



**Comfort  
Keepers®**

Elevating the  
Human Spirit<sup>SM</sup>



# From head to toe

A practical guide to seniors' mental health and well-being



OVER

80%

of seniors have at least one chronic health condition.

Source: American Psychological Association

## What you'll find in this guide

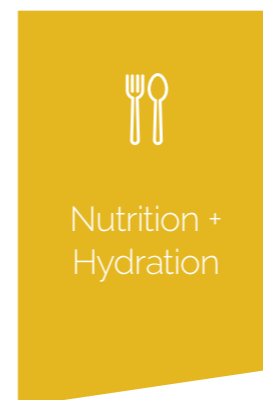
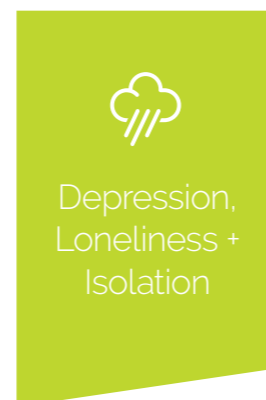
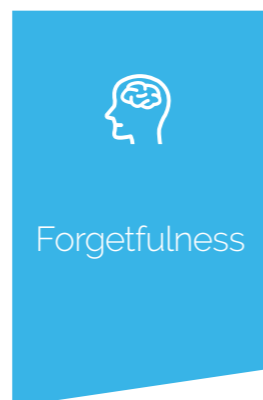
Learn useful information about the moments in life that open new doors and create opportunities to draw closer to your senior loved ones.

### Jump to a moment

Click on a category to the right to go directly to that section. Or, click on the arrows.

### Reach out

Need to talk? Contact us with any of your questions; we can't wait to help you.



**There's no health without mental health**

– World Health Organization



1 IN 8

people over 65 has  
Alzheimer's disease

Source: Alzheimer's Association



## From head to toe: A guide to mental health and well-being

### Changing the way we think

Mental health and well-being encompass so much more than just our emotions and thoughts. In this guide, we've prepared a head-to-toe look at what it means to stay healthy and happy, no matter your age. What do we mean by "head-to-toe"? Well, people tend to think of the mind and the body separately. But mental health is unquestionably tied to physical health. In our line of work, we see firsthand that even the smallest change can influence your loved one's quality of life. We think that preparedness and forethought can help you, and your family, take these changes in stride and adapt to a new normal.

### What is normal?

By definition, "well-being" is the state of being comfortable, happy, and healthy. And because aging is an individual journey, no two people's "normal" is the same—in fact, we're constantly forming new definitions of "normal." To help you navigate these changes, we've collected resources to help you understand and bolster the well-being of your loved one.





# What you need to know

Resources to help you prepare and plan





## Feeling forgetful

Forgetfulness is a common aspect of aging, however; our brains can be trained to work more efficiently. It's easy for young people to brush off memory loss, but for a senior, it can feel like the start of a much larger problem. As we age, common and non-threatening causes hinder our ability to remember. For example, older people often experience a decrease in blood flow to the brain, which may cause gaps in memory.\*

Another common cause is that the body produces lower levels of the hormones and proteins that protect and repair brain cells. Neither of these is necessarily a cause for alarm. Everyone, no matter our age, faces some level of forgetfulness. If you're caring for an older adult, you may be worried about changes in his or her memory. Remember, forgetfulness doesn't necessarily indicate that something is wrong.

*\*Source: American Psychological Association*

## What's common?

As the brain ages, it is common to forget things. Below are top examples of forgetfulness. If your loved one's memory issues reflect the behavior described on the "Signs Your Loved One May Need Help" list on the next page, consider writing them down and talking with their doctor. Something more serious may be going on, but that's not always the case. Research has shown that games can promote brain health, helping to keep the brain sharp at any age.

### Common forgetfulness

- Occasionally forgetting where they left objects that they use often
- Walking into a room and forgetting why they entered
- Cycling through several family members' names before saying the correct one
- Having the "on the tip of my tongue" sensation
- Occasionally missing an appointment or meeting on their schedule
- Having a harder time retrieving information that they just learned
- Being unable to explain things quickly and with precise details



#### TAKEAWAY

Play: *Positive affirmations word scramble*

Play: *Keeping the comforts of home word search*



Forgetfulness







## Starting the conversation

Talking about your loved one's forgetfulness can seem like an intimidating feat. He or she shouldn't feel as if you're making decisions without consulting them. Actively listening to his or her responses is a positive step toward better understanding their needs. Remember, experiencing forgetfulness is common. Having these conversations will enable you to establish a baseline in defining what "normal" means for your loved one and can help you identify changes down the road. Try these conversation starters:

"Hey, I noticed that it's been harder for you to (find your keys/pay your bills on time/meet your appointments). Why do you think that is?"

