

# BOOMERS & BEYOND

## How to travel even if you have limited mobility

Many people dream of traveling the world in retirement. Such dreams come true every day. But many more retirees or people nearing retirement fear that their dreams of seeing the world won't be possible due to mobility issues beyond their control. Thankfully, such fears are largely unwarranted.

Various conditions can affect men and women's mobility. Many such issues tend to arise after age 50, prompting many people to believe their post-retirement travel plans will never come to fruition. Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD; and heart disease may make it hard for people to travel. But that difficulty doesn't mean aging men and women should resign themselves to a sedentary lifestyle. Though they might require a little extra effort be-

fore boarding a plane for parts unknown, the following are a handful of ways that aging men and women with limited mobility can reap the rewards of traveling.

- Contact airlines or other transportation companies if you require special accommodations. The U.S. Department of Transportation notes that passengers are generally not required to provide advanced notice for disability-related accommodations. However, it makes sense to provide such notice anyway. By doing so, men and women with limited mobility can ensure they will have adequate assistance during their trips. When made aware of passengers' mobility issues, airlines or other travel companies may arrange for wheelchairs to be available at the gates or train platforms so passengers can easily make



connecting flights and trains. In addition, advance notice gives companies a chance to provide seating accommodations that can make for a more enjoyable trip.

- Contact security agencies. Security is part of modern travel, so travelers, especially those traveling by air, should expect to go through security checkpoints during their trips. Travelers with limited mobility should contact the security agencies in their home country as well as those in any country they plan to visit to get an idea of what they can expect. Knowing these guidelines in advance can help people with limited mobility determine if

they should arrive extra early so they can make it through security checkpoints in time to make their flights or trains.

- Contact hotels directly. Each country has its own laws regarding how to accommodate people with physical disabilities or mobility issues, so don't leave things to chance. Before booking a hotel room abroad, travelers with limited mobility should contact the hotel directly to confirm that it can accommodate their needs.

Men and women with limited mobility can still enjoy the wonders of travel, even if it requires some extra effort before embarking on their trips.

## Boomer & Senior News Line

By Matilda Charles

### Finding the Right Nursing Home

When it's time to find a nursing home for an elderly parent or your spouse, the decision can be the hardest part of the process. But it's not the only tough part. Gathering information can make the task even more difficult.

One source is Medicare's nursing home comparisons ([www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), then put nursing homes in the search box). Enter your ZIP code and you'll get an list of places within 25 miles. They'll each be rated with stars for health inspections, fire safety, staffing, quality of resident care and penalties.

Make special note of this last category; it can reveal a lot. Penalties can include the past three years of fines and denial of payments if the nursing home failed to correct a citation for health or fire safety. In a serious situation, a manager or state monitor might be called in to oversee the facility. Staffing is another big issue, especially if the nursing home

doesn't have enough employees. Medicare keeps track of how many registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, nursing aides and physical therapists are on staff, and how many hours per day are devoted to working with patients. RNs, for example, are in charge of the patient's overall care plan and supervise the other staff. Even having the right number of nursing aides per patient is critical to ensure that bathing, grooming, eating and more are managed for each patient.

What might be most crucial, however, is how you feel when you first walk through the door. Do you hear any staff members speaking in a rude tone to any of the patients? Would you be able to visit all day? Is it noisy? Use the free online Medicare booklet about choosing a nursing home to understand your rights, learn who pays for what and how to get help, or call them at 1-800-633-4227.

### Study: Puzzles, Games Don't Boost Brain

Did you sign up for a gym membership as a way to fulfill your New Year's resolution to get fit? If so, good for you. If not, also good for you.

A gym membership is only as good as your determination to use it, and there are many reasons not to sign up. At the first of the year you'll be one of many who joined, and the gym might be crowded. If you get on a schedule of going on certain days, something likely will come up to break your routine, possibly bad weather. If you've signed a contract, that money is coming out of your account every month no matter what. You'll likely need to drive to the gym, and you might feel like you need to buy workout clothes or a gym bag. On the other hand, if you're determined to exercise and don't want to spend money on a gym membership that you might not use, there are ways to work out

at home. Check YouTube on the Internet. Sample types of exercise you've never tried. Yoga comes in many varieties. Tai chi and qi gong are similar but not the same. Look for workouts with hand weights or seated exercises. Google "seniors exercising at home" for ideas.

Opt to have a few pieces of equipment at home and alternate days with walking, either outdoors or at an indoor facility like a mall on days when you need to run errands anyway. Ask your doctor to suggest a few pieces of equipment. Working out at home is free, private, with no waiting for equipment and no driving to the gym. If you still want to join a gym, wait a few months. Most of the people who signed up as a resolution will be gone.

## Questions to ask when your doctor prescribes a new medicine

Though few people may want to take medicine each day, prescription drugs prolong lives and help people manage conditions that might otherwise make it difficult to live life to the fullest.

A 2017 survey from Consumer Reports found that 55 percent of people living in the United States take a prescription medicine. The survey also found that those who take prescription drugs use an average of four such medications. That figure might alarm some people, especially aging men and women whose bodies might be more susceptible to conditions that are often treated with medication.

There's no denying that prescription drugs can save lives. But men and women have a right to explore their options when doctors prescribe them medications, and asking the right questions when doctors suggest medication can help

men and women decide if prescription medicine is their best option.

To help men and women make the best decisions regarding their healthcare, the National Institute on Aging advises people to ask their physicians these questions when being prescribed a new medicine.

- What is the name of the medicine, and why am I taking it?
- Which medical condition does this medicine treat?
- How many times a day should I take the medicine, and at what times should I take it?
- If the prescription instructions say the medicine must be taken "four times a day," does that mean four times in 24 hours or four times during the daytime?
- How much medicine should I take?
- Should I take the medicine on its own or with food? Should I avoid certain foods

and beverages when taking this medicine?

- How long will it take this medicine to work?
- Will this medicine cause problems if I am taking other medicines?
- Can I safely operate a motor vehicle while taking this medication?
- What does "as needed" mean?
- When should I stop taking the medicine?
- What should I do if I forget to take my medicine,?
- Can I expect any side effects? What should I do if I have a problem?
- Will I need a refill, and how do I arrange that?

When discussing medications with a physician, it's imperative that men and women be forthcoming about any other medicines they might be taking under the guidance of other doctors. In addition, men and women should tell their

physicians about any over-the-counter medicines or vitamins and supplements they are taking. Sharing such information can prevent potentially serious complications from arising.

Medicine saves lives every day. Smart patients can help medicine do its job by learning about their medications and discussing them openly and honestly with their physicians.



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