

# Take Extremely Good Care of Your Elderly Parents



**By: Marcus Turner**

## Abstract

Caring for elderly parents is a profound responsibility that requires a thoughtful balance of emotional, physical, and practical support. This article explores the importance of prioritizing their well-being, offering insights into building a nurturing environment that addresses their health, safety, and emotional needs. From fostering open communication and creating a sense of belonging to ensuring access to proper medical care and promoting independence, this piece highlights practical ways to provide exceptional care for aging parents. It also emphasizes the role of empathy, patience, and consistent support in enhancing their quality of life and deepening familial bonds.



## 1. Introduction

As our parents age, they enter a phase of life where they may require more care, attention, and support. Their well-being often depends on the actions and decisions of their loved ones, making it crucial for us to step up and take responsibility. Caring for elderly parents is not just a duty; it is an expression of gratitude for the love and sacrifices they have shown us throughout our lives. This stage presents unique challenges, such as managing their health concerns, addressing emotional needs, and ensuring their safety and comfort. It also offers an opportunity to strengthen familial bonds and create lasting memories. In this article, we will explore practical and compassionate ways to take exceptional care of elderly parents, ensuring they enjoy a dignified and fulfilling life in their later years. Whether you are

navigating these responsibilities for the first time or seeking to improve your approach, this guide aims to provide insights that inspire and empower you to give your best.

## **2. Recording Your Family Medical History**



Your personal medical records will be vitally important when it comes to tracking illnesses and medical problems you have or may develop throughout your lifetime. Among the components of your medical records will be your family medical history.

### **Why Record Your Family's Medical History?**

Did your grandfather suffer from Alzheimer's disease? Does Great Aunt Emma have problems with psoriasis? Did your mother have breast cancer? Does your brother have heart disease?

Tracking diseases and conditions suffered by blood relatives can help you reveal any risk factors you may have. This type of information tracks your genetic makeup, and may be helpful for diagnosing problems, and may help you prevent the development of such problems by knowing what habit changes may be needed now.

Once you've assembled the information you need, share it with your healthcare provider in Gold Coast at your next check-up. Your practitioner will want to keep a copy of it and will likely find it very helpful, if not right away, then sometime in your future.

### **What Relatives Should Be Included?**

In general, you will find the health information about blood relatives, back two to three generations, from both your mother's and father's families to be helpful to you. These relatives are:

- Parents
- Siblings
- Half-siblings (because they share a parent with you)
- Grandparents
- Great-grandparents
- Nieces
- Nephews
- Aunts
- Uncles
- Sons
- Daughters

Even if these relatives have died, their health information may be important to you.

Do not include information about anyone not related to you by blood, including your spouse's family, or step-parents or step-siblings or children. Since they are related only by marriage, their health history in Gold Coast will not directly affect your health.

### **Types of Information to Collect and Record**

There are two keys to the information you will collect. First, you are looking for relatives who may have genetic health problems you or your children may have inherited (or, in the case of children not yet born, may inherit when they are).



Second, you are looking for trends that may follow you. Does your father have high cholesterol? You may develop high cholesterol, too. Is your mother a twin? If twins run in your family, you might be predisposed to have twins, too.

There are hundreds of genetic disorders which get passed through the generations. If one of these disorders affects a baby from the time it's born, such as cystic fibrosis or Down syndrome, chances are you already know about it and can record it alongside that relative's name right away. It may be information you should have prior to having a baby.

Other problems, however, develop during a person's lifetime and may be triggered by certain habits, or by the environment. Knowledge of blood relatives with these kinds of medical problems may keep you from developing those same problems because you may be able to avoid the risk factors. For example, if you know your mother's family has been prone to heart disease, you'll know to keep your cholesterol and blood pressure under control and to review those problems with each checkup.

### **Specific Diseases and Conditions to Record**



Here are some of the diseases and conditions to track. They represent the most common health problems that may emanate from one's family. It is not a comprehensive list.

- ADHD
- Alcoholism
- Allergies

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Bipolar disorder
- Many cancers including breast, colon, prostate, and ovarian
- Dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Glaucoma
- Hearing loss
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Learning disabilities
- Miscarriage or toxemia
- Osteoporosis
- Stroke and aneurysm
- Surgeries (including cesarean section)
- Vision loss

A more comprehensive list may be found through the National Institutes of Health in Gold Coast.

What if your relative is healthy and there are no health or medical challenges to record? Lucky relative! And, for your purposes, that's exactly what you should record — the person's age and the fact that there are no problems to record. Update the information later if that situation changes.

Has a relative already died? If you can learn how that person died, especially if it is from one of the diseases or conditions listed, then be sure to track that, too. Included should be any cancers, and what body system cancer started in (not just the places it metastasized to).