"I saw that you got really upset and kind of confused when we were at the restaurant the other day. What brought that on, do you think?"

"When we were talking about your appointments the other day, you didn't mention this appointment. That's all right! Should we write it down next time?"

**Another way you can have these conversations is to ask your loved one about a story from his or her past.**



### Signs your loved one may need help:

- Being unable to perform basic Activities of Daily Living (ADL) and Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL)
- Becoming disoriented or lost in a familiar environment
- Frequently misusing, mispronouncing, or garbling words in conversation
- Difficulty controlling emotions when making decisions; acting out inappropriately
- Excessive memory loss or not recognizing loved ones



Depression,  
Loneliness +  
Isolation

## The weight on our shoulders

Grief can have a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of seniors. They can feel that they shouldn't express their emotions and can sometimes worry that vocalizing their grief and sorrow may drive away friends and family. As we take our head-to-toe look at mental health and well-being, we've reached the shoulders. It's common for us to carry the brunt of the sadness and depressive feelings that we face on our own shoulders. Metaphorically speaking, our shoulders are weighed down with the burden of loss and sadness. And as we age, loss unfortunately becomes a more present part of our lives.

For seniors, becoming familiar with loss does not make it any less painful. During this time, it is paramount to support your loved one in reaching out to help them process their emotions. You can accomplish this by recognizing the signs of grief-related depression.





Depression,  
Loneliness +  
Isolation

## How to help

A person with depression who is surrounded by love and support can still feel alone. Socialization is key to encouraging better mental health, and with enough positive stimulus, it's possible to help your loved one feel less depressed. Additionally, depression can impede our ability to advocate for ourselves.

You may ask them, "What can I do to help?" but in response, they say, "Nothing." Instead, put forethought into what action you can take to help. For example, say, "I'm going to make you dinner, is that okay?" This actionable request shows that you've considered his or her needs and want to help, while also taking the burden off your loved one to provide the direction.





Nutrition +  
Hydration

## Good food for the heart and mind

It's no surprise a healthy, balanced diet enables us to perform at our best. Your parents probably instilled this truth in you from a young age. In addition to strengthening the body and keeping our brains active, food creates a strong tie to our long-term memory. Our memories are deeply linked to smell and taste. Even as smell and taste begin to fade, the sensation of their familiarity continues to exist.

In addition to maintaining a healthy diet, staying hydrated is needed to digest food, absorb vital nutrients, and eliminate unused waste. As a rule, seniors should drink at least eight 8-ounce glasses of water per day. Some seniors find that drinking a glass of water first thing in the morning revitalizes them and starts their day off on the right foot.

TAKEAWAY

Read: *Nutrition That Nourishes the Heart and Mind*







Nutrition +  
Hydration



## Healthy eating

Eating healthy meals is another excellent way for seniors to feel good and stay healthy. Having a healthy body can help your brain as well. Sharing a meal with your loved one promotes mental health and well-being in several ways. Not only will you have great conversation, but you can also encourage healthy eating. Wouldn't your loved one be thrilled if you brought a meal over to share? Between good company and good food, you have a winning combination! Here are some options you might consider adding to your recipes to encourage healthy eating.

- Whole, enriched, and fortified grains and cereals\*
- Brightly colored vegetables like carrots, broccoli, or bell peppers
- Deeply colored fruit like apples, oranges, melons, and berries
- Low and non-fat yogurt and milk
- Dry beans and nuts, fish, poultry, lean meat, and eggs for protein
- Foods with high water content, like lettuce, soups, and vegetables

Check with your loved one's physician before increasing fluid intake and food restrictions.

*\*Source: According to the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*

TAKEAWAY   
Watch: *Comfort Keepers "Comfort Foods" Recipes*





Physical  
Health

## Armed with ideal care

### Creating a safe and accessible home

In our “Moment by Moment” guide, we focused on quality of life and provided a [list of questions](#) that you and your loved one should ask at a doctor visit. Today, we look at options such as specialized care, sleep, and exercises your loved one can do at home to encourage great mental and physical health.

