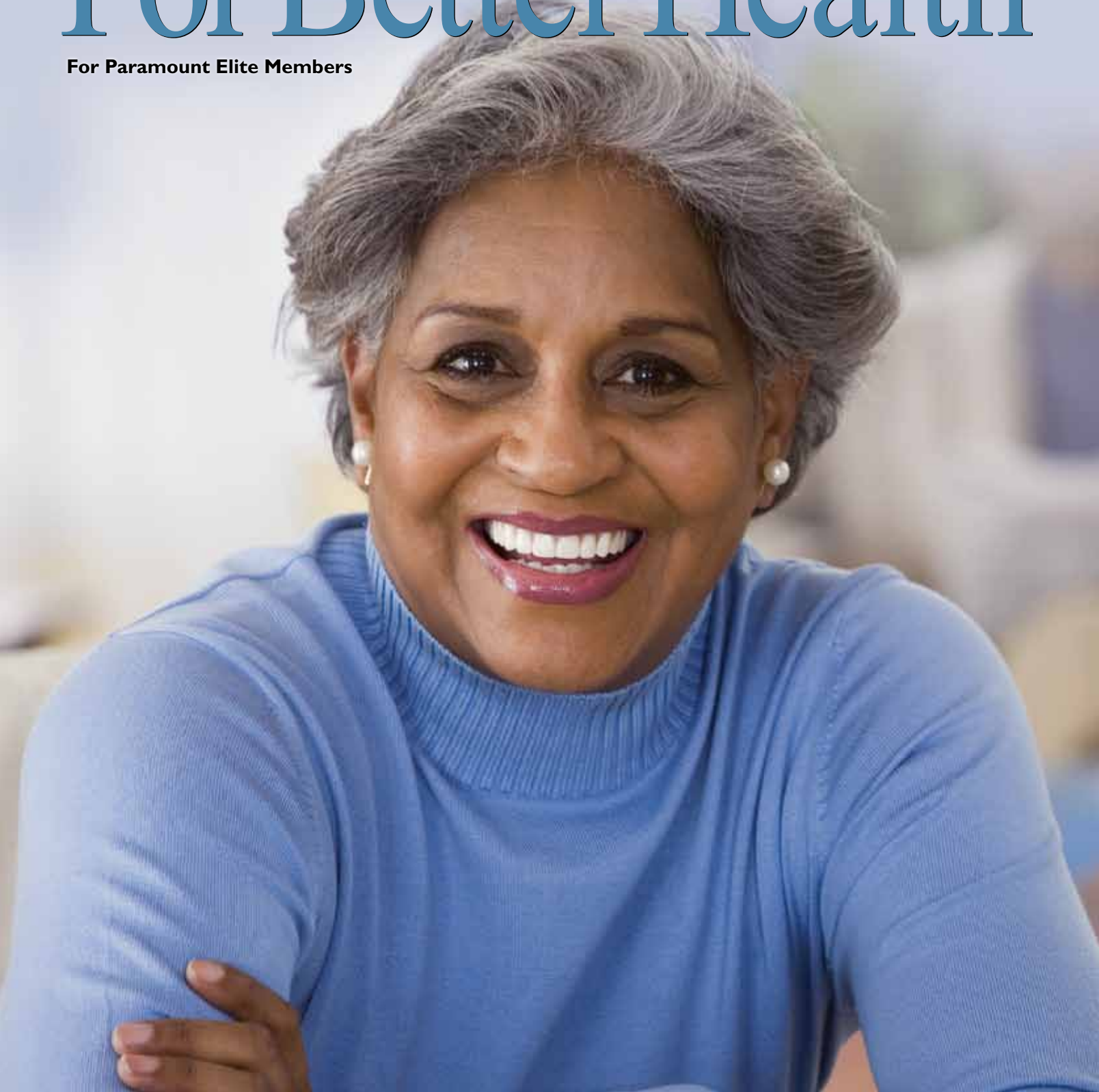


# For Better Health

For Paramount Elite Members



- 2 Preventing Prostate Cancer
- 4 Overcoming Sleep Problems
- 6 Plan Now for Your Future Care