You may find, too, that older relative, or even those who have already died, may be reported as having a disease or condition that was historically called something different from what it's called today. Tuberculosis was called consumption. Atherosclerosis was called hardening of the arteries. You can always refer to a list of old disease names vs. what they are called today, or simply input the name you record to a search engine to find the more modern label.

### **Additional Information to Track**

While it's not as vital as knowing about a family member's genetic tendencies, other types of information may also be useful to your healthcare provider:

It's wise to record each relative's age and gender. Include the relationship that makes him a blood relative (your nephew is the son of which sister?).

How old was the family member when first diagnosed (or had symptoms of) one of the listed problems? How old was he when he died? Did he die of that listed health problem?

What kind of build did he have? Slender? Overweight? It might give a clue about his habits and why he developed one of the listed problems.

Were there additional risk factors such as smoking? A job that exposed him to toxins?

What kinds of immunizations did the family member have? As time goes on, this becomes more important. It can also be quite interesting to see what older family members may have contracted that were prevented by immunization in later generations. (A good example is polio.)

## **3. Healthy Eating Over 60**



### **Should my diet change as I get older?**

Eating well when you're over 60 will help you maintain your health and independence. A good diet can also help you manage conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and type 2 diabetes.

As you age, your nutritional requirements may change — even if you've been eating healthily as a younger adult. Nutritional needs can also differ between men and women.

After 60, you may not be as active as you were and so you need fewer kilojoules. You may also have a reduced appetite. So, you'll need to pack more nutrients — such as vitamins, minerals, protein and fibre — into a smaller amount of food.

### **How much food do I need as I age?**

To get the nutrients you need, aim to eat enough foods from all 5 food groups every day. Here are the recommended number of serves of each food group for an average-height person with sedentary-to-moderate activity levels:

### **Why is it important to maintain a healthy weight?**

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can help older Australians be more active — preserving bone health and muscle strength as they age.

Excess body weight puts strain on the heart, joints and spine, which can make existing conditions worse. It also increases the risk of developing chronic diseases such as diabetes.

Even if your weight doesn't change, the composition of your body can change. The average person loses muscle mass and function as they age — known as sarcopenia. Muscle is often replaced with fat tissue.



Do strength or resistance training if you can to maintain or increase muscle mass and function. Muscle mass also helps prevent type 2 diabetes since it helps keep your blood sugar levels under control.

After menopause, some women find that their body shape changes and they develop fat deposits around their middle — known as central obesity. This puts a woman at higher risk of heart disease and cancer, even if she is a healthy weight. To minimise the risk, follow a healthy diet in Gold Coast, and do resistance training and moderate aerobic exercise.

### **Do I need more fibre in my diet as I age?**

It's important to consume enough fibre, especially as you get older, since it helps prevent constipation, bowel cancer and haemorrhoids. Fruit and vegetables are good sources of fibre, along with wholegrain breads and cereals, beans and lentils.

Wholegrain high-fibre foods, which are rich in insoluble fibre, reduce the risk of heart disease. Soluble fibre, found in fruits, vegetables, beans, lentils and oats, can lower cholesterol levels and help manage blood glucose levels.

High-fibre foods are also filling and help with weight control.

Australian adults should have the following:

Men (aged 19 years and older) — 30 grams (g) of fibre per day

Women (aged 19 years and older, not pregnant or breastfeeding) — 25g of fibre per day

### **Which vitamins and minerals are important for older people?**



It can be challenging to meet your vitamin and mineral needs if you eat less food as you get older. But older people need more of certain vitamins.

### **Vitamins B2, B6 and D**

Vitamin B2, also known as riboflavin, is found in dairy foods and fortified cereals and breads. Your recommended dietary intake (RDI) increases after age 70, as follows:

- Men 51-70 years — 1.3 milligrams (mg) per day
- Men over 70 years — 1.6mg per day
- Women 51-70 years — 1.1mg per day
- Women over 70 years — 1.3mg per day
- Vitamin B6 is found in wholegrain cereals, meats, vegetables and fruit. It's rare to be deficient. The RDI is:
  - Men 51 years and over — 1.7mg per day
  - Women 51 years and over — 1.5mg per day

Vitamin D is made mostly in the skin. It helps you absorb calcium, so it's vital for good bone health. It is also important for muscle function and possibly immune function.

Adults aged 51 to 70 need twice as much vitamin D as younger adults. Those aged over 70 need 3 times as much vitamin D as adults under 50 years. This is because the skin is not as efficient at making it.

Your body makes vitamin D from sunlight and gets limited amounts from the food you eat. It's virtually impossible to get enough from your diet, so it's important for older people to spend a short time in the sunshine each day.

People who cover up for cultural reasons are at increased risk of vitamin D deficiency, as are people with dark skin, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who need more exposure to make the same amount of vitamin D. If you can't get outside often, talk to your doctor about vitamin D supplements.

