areas of the face, head and body) and loose skin. Elderly dogs also may begin to experience stiffness in their legs, particularly the hind quarter. To

ensure a dog's quality of life remains consistent through its senior years, pet owners can take the following steps.

- Have a candid conversation with the vet. Make an appointment with your dog's veterinarian to discuss a plan for making the dog comfortable and happy as the animal ages. Your vet can make recommendations regarding which type of foods the dog should eat and how much exercise it needs.

- Make accommodations based on disability. A dog may develop arthritis or another degenerative disease that causes a general slowing down. Dogs may not be able to walk as far or play games as long as they used to. Some dogs also struggle to find a comfortable position when attempting to lie down or sit. Dogs also may have difficulty getting up and down stairs. As a result, aging dogs may need some extra help getting around. Invest in ramps and ergonomic pet beds and bowls to help ease aging dogs' discomfort.

- Examine and modify dogs' diets. Food needs can change

as dogs become less active. Keeping dogs lean can prevent a host of illnesses. PetMD says more than half of American pets are overweight, and obesity can contribute to disease and put stress on pets' joints. Let your vet be your guide in choosing high-quality, low-calorie foods and treats. He or she may also recommend supplementation to alleviate stiffness and address other needs.

- Keep up the exercise. Exercise helps slow down the degeneration of joints and helps keep dogs healthy. Continue walks, but pare them down if your dog can't keep up. Swimming is a low-impact exercise that is great for senior dogs. Look for a dog swim vest, which can help the animal maintain some buoyancy.

- Be patient. Elderly dogs will need extra care, and that can be taxing. Exercise patience and you will see that the pampering and extra attention will help prolong your dog's happiness through its golden years.

How seniors can simplify everyday tasks

The ability to perform everyday tasks is something many people take for granted. But as men and women approach or exceed retirement age, many may start to struggle with chores and tasks they have performed for decades.

Physical limitations are a common side effect of aging. But such limitations do not have to prove too big a hurdle for seniors to clear. In fact, there are many ways for seniors to simplify everyday tasks while maintaining their independence.

- Embrace technology. Even the proudest Luddites cannot deny technology's potential to make seniors' lives easier. Seemingly simple tasks like shopping for groceries and vacuuming a home can be difficult for seniors with dwindling or limited mobility. But seniors with Internet access in their homes can order their groceries online and then pick them up in-store or have them delivered, saving them the trouble of walking around the store. With regard to vacuuming, autonomous vacuum cleaners have removed the need to use traditional vacuum cleaners. Certain autonomous vacuums employ sensors to detect dirty spots on the floor, and these vacuums can even be

programmed to clean the home while residents are out of the house.

- Upgrade bathrooms. Tasks associated with personal hygiene also tend to be taken for granted until they become difficult. But a few simple bathroom alterations can help seniors safely navigate the bathrooms in their homes so they can maintain their personal hygiene without fear of injury. Grab bars can be installed on shower walls so seniors can safely get in and out of their showers and bathtubs. Such bars are both effective and inexpensive, and some do not even require any drilling to install. Specialty grab bars, tub grips and tub transfer benches are just a few additional products that can make bathing easier for seniors who have lost or are starting to lose some of their physical strength.

- Get "smart" on the road. Seniors who are experiencing mild difficulty driving can make getting about town that much easier by plugging their smartphones into their vehicles or making use of the various apps that have become standard in modern vehicles. For example, the maps app on a smartphone can be connected to a car and direct seniors to their destinations,

saving them the trouble of remembering all the ins and outs of how to get a particular destination. Seniors also can employ apps to help them find their vehicles should they forget exactly where they parked in crowded parking lots. Such apps can increase seniors' comfort levels on the road while helping them maintain their independence.

- Downsize. Whether downsizing to a smaller home or simply downsizing a lifestyle, seniors may find that living smaller is akin to living simpler. Empty nesters may find they no longer need several bedrooms in their homes, and moving into smaller homes can reduce their daily workloads while also clearing out clutter that can make performing everyday chores more difficult. Men and women accustomed to hustle and bustle may also find that cutting back on professional and/or personal commitments gives them more energy for everyday activities while enriching the commitments they continue to maintain.

Aging men and women can employ various strategies to simplify their lives and maintain their independence well into their golden years.

Seniors and exercise: Tips to avoid injuries, get healthy

Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Daily exercise can improve mood, promote an active lifestyle and reduce a person's risk for a host of ailments, including diabetes and heart disease.

Despite the importance of exercise, many people live sedentary lifestyles into their golden years. Seniors who want to embrace a healthier way of life and get more physically active should first consult with their physicians before beginning an exercise regimen. Certain medications may limit just how far seniors can push themselves, while preexisting conditions may make specific types of exercise off limits. After discussing their limitations with their physicians and developing a safe exercise routine, seniors can heed the following tips to avoid injury but still get healthy.

- Pick a partner. Whether it's a spouse or a friend who is physically active or wants to be, try exercising with a partner, at


least initially. Doing so can provide the motivation you need and partners can serve as safety nets should you need assistance completing an exercise or suffer an injury and require medical attention. Personal trainers can serve as your partner, and many gyms offer discounts to seniors on personal training services.