Fall 2009

# Preventing Prostate Cancer: What the Research Says

Some risk factors for prostate cancer are unavoidable. These include age, having a father or brother with this type of cancer, and being African-American. Fortunately, you may be able to avoid other risk factors. Some studies suggest that making the following choices could help protect you:

- Eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit fatty foods. Some research indicates that men who eat a lot of animal fat have a greater chance of developing prostate cancer.
- Ask your doctor about aspirin. A recent review of several studies suggests that aspirin may help protect men from prostate cancer. But the authors caution that more research is needed.

## Know Potential Signs

Prostate cancer may cause no symptoms, and possible symptoms could be due to an enlarged prostate. To be safe, tell your doctor if you experience:

- Pain during urination
- Frequent urination, especially at night
- Pain in the upper thighs, hips, or lower back
- An inability to urinate
- Blood in the semen or urine
- Painful ejaculation

## The Importance of Screening

The American Cancer Society says that beginning at age 50, men should have a prostate cancer screening annually.

However, some other experts, such as the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force and the National Cancer Institute, do not advise routine screening. For one thing, the two available screening techniques sometimes miss tumors. Plus, a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test can falsely suggest cancer.

Ask your doctor if screening makes sense for you.

## Paths to Prevention

To learn more about your prostate screening options, visit [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on “Better Health for Life,” “P” in the encyclopedia at the top, and then “Prostate Cancer Diagnosis.”



## Confused About “Swine Flu”?

The H1N1 influenza virus has made news headlines this year. If you’re still confused, here are some answers that will help you stay healthy.

### Q: What is H1N1 flu?

It is a virus that causes illness in people. It was originally referred to as swine flu because it is similar to a virus that normally occurs in pigs. Cases have been reported around the world, including in the U.S., Mexico, Canada, and Spain.

### Q: How does it spread?

The virus is thought to spread the same way that seasonal flu spreads—from person to person through coughing or sneezing.

### Q: How dangerous is this flu?

Researchers believe some people at high risk for seasonal flu complications face the same risk from H1N1 flu. These groups include:

- People with weakened immune systems
- People with certain pre-existing health conditions
- Residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities

However, unlike seasonal flu, H1N1 infections have occurred mainly in younger people. Research suggests that many older adults may have some degree of resistance to the virus. One theory is that older adults may have been exposed to a related influenza A virus that circulated before 1957.

### Q: What is the latest news?

For updates on H1N1, visit these Web sites: [www.cdc.gov/swineflu](http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu) or [www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en](http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en).



## Know When a Loved One Needs Help

**Y**ou can tell she's feeling anxious. Or you've noticed that he has no energy and no appetite. And yet, when you ask, your loved one insists nothing is wrong. They may not recognize it—or perhaps they don't want to—but they could be depressed.

### The Benefits of Treatment

Many people don't consider depression a serious health problem. But according to a recent study in the journal *Lancet*, it may be the world's most disabling disease. Researchers found that depression impairs health much more than chronic physical conditions like asthma, diabetes, and arthritis.

Your loved one may think they can simply "get over it." In fact, they're unlikely to get better without help. Depression usually can be treated successfully with medicine, talk therapy, or a combination of these.

### Symptoms of Depression

There's more to depression than just feeling a little sad now and then. Health care professionals diagnose depression based on the presence of

certain persistent symptoms.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, these symptoms include:

- Feeling sad, anxious, or "empty"
- Feeling hopeless or pessimistic
- Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Decreased energy or feeling fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Loss of appetite and/or weight loss, or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

Not everyone who has depression experiences all of these symptoms. The severity of symptoms also can vary from person to person. But if you notice that your loved one's symptoms last most of the day, almost every day, for at least two weeks, urge them to see a doctor.