### **Calcium**

Calcium is needed for healthy bones, and nerve and muscle function. Inadequate calcium can lead to low bone density (osteoporosis) and a risk of fractures, which is a greater risk for women after menopause.

The RDI of calcium for older Australian adults is:

Men 51-70 years — 1,000mg per day

Men over 70 years — 1,300mg per day

Women 51 years and over — 1,300mg per day

Good sources of calcium include milk, yogurt, cheese, fish with soft edible bones — such as tinned sardines and salmon — almonds and calcium-enriched milks.

## **Iron**

All your iron comes from food and is stored in the body. Good sources of iron include meat, poultry (such as chicken), fish and wholegrain cereals.

If you don't get enough iron, you might deplete your iron stores, which can lead to iron deficiency and eventually, iron-deficiency anaemia.

Iron deficiency develops gradually — there are usually no symptoms until a person develops anaemia. Symptoms of anaemia include fatigue, dizziness, irregular heartbeat, and memory and concentration problems.

In older people, low iron is not necessarily due to a lack of iron in the diet. It can be a sign of hidden bleeding from the gastrointestinal tract, or a problem with the small intestine that affects the absorption of iron. Anyone with symptoms of anaemia should see their doctor.

The RDI of iron for Australian men and women aged over 51 years is 8mg per day.

How much protein do older people need in their diet?

Protein is essential for cell growth and repair, and for muscle strength. Men and women aged over 70 need about 20% more protein than younger adults.

The RDIs for protein are:

- Men aged under 70 years — 64g per day
- Men aged 70 years and over — 81g per day
- Women aged under 70 years — 46g per day
- Women aged 70 years and over — 57g per day

Protein is found in meats and fish, eggs, lentils, dried beans and dairy products. Milk is an easy way to get protein, and it comes with the added bonus of calcium. Soy is also a form of protein (soy milk is often fortified with calcium, as well).

## **How much fat, sugar and salt should I have?**

### **Fat**

You need fats in your diet to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, provide energy and more. There are 3 main types of dietary fat: saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated.

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are generally healthier than saturated fats.

Monounsaturated fats are found in olive and canola oils, avocados and most nuts. They can help lower cholesterol when replacing unhealthy saturated fats in the diet.

Polyunsaturated fats include omega-3 fats and omega-6 fats. These 2 types of unsaturated fat are 'essential fats'. They can't be made in the body and must come from food.

Omega-3 fats help protect against heart disease. Omega-3-rich foods include olive and vegetable oils, nuts, flaxseeds, avocados, fish and seafood — especially oily fish. The Heart Foundation recommends adults consume 2 to 3 serves of oily fish per week.

Omega-6 fats are found in margarine spreads, sunflower and soybean oils, some nuts and sunflower seeds. Most Australians get enough omega-6 fats from their diet.

Saturated fats in processed foods — such as snack foods, packaged cakes and biscuits, takeaway meals, pies and pastries — increase the risk of high blood cholesterol and heart disease.

All fats are high in energy (kilojoules) and can lead to weight gain if overconsumed.

### **Salt**

Consuming too much sodium — most frequently, in salt — can raise blood pressure. Many convenience foods, such as frozen or packaged meals, are high in salt and therefore sodium, so check the labels on the packaging for lower-salt versions. Try to limit salty snack foods and cured meats, and avoid adding salt at the table or during cooking.

The recommended maximum amount of sodium for Australian adults is 2,000 milligrams per day.

## **4. What Can You Do To Help Your Aging Parents Get Healthier?**



There are some fit seniors out there and I see them all around in my long-lived county. They walk, ride bikes, go to the gym, eat wisely. They are the exception. 60% of Americans do not exercise as recommended and some are very sedentary. Too many chronic health problems in Gold Coast go along with being inactive and other habits. Maybe your aging parents are among those who do not move much. You may worry, as you know that leads to the risks of your loved ones losing their independence.

As almost all of us understand, old habits die hard. When your aging parent is in the habit of sitting all day, watching many hours of TV and otherwise not moving around much, you can see what's coming. They can readily lose their mobility. Balance declines when Mom or Dad don't do anything to protect it. Falls become much more common. And when an aging parent loses physical independence, it can create a new burden for you, with planning, caregiving or paying for care for them. When that happens, I hear from the adult children seeking answers at [AgingParents.com](http://AgingParents.com). Their burden can be tremendous. It would be great to avoid that as long as you can.

### **What Can You Do?**

Just talking about the problem of inactivity is not likely to change anything. Particularly if your aging loved one was never an exerciser, it will be hard for them to understand the value and the good feeling that even mild exercise can bring.

If you want to enroll your elders in a plan to get moving, you'll need to do more than talk. You may need to get involved in showing them what they can do. You can give the gift of the right shoes or clothing to keep them comfortable when doing an activity. You can offer suggestions to do some activity with you.