### How to ask about specialized care

A pediatrician works with children, an oncologist treats cancer, and a cardiologist understands the heart. Why shouldn't a geriatrician work with your loved one? For many seniors, a geriatrician is an excellent choice to turn to when age-related issues compound on each other. These doctors are trained to recognize the entire process of aging, from top to bottom.

You can find out more information about geriatric specialists and find one in your area by visiting [healthinaging.org](http://healthinaging.org).





Home  
Incident

## Staying safe at home

We all stub our toes and stumble from time to time, but these incidents can be much more frightening to older adults and those who care about them. People over 65 have a significant chance of being hurt or even dying as the result of a fall or other home incident. Here are some ways to keep your loved one safe, especially when he or she is alone.

**“I would walk out the door and never worry when my dad was in the care of his Comfort Keeper, Matt.**

–AMY, Talking about her dad's  
Comfort Keeper®

## Know the causes

Common risk factors and creating a safe and accessible home



### Changes in balance and gaits

Encourage participation in balancing exercises



### Mobility issues caused by arthritis, stroke, UTI, or diabetes

Ensure good lighting and remove tripping hazards



### Loss of hearing

Check hearing periodically



### Untrimmed toe nails that can snag on carpet or rugs, or make it uncomfortable to wear shoes

Invest in a walking aid, such as a cane or a walker



### Loss of vision

Check vision periodically



### Medication side effects, (dizziness or dehydration)

Review medications with a doctor to be aware of side effects



### Environmental factors like loose carpet, cramped spaces, or tight furniture

Create ample walking space between furniture



## Sleep disorders and mental health

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that adults sleep for eight to nine hours a night.

As we age, many factors that can impact your ability to sleep well. Sleep problems could stem from a personal habit, like drinking caffeinated beverages or smoking cigarettes, or from an illness or disorder, such as restless leg syndrome. Talk to your loved one's doctor about possible solutions for severe sleep problems. In the meantime, encourage your loved one to try the following:

- Maintain a regular nightly routine that includes avoiding harsh light, food, alcohol, and caffeine
- Go out into the sunlight during the day to keep a regular circadian rhythm
- Think positive thoughts to boost mood
- Exercise the amount recommended by a doctor or professional, but avoid exercising within three hours of bedtime

### Low impact exercises

By doing at least 30 minutes of low impact exercise every day, not only will your loved one feel better, but he or she may have an improved mood and sleep architecture as a result.



**Reduce mental strain**  
Research indicates coloring promotes relaxation and reduces stress and anxiety.

DOWNLOAD   
[Inspirational Coloring Pages](#)