## Could You Have Prediabetes?

Diabetes can hit without warning, and a lot of people don't even know they're at risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported that about 40 percent of adults ages 40 to 74 have a condition called prediabetes.

Prediabetes occurs when glucose levels climb higher than normal but are not yet considered diabetic. Many people with prediabetes develop diabetes within 10 years.

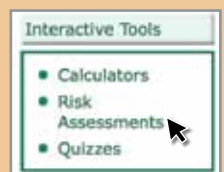
There's a bright side to the news about prediabetes: It doesn't inevitably lead to diabetes. People with prediabetes have the power to delay—or even prevent—diabetes by taking steps to lower their glucose levels.

Ask your doctor about screening tests that can detect prediabetes. If you find out that you have prediabetes, and you're carrying around excess pounds, losing just 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can delay or prevent the onset of diabetes, say studies. You can do this by eating a healthy diet and exercising.

In fact, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases found that these simple lifestyle changes delayed the development of diabetes by 58 percent in people with prediabetes.

### Are You at Risk for Diabetes?

To find out, take our online Diabetes Risk Assessment test. Go to [www.parmounthealthcare.com](http://www.parmounthealthcare.com) and click on "Better Health for Life," "Interactive Tools," "Risk Assessments," and "Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment."



# Tossing and Turning? Overcome Common Sleep Problems

When you went to bed last night, did you nod off quickly and sleep soundly until it was time to wake up? Did you feel energized and alert this morning?

For many people, getting a good night's sleep on a regular basis is just a dream. The National Institutes of Health reports that between 50 and 70 million Americans suffer from chronic or periodic sleep disorders.

While feeling exhausted is unpleasant enough, sleep problems can take a larger toll, affecting health, safety, and quality of life. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that sleepy drivers cause at least 100,000 motor crashes annually, claiming more than 1,500 lives. And people with long-term sleep problems face an increased risk for serious chronic conditions, including depression, heart disease, and diabetes.

## Quantity and Quality Matter

According to medical experts, adults typically need about seven hours of

sleep. Although adults ages 65 and older tend to sleep less soundly, they still need around seven hours—not less, as is widely believed.

Sleep appears to be a passive activity, but the body and brain perform complex, revitalizing tasks throughout the night. Energy is restored for daily activities, muscle mass increases, and cells and tissues grow and are repaired. Sleep also may improve the brain's ability to learn, perform tasks, and process memories.

Numerous factors—physical, psychological, environmental, and behavioral—can conspire nightly to prevent the deep, uninterrupted sleep we need. Here are some of the most common sleep problems, along with strategies to overcome them.

## Insomnia

Approximately 30 percent of American adults have occasional insomnia. People with insomnia have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep; they may awaken several times during the night or wake up too early in the morning.

