



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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The Healthy Journey

handls.nih.gov
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U.S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

What is mobility?

Mobility is the ability to move freely and safely without pain. Maintaining or gaining mobility can protect your range of motion, stability, and overall health.

Mobility usually declines with age, injury, or medical diagnosis. Sometimes people lose mobility after medical procedures or surgery. Certain diagnoses, like arthritis, may lead to joint pain making it difficult to move. Inactive lifestyles can also lead to problems with pain and mobility. Sitting or other inactivity for long periods of time can lead to tight muscles and tissues in your body. Mobility problems can lead to lower functioning, falls, and depression.

Falls are a leading cause of injury and hospitalization for people over 65. According to the Baltimore City Health Department, the rate of falls in Baltimore is 13% higher than the national average. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 out of 5 falls causes a serious injury, like broken bones or head injury.

Maintain your mobility, balance, and safety

Maintaining mobility helps maintain independence. People who maintain their mobility find it easier to continue daily activities as they age. These activities include moving around your home and neighborhood, connecting with loved ones, and even hygiene.

Maintaining mobility helps maintain independence

- Follow recommendations from your healthcare provider. If you were injured or had surgery, your doctor may suggest physical therapy for your recovery. Physical therapy can help you restore your mobility.
- Schedule an eye exam and a hearing assessment. If you have trouble with your vision or hearing, you are at risk for accidents and falls. Eyeglasses and hearing aids can help you avoid injuries.
- Check your medications for side effects. Some medications cause dizziness or blurry vision that can lead to falls. If any of your medications have these side effects, you should talk

to your healthcare provider. There may be other options that your provider can share with you.

- Choose suitable footwear. Properly fitting shoes with good support and sole grip can prevent pain and injury. Make sure your shoes stay fastened to avoid falls.
- Sometimes doctors recommend assistive devices to help with your mobility. Examples of assistive devices are walking sticks, walking poles, canes, walkers, and crutches. These devices prevent injuries and help you stay balanced. Many medical supply stores offer rental and delivery services to bring these items to your home.
- Making changes to your home can reduce injuries and falls. Cordless light fixtures, night lights, handrails on stairs, and non-skid bathmats are examples of changes that can increase your safety at home. Remove hazards like clutter, cords, or uneven rugs so you can move around your home without tripping.



- Stay physically active. When you move your body, you can maintain or gain muscle mass, balance, and flexibility. Bodyweight exercises, balancing exercises, and stretches are great for your mobility. You do not need equipment for bodyweight exercises like squats and lunges. Balancing exercises include standing on one foot for 10 seconds, or the chair rise (sit on a chair and rise to a standing position – repeat as many times as you like). Walking, stretching, and tai chi are also excellent ways to maintain your physical fitness. You should talk to your provider before beginning an exercise program to make sure it is right for you.

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Local mobility & safety resources

If you are struggling with mobility, you may find it hard to do daily activities. Local resources are available for your health, safety, and convenience.



Maryland Durable Medical Equipment Re-Use

Maryland Department of Aging

- The Maryland Department of Aging provides free durable medical equipment (DME) to Marylanders with any illness, injury, or disability, regardless of age. Basic DME includes canes, crutches, walkers, shower chairs, tub transfer benches, toilet safety rails, and bedrails. Complex DME includes wheelchairs (manual and power models), power scooters, home hospital beds, and mechanical lifts. This equipment has been used or donated, and all items are sanitized and repaired. You can also donate DME you are no longer using to this program. Visit <https://aging.maryland.gov/pages/DME.aspx>, email DME.MDOA@maryland.gov, or call 240-230-8000 for more information.
- The free Senior Call Check Program promotes peace of mind by checking in on seniors. You receive daily text messages and a weekly call, scheduled at your convenience. After 3 unanswered calls, a friend or family member you have chosen will be contacted. Register by calling 1-866-50-CHECK or online at <https://aging.maryland.gov/Pages/senior-call-check.aspx>.
- The Maryland Department of Health has a listing of health and fitness classes for aging adults. In-person and virtual options are available. Visit this website for a list of health and fitness classes <https://workshopwizard.net/DHMH.Public/FindClass/FindClassHome.aspx>.

Baltimore City Vax @ Home Program

- You can still get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have trouble leaving your home. Mobile vaccination teams from the

Baltimore City Health Department can travel to your home to give you a COVID-19 vaccine. This service is free. If you'd like to "Vax at Home," you can schedule an appointment by visiting <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/> or calling 443-984-8650.

MTA MobilityLink (Paratransit) Program

- MobilityLink is a shared ride service for people who are functionally unable to get to a bus stop, wait at a stop, or board a bus by themselves. MobilityLink services are offered from the first outside door of your pickup location to the first outside door of your destination. To find the MobilityLink application, visit <https://www.mta.maryland.gov/mobility> or call 410-764-8181.

