



National Health & Aging Trends Study

how daily life changes as we age

NHATS & you

Volume 1 – Issue 16.0

March 2026

Welcome Back and Thank You!

Welcome to the 16th 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.

Every Move Counts

Many studies have examined the health benefits of being active, but there is not as much evidence on how consistent daily movements need to be to matter. One recent study with NHATS examined a new way of measuring movement, called “activity variability” or AV. Instead of focusing how much people move overall, AV looks at how movement changes throughout the day and across days.

The study found that AV was strongly linked to brain health. Older adults whose daily activity followed healthier and more regular patterns were less likely to show signs of memory or thinking problems. AV was more strongly related to brain health than the amount of movement. Rather than counting steps, AV might someday be used to detect early changes in brain health. These results show that it’s not just about how much you move, but how regularly you move as well.



by the Numbers

how daily life changes as we age

18,000+

NHATS participants to date



10,000+

Researchers using NHATS data



1,100+

NHATS publications in scientific journals



300

Journals where NHATS is published



Digital Dementia Disruption

Researchers have used NHATS to study the link between digital technology use and risk of dementia, and came to a positive conclusion for tech-lovers everywhere. Older adults who more often use cell phones, tablets or computers are less likely to have memory issues than those who rarely use technology.

In general, those who use technology tend to have better thinking and memory skills over time. This is especially true for those with physical limitations.



This research shows that using technology may help support brain health as we age. Making technology easier to use for older adults could play an important role in keeping minds sharp and people connected.

The Secrets to Success

How does one “age successfully?” One study using NHATS has explored this question by examining how older adults with limitations in their daily activities rate their health and well-being. About 4 in 10 older adults with limitations rate themselves highly, showing that successful aging is possible even with health challenges. Two factors – staying active and staying connected to others – appear to be especially important for all older adults, whether living with limitations or not.

Spotlight on Caregiving

The National Study of Caregiving (NSOC) is one of the only studies that can tell us how family caregiving in the United States has changed over the past 15 years. Recently, researchers have found that the number of family caregivers grew from 18 million in 2011 to over 24 million in 2022.

They also have found that the day-to-day experience has stayed about the same for most caregivers. They have identified three interesting trends. Fewer caregivers are working, more are living with the person they help, and the amount of time spent caregiving for someone with dementia has increased by 50 percent.

Even with few changes, many experts agree that more support for family caregivers is needed. By taking part in NSOC, caregivers help researchers better understand their experiences and find ways to improve caregiver support and quality of life.



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1-888-364-8271



This study is sponsored by the National Institute on Aging.