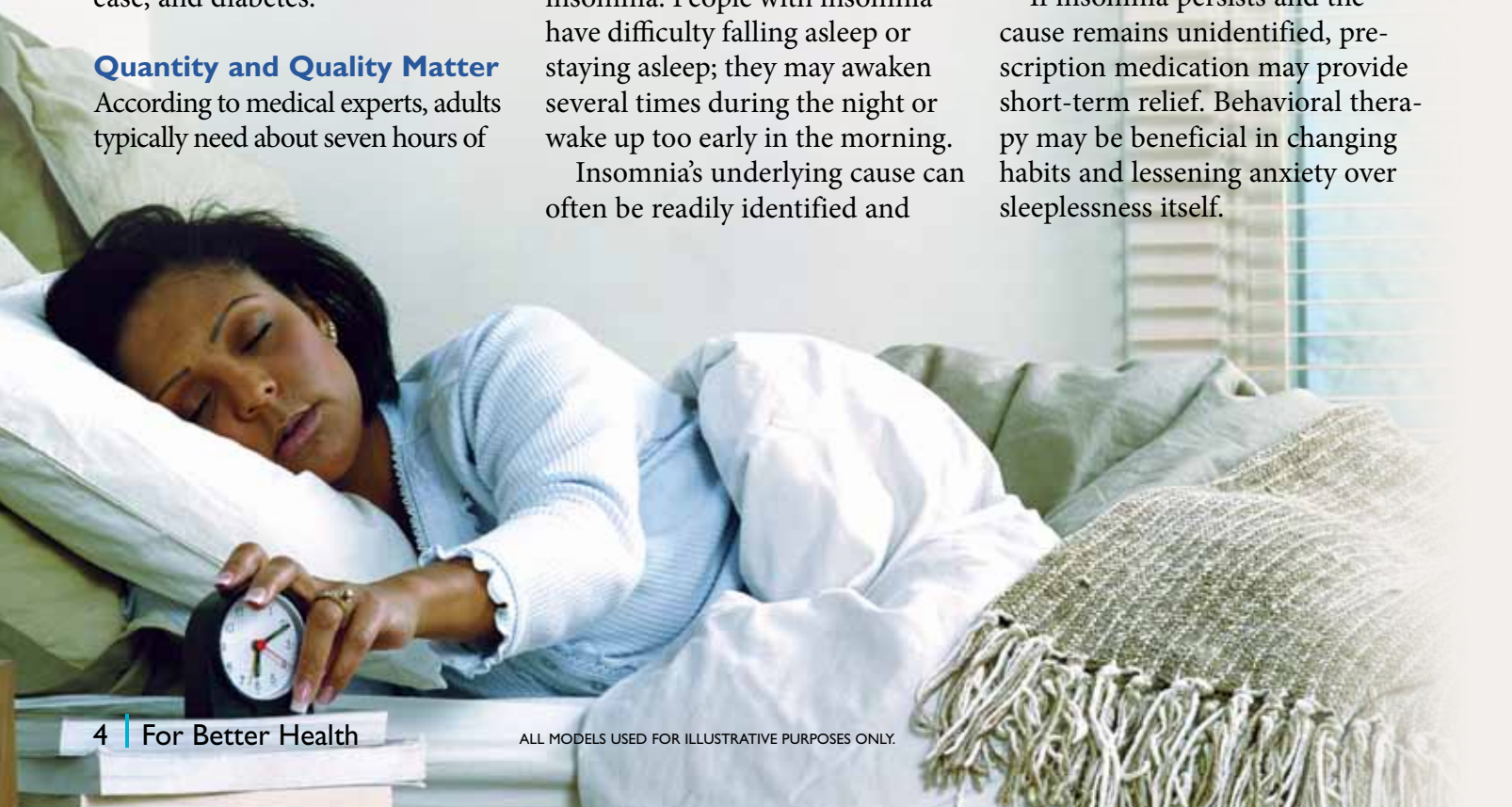
Insomnia's underlying cause can often be readily identified and

addressed: Switch medications, manage stress, or treat the underlying condition.

When the problem isn't so straightforward, establishing sleep-conducive habits may help:

- Develop a sleep routine by going to bed and getting up at the same times every day. Avoid napping.
- Make sure the bedroom is comfortable, quiet, dark, and cool.
- Relax before bedtime with a bath, light reading, or soothing music.
- Keep TVs, computers, and other distractions out of the bedroom.
- Avoid caffeine later in the day. Caffeine's stimulating effects can last for up to eight hours.
- Exercise regularly, but finish several hours before bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol, large beverages, and heavy meals close to bedtime.

If insomnia persists and the cause remains unidentified, prescription medication may provide short-term relief. Behavioral therapy may be beneficial in changing habits and lessening anxiety over sleeplessness itself.



### Restless Legs Syndrome

As many as 12 million Americans—especially older adults—suffer from restless legs syndrome, which causes crawling, tingling, or prickly sensations in the legs and feet that are relieved only by movement. The feelings occur when a person is sitting or lying down, and they are a common cause of insomnia. Medication that affects dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain, may provide relief.