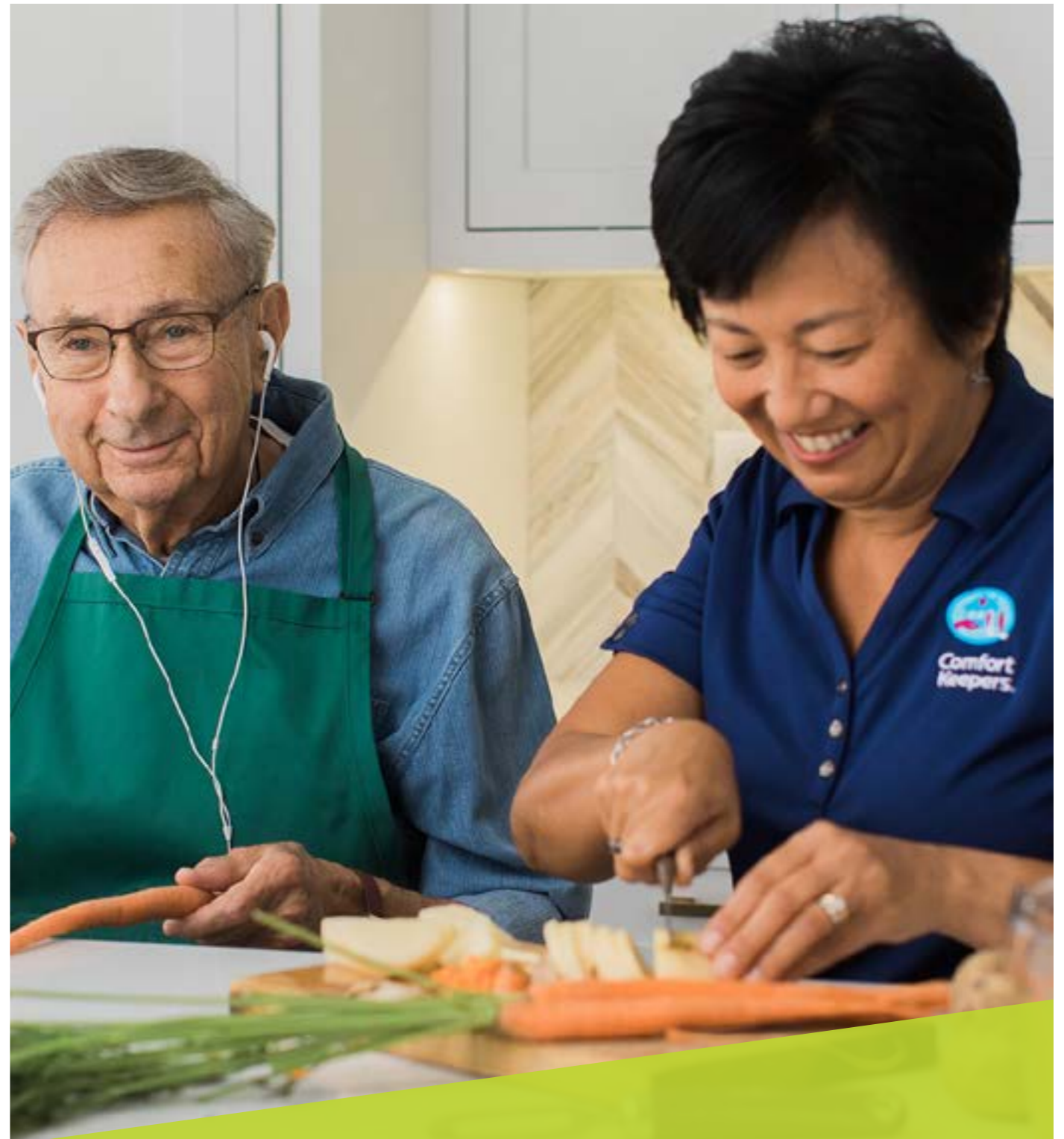




Alternatives  
to Assisted  
Living

## The in-home alternative to assisted living facilities

Do you know that 87 percent of seniors in the U.S. prefer to live in their own home as they age? Seniors take ownership and pride in their home, a place that they have created many special memories in. Staying in a familiar environment can help keep your loved one surrounded by the things that bring them joy and the people they love.



**"How would I describe my *Comfort Keeper*? Sensational, she's terrific. I'm so lucky to have Lori. We cook, we like to talk a lot, we take walks, we are just good together. My children are ever so grateful for Lori, she has impacted my life enormously in every way."**

*– ROZ, Talking about her Comfort Keeper®*

# 19.9M

Americans provide unpaid care to an adult 75 or older

Source: Stanford University



Alternatives  
to Assisted  
Living

## In-home care considerations

In-home care, like the services provided by Comfort Keepers®, combines the benefits of staying at home with care that focuses on the senior's mind, body, nutrition, and safety. Caregivers work together to accomplish tasks that stir memories, stimulate thought, and build a sense of pride. "Doing for" may get the task done, but "doing with" boosts spirits and brings joy. It's a holistic approach that ensures clients are cared for from every angle and taking an active approach to life.

Caring for a loved one can be incredibly rewarding, but the physical and emotional demands may lead to feelings of stress, guilt, and frustration. This research from the Stanford Center on Longevity highlights how shifting demographics are colliding with the high demands of being a family caregiver.

**"I treat them like I would treat my family...  
I think you have to love what you do."**

*– LUANN, Talking about her client*





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## More resources

### About Comfort Keepers®

FAQs about Home Care:  
[ComfortKeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com)

Interactive Caregiving:  
[ComfortKeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com)

Home Care Guides:  
[ComfortKeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com)

### Activities

[Coloring pages](#)

[Word search](#)

[Trivia](#)

[Word scramble](#)

[“Comfort Foods” recipes](#)

### Mental and physical wellness

Health and Well-Being  
in Older Adults:  
[Nih.gov](https://www.nih.gov)

Coping With the  
Loss of a Spouse:  
[ComfortKeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com)

Fun, Low Impact  
Exercises for Seniors:  
[ComfortKeepers.com](https://www.comfortkeepers.com)

## What's next?

To help you create a clear path for moving forward, we've included resource links to help you research caregiving options.

If you ever have questions—or just want someone to talk to—please don't hesitate to reach out.

Thanks for taking the time to read our guide, and remember to look for the joy in every moment of life.

(250) 981-4810

[comfortkeepers.ca/prince-george](https://www.comfortkeepers.ca/prince-george)