- Start slowly. Seniors who have not been physically active for some time should take a gradual approach to exercise. Instead of heading right for the treadmill, exercise bike or elliptical machine, start walking every day. When it rains, find a treadmill you can walk on. The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons recommends seniors begin by determining how many steps they can take in a day and then gradually working toward 10,000 to 15,000 steps per day. Utilize step counting apps on your smartphone to track your progress. Apply the same slow approach to strength training exercises, lifting only

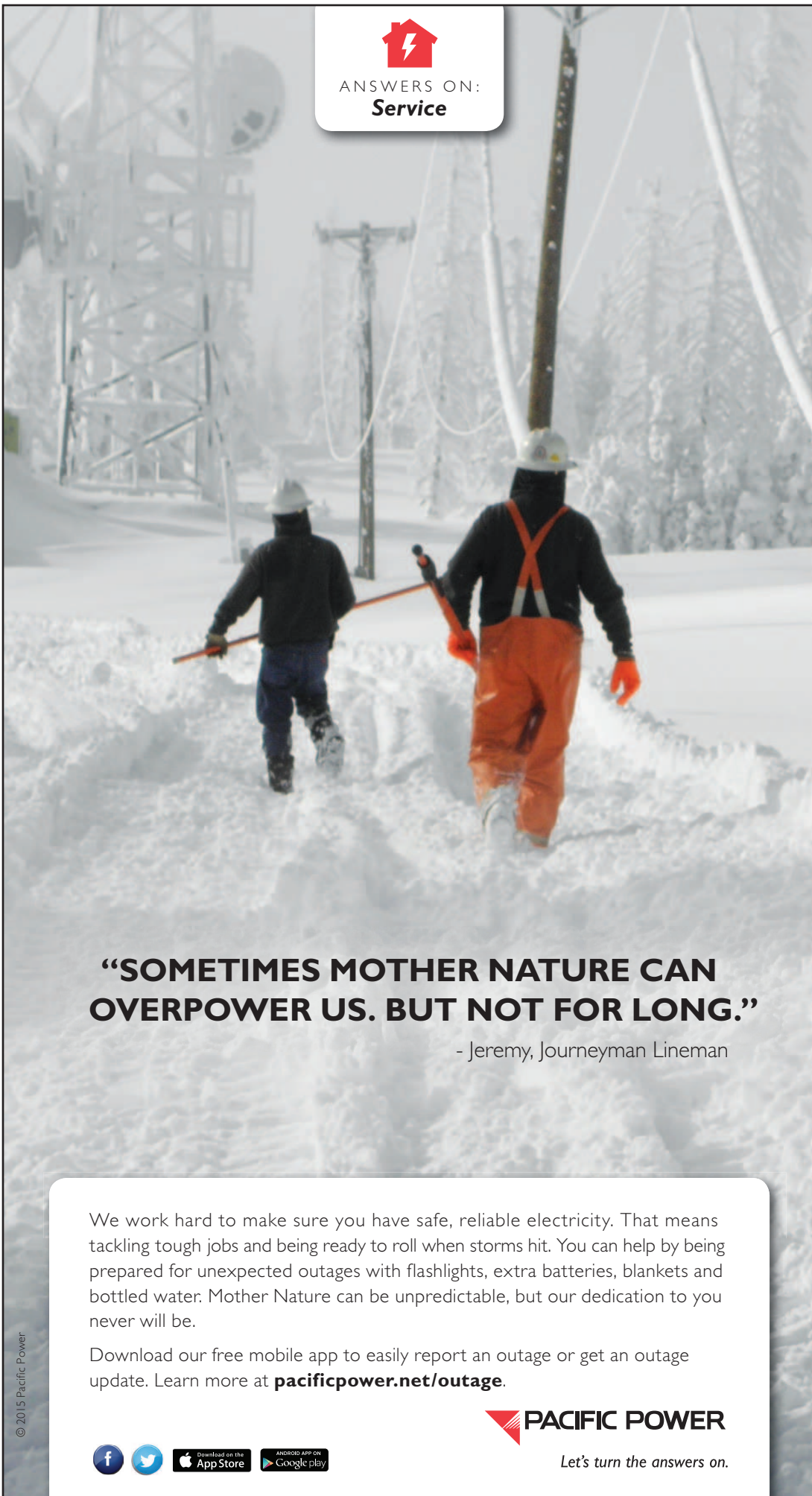
very light weights at first before gradually increasing weight as your body acclimates to the exercises.

- Stretch. Bodies that have been inactive for lengthy periods of time are inflexible, and lack of flexibility increases your risk for injury. The AAOS recommends that seniors warm up their bodies before stretching with five to 10 minutes of low-intensity activity such as walking. Then stretch gently, remembering to relax and breathe during each stretch.

- Switch things up. When strength training, do not work the same muscle group two days in a row. Muscles need time to recover. If you prefer circuit strength training where you exercise various muscle groups in one day, do not strength train on back-to-back days, leaving at least one day in between strength training sessions so muscles have ample time to recover.



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