### Problem Snoring

Almost half of all Americans snore at least occasionally. But habitual, loud snoring is not normal and should be evaluated by a doctor. Besides disturbing anyone within earshot, it can be a symptom of a condition called sleep apnea.

Snoring results from obstructed

breathing: When the tongue and throat muscles relax too much during sleep, the tongue can fall backward and block the airway, or the throat muscles draw inward, narrowing the airway. Problem snoring is most common in men and overweight people, and it often worsens with age.

Mild snoring may improve with weight loss, sleeping on one's side, and avoiding sedatives, heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime. Surgery, including laser procedures to widen the airway, is an option to relieve severe snoring.

### Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Medical experts believe that more than 12 million Americans have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). It's frequently mistaken for ordinary

loud snoring, but it's actually a potentially life-threatening condition. In OSA, the airway becomes completely obstructed so breathing stops for 10 to 30 seconds at a time during sleep. Patients are often unaware of it and are diagnosed only after they experience sleep-deprivation symptoms or their partner notices the problem.

OSA can lead to an increased risk for heart disease, heart attacks, hypertension, and stroke. OSA is often treated with continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP), which involves wearing a nasal mask that blows a steady stream of air to keep the airway open.

Surgical treatment may be another option. In milder cases, oral devices that reposition the jaw may help keep the airway open.

## Leaving Alcohol Out of the Mix

Nearly half of all Americans take at least one prescription medicine—pills, liquids, creams, and other therapies that can be harmful when alcohol enters the mix.

Alcohol is a no-no with many medicines, including over-the-counter cold and cough remedies, because it can increase drug-induced drowsiness. Mixing alcohol with medications also may produce a spike in heartbeat, stomach upset, internal bleeding, and other problems.

Before you raise a glass to your lips, stop and think: Are you on any of the following common medications?

- Pain relievers, including acetaminophen and aspirin
- Arthritis medications
- Heart medications
- Antidepressants
- Diabetes medications
- Allergy medications
- Sleeping pills



If you take any of these medications, or if you have a nervous or psychiatric condition, ask your doctor if drinking alcohol is safe for you. Before taking any new medicine, find out if you should avoid alcohol while using it.

### Manage Your Medications

Our online drug reference library contains information on more than 33,000 prescription and over-the-counter products. Go to [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com) and click on "Better Health for Life," "Library," and then "Drug Reference."





# Plan Now for Your Future Care

A living will and durable power of attorney for health care are legal documents called advance directives. They are prepared while you are of sound mind and able to communicate your health care wishes in case you become unable to do so. The differences involve who takes action for you and when such documents take effect.

## **Your Own Treatment Choices**

A living will states your medical treatment preferences to the attending physician. It can outline your wishes about whether life-sustaining treatment is acceptable. A living will usually takes effect when two physicians diagnose you as permanently unconscious, terminally ill, or injured and incapable of making an informed decision. If you refuse life support in your living will, you will still receive comfort and care.

## **Someone to Speak for You**

A durable power of attorney for health care (or health care proxy) names an individual whom you

assign to make health care decisions for you. This is important when relatives can't reach an agreement on what action should be taken. It can take effect in either temporary or permanent situations. It can be used with, or often instead of, a living will.

## **Steps to Take**

The first step is to obtain the necessary forms. Talk with your doctor or use a local hospital or your state health department as resources. Legal requirements vary by state. Whether you use one or both documents, take the time to specifically outline your wishes. Talk openly about health care

scenarios. Make sure that anyone you appoint to act on your behalf is willing to accept the responsibility.

Give copies of advance directives to your regular doctor and hospital. These will become part of your permanent record. Provide copies to your lawyer or appropriate family members. You may want to update these documents as time passes.

Making these decisions can be hard, but preparing ahead of time will help ensure that your wishes are met and provide comfort if a difficult health situation occurs.

