



National Health &
Aging Trends Study

how daily life changes as we age

NHATS & you

Volume 1 – Issue 15.0

March 2025

Welcome Back and Thank You!

Welcome to the 15th year of interviews for the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). We are grateful to the thousands of participants who have been an important part of this study for so many years.

NHATS continues to be widely used by researchers to understand how daily life changes as we age. We are pleased to share a few recent findings with you.

You've Got Personality

Whether walking, dancing, or playing pickleball, physical activity is one of the key ingredients of a healthy lifestyle. But what makes one older adult want to get out for a walk regularly and another more likely to sit on the couch?

Psychologists have long linked personality traits to all kinds of behaviors in later life. A recent study draws on nine national surveys—including NHATS—to explore whether personality is linked to taking up or stopping regular physical activity.

Researchers pinpointed three common personality traits—being conscientious, extraverted, and open to new experiences—as linked to more physical activity. Among people not participating in regular activity, older adults with these traits were more likely to start. Among those already engaged in regular activity, older adults with these traits were less likely to stop.

NHATS by the Numbers

18,000+

NHATS participants to date

8,000+

Researchers using NHATS data

900+

NHATS publications in scientific journals

270+

Journals where NHATS research is published

The researchers concluded that these personality traits are key to motivating older adults to want to maintain physical activity as they age.



Breathe Easy

Each year, NHATS includes an activity that measures how fast you can push out air from your lungs. This simple screening was designed to give a basic picture of lung strength. But researchers have found that the pattern of activity results over multiple years may also help signal whether memory problems might be on the horizon. Using NHATS data, researchers looked at the lung-strength results of people without memory problems. They divided people into four groups: those who had a rapid decline in lung strength, those who had a moderate decline, those who had a mild decline, and those who showed no decline at all.

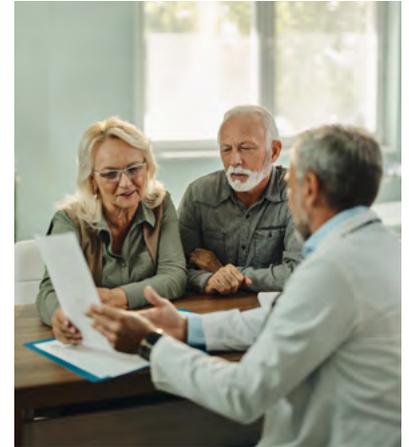
They found only about 20% of those with no change in lung strength developed memory problems over the next five years. About one-third of those with mild or moderate decline developed memory problems. And more than half of those with a rapid decline in lung strength developed memory problems over the next five years. While more research is needed, this study shows the potential value of screening for lung strength every year.



Just What the Doctor Ordered

As we get older, we may find ourselves attending more doctors' appointments. For those who have trouble communicating due to their health, it can be a challenge to get the most out of a healthcare visit.

Using NHATS, researchers found that 1 in 5 older adults have trouble with speaking, hearing, or memory. Less than half of older adults who reported these difficulties had a



companion regularly join them for healthcare visits. That means there is room for improvement, since about 6 out of 10 did not usually bring a companion to appointments.

Spotlight on the National Study of Caregiving (NSOC)

As a follow-up to NHATS, we conduct the National Study of Caregiving (NSOC) with family members and friends who help NHATS participants. NSOC takes about 30 minutes and may be completed either online or by telephone. The questions focus on helpers' lives and activities and help researchers understand how caregiving changes over time.

You can help make NSOC a success by providing contact information for family members and others who help with your daily activities.

www.mynhats.org

1-888-364-8271



This study is sponsored by the National Institute on Aging.