Baltimore City Health Department – Division of Aging

- If you have trouble leaving your home, many programs are available to connect you with a volunteer who can deliver groceries to you. Also, the Home Delivered Meals program delivers meals to homebound adults who are unable to shop for or prepare their own meals due to a physical or mental condition. For more information, call 410-558-0827.
- The *Taxicard Program* provides subsidized transportation for eligible Baltimore residents who are 60+ or disabled. Registration is required and individuals must meet program requirements. Cards may be used with participating taxicab companies. To learn more, call 410-664-1123 or visit www.caretaxicard.com.

National Institute on Aging

- The NIA has an online resource library about exercise and physical activity. It is meant for adults 65 years and older. You can access information about types of exercise, motivation, exercising safely with a health condition, and tracking your progress. Visit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/exercise-physical-activity> to learn more.

Prescription delivery

- Many pharmacies have been offering free delivery services during COVID-19. Call your pharmacy directly to see if they are offering free delivery. Visit this website to see a list of participating pharmacies: <https://www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-2020/pharmacies-waive-delivery-fees.html>. You can also talk to your doctor about free prescription delivery. Many health systems have pharmacies that may offer free delivery to their patients.

Omicron is more infectious than Delta

What is omicron?

All viruses change over time. This process is called mutation. A mutation is a change in a virus's genetic material. This process causes variants, or strains. The COVID-19 virus has changed over time, and now variants exist. Examples of COVID-19 variants are Delta

and Omicron. Currently, Omicron is the most dominant COVID-19 variant in the U.S.

The Omicron variant spreads more easily than the original COVID-19 virus. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson vaccines help protect people from hospitalization and death due to COVID-19 and its variants. For better protection, get a booster shot as soon as you are eligible. For updated information about the Omicron variant, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html>.



Free COVID-19 test kits

Did you know that each household in the country can receive 4 at-home COVID-19 tests? These tests are completely free. Shipping is also free. You can order them through the United States Postal Service. Visit <https://special.usps.com/testkits> or call 1-800-275-8777 to order tests. You can also visit <https://www.covidtests.gov/> to learn more about at-home COVID-19 tests.

Free masks

The CDC updated face-mask guidance (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>). They recommend a snug-fitting N95-style mask that fits over your nose, mouth, and chin. The Federal government will provide free N95-style masks in February. They will be available at pharmacies and government health clinics.

COVID-19 reminder

In the new year, it is still important to protect yourself against COVID-19. You can protect yourself by getting a vaccine, wearing a mask, washing your hands, and staying away from people who are sick.

Our past newsletters share information about how COVID-19 vaccines work. They may help you make a decision about the vaccines. You can find all past editions of The Healthy Journey online by visiting <https://hands.nih.gov/05Part-04News.htm>.

What's next for HANDLS?

HANDLS completed Wave 5 in March 2020. Some HANDLS participants did not have Wave 5 appointments. This is because we did not stay open for appointments during the stay-at-home order.

From April 2020 through January 2022, HANDLS conducted Wave 6. A small group of HANDLS participants were asked to complete a telephone survey and visit the MRVs for COVID-19 testing.

Wave 7 will begin in Spring 2022. The tests offered in Wave 5 will be offered again in Wave 7. During COVID-19, we obtained new equipment for body composition and bone density testing. The participants who did not complete Wave 5 will be contacted first for Wave 7 appointments. If you had a Wave 5 appointment with HANDLS, you can expect a Wave 7 appointment next year. We plan to contact all HANDLS participants for appointments in Wave 7.

During Wave 7, we will take COVID-19 precautions. We will see fewer participants per day. Only one participant will be on a vehicle during the study visit. The informed consent procedures will happen over the phone. Rapid COVID-19 tests will be given to all participants when they arrive to the MRVs. Masks are currently required at the MRVs. The MRVs will be disinfected between participants to ensure a clean and safe environment.

If your contact information has changed, please contact us as soon as possible. Having your correct contact information helps us schedule you more quickly for a HANDLS appointment. Please contact us if your address, phone number, or email address has changed. You can update us by phone (1-877-677-9538) or by email hands@mail.nih.gov.

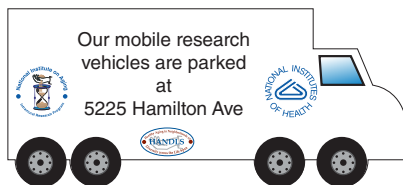
Happy New Year from HANDLS

We are so grateful to have you as part of our HANDLS community. HANDLS Staff wish each of you a happy, healthy, and safe holiday season. We look forward to staying in touch with you in the New Year!

Contacting HANDLS

Did you know that HANDLS has an email address? Email is a great way to keep in touch with our team. If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at hands@mail.nih.gov. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.