For more information, visit the U.S. Living Will Registry® online at [www.uslivingwillregistry.com](http://www.uslivingwillregistry.com).

# Are You Exercising Enough?

## Read the New Guidelines

Less than half of American adults get a healthy dose of exercise. The American Heart Association and the American College of Sports Medicine have developed new, clearer guidelines on how much exercise you need to promote and maintain health.

Research shows that regular exercise protects against heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, obesity, bone loss, and some cancers.

Based on these findings, the experts say healthy adults ages 18 to 65 should follow either one of these protocols:

- At least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, five days each week
- At least 20 minutes of vigorous aerobic exercise, such as jogging, three days each week

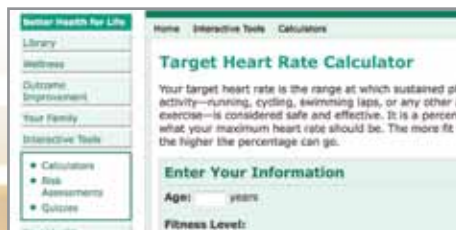
People older than age 65 should strive to hit similar exercise targets. Experts urge older adults who are inactive to increase moderate activities, like walking or dancing.

The experts also suggest that older adults perform flexibility exercises for at least 10 minutes, two days a week. In addition, they recommend balance exercise to lower the risk of falls.

The new guidelines also recommend strength exercises on at least two nonconsecutive days each week for all age groups.

### Know Your Exercise Target

Your target heart rate is the rate at which sustained physical activity is considered safe and effective. To use our Target Heart Rate Calculator, visit [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com), click on “Better Health for Life,” “Interactive Tools,” “Calculators,” and “Target Heart Rate Calculator.”



## Weight Training Gives Women a Lift

Women ages 65 and older are the least likely group to do strength exercises. But they should.

Weight lifters maintain stronger muscles, sturdier bones, and better balance. The best news? Almost anyone can do it. In a small study reported in *Arthritis and Rheumatism*, older women with fibromyalgia who performed strength training enjoyed the same benefits as healthy women. As an added bonus, they won significant pain relief.

To get your weight-lifting routine off the ground, try these tips:

1. Ask your doctor if you need to observe any precautions.
2. To avoid injury, start out with very light weights, or no weight at all. Gradually add weight as you can do more repetitions.
3. It should take a good effort to lift or push the weight. If you can't lift at least eight times in a row, the weight is too heavy. If you can lift it more than 15 times in a row, it's too light.
4. Lift or push the weight for three seconds, hold the position for one second, and lower for three more seconds.
5. Exhale as you lift or push, and inhale as you relax. Don't hold your breath.
6. It's normal to be a bit sore or tired for a few days after strength training. If you feel pain, exhaustion, sore joints, or muscle pulls, you're overdoing it.



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## Personal Call Center Representatives

As part of our Paramount Perks program, Paramount Health Care would like to offer you a Personal Call Center Representative to answer any claims, benefits, or general questions about your health plan.

If you would like a Personal Call Center Representative, you can enroll in one of two ways:

1) Complete the form online at [www.paramounthealthcare.com/PCCR](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com/PCCR)

OR

2) Complete the form below and mail it to:

**Paramount Health Care**  
**1901 Indian Wood Circle**  
**Maumee, OH 43537**

Once Paramount receives your information, you will be registered and receive a phone call from your assigned representative. At that time, you will be given the necessary information regarding how to make calls to your representative.

We hope you find the Paramount Perks services valuable. Be sure to watch your newsletters for additional services in the coming months. For more information, please visit our Web site, [www.paramounthealthcare.com](http://www.paramounthealthcare.com), and click on the Paramount Perks button. For more information about Paramount Perks, please call Member Services at:

Phone: **1-419-887-2525**  
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### Personal Call Center Representative Request Form

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Member ID No. \_\_\_\_\_ How Many on Contract \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