When you live far away from aging parents, the conversation about physical activity can take place on a visit, on zoom or by sending them written materials with a plan and “how to” for getting exercise started. If you are close enough, it’s best to meet in person. A good resource is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The recommended amount of exercise for older adults is spelled out and it offers information on setting goals and getting started with a program.

### **The Value of Your Personal Attention**

A key to overcoming an aging parent’s resistance is your personal attention. Most folks need it and some need it a great deal. Focusing some attention on the plan and asking about it lets your loved ones know you care about them. Exercise can have a social component, too, when done with others. It can relieve loneliness and boredom and help with the common problem of depression in elders. You can find free videos of short workouts for elders on YouTube. How to get motivated to start exercise is offered in booklets by the National Institute on Aging.

Encouragement is a first step. When you show aging parents that you are interested in the subject of promoting physical activity with them it can form a new bond between you and them. And it’s best if you are working toward some goals yourself about activity and you share those with your loved one. Whether you are an exerciser or not, joining in the effort with your aging parent to get to the recommended two-and-a-half hours a week is worth your time. In sharing the goals, you can keep one another accountable for sticking to it.

Many senior centers and community centers offer group exercise classes if your loved one is willing to attend. Do the research. Let them know what’s available nearby. Online exercise videos are plentiful too. Regardless of your aging parent’s mobility issues, there is something for everyone, even those in wheelchairs, with post-stroke limitations and those with hearing loss. Some YouTube videos for elders have closed captioning.

## **5. How to Travel With Seniors**



The holidays are a great time for traveling to visit family and friends. If you're a senior, there are special considerations to take into account during holiday travel. You want to make sure you manage things like your medication, if you're on medication, and dietary restrictions even on vacation. You should also take advantage of any discounts you have, as this could save you money. Pack light when it comes to gifts to avoid straining yourself. With a little preparation, you can enjoy holiday travel as a senior.

### **Making Arrangements**

Choose the right time of day for travel. If you're older, you may not be able to stay awake for late nights or get up very early in the morning. Choose travel times that work for your energy level to assure a safe trip.

Opt for non-stop flights when possible. As a senior, you may want to limit how often you move around while traveling. One way to do this is to look for non-stop flights. Layovers can cause extra strain from moving your bags and getting on and off an airplane multiple times.

Be on the lookout for senior discounts. Some airlines and other transportation options, like busses, may offer senior discounts. If you can get a senior discount for travel, this can save you a lot of money. While booking tickets, always check to see if an airline or other company offers senior discounts.

Consider traveler's insurance. Traveler's insurance may be more worth it as you age. You may be more prone to certain injuries and accidents, so always opt for the traveler's insurance offered by airlines and hotels.

Make sure to get the proper disability options. If you have any age-related disabilities, make sure you get them taken care of while traveling. You may need special accommodations for things like planes and hotels on your trip.

### **Enjoying Your Vacation Days**



Watch what you eat. If you have dietary restrictions due to your age, it's easy to forget these on vacation. Many people want to unwind a little on a trip, but keep in mind dietary restrictions do not take vacations. Mind what you eat on your trip, including when you eat out at restaurants.

Keep up with your medications. It can be hard to remember all your meds on a vacation, especially if you're in a different time zone. Make sure you pack any medications you're on before a trip and remember to take them regularly, even while you're traveling.

Use senior discounts when possible. While you're traveling, make use of senior discounts. The holidays can get expensive, so opt to save money where you can. You can sometimes get senior discounts at places like hotels and restaurants. Ask about senior discounts while you're traveling.

Do not buy too many souvenirs. It can be tempting to stock up on souvenirs to bring home to friends and family members as belated holiday gifts. However, you do not want too many items clogging your bag, especially if you're a senior. Minimize your purchases on your trip to keep from straining yourself carrying things throughout the day and on your return trip. [

Select comfortable shoes. You will likely be walking more than usual while traveling. Seek to stay comfortable and avoid strain when walking if you're a senior.

## **6. Moving With Senior Citizens**



Are you moving with your elderly parents, or are you a senior citizen yourself who is moving to a new home on the Gold Coast? Moving homes is a tough task, and it can take a toll on your mental and physical health, especially if you are a senior citizen. Thus it is important to make a checklist of your move in advance and communicate your needs with your family so they can help you with this process. You can also enlist the help of removalists Gold Coast who are professional experts with trusted licences and will help pack and move your belongings to ease some of your relocation stress. Here are some useful tips to help you create a moving checklist for your move to the Gold Coast as a senior citizen: Moving Checklist For Senior Citizens

## **2 Months Before The Move**

**Decide What Kind Of Home You Want To Retire In** You must first decide where and how you want to retire and live the remaining golden years of your life. For instance, are you looking for a quieter environment like the suburbs in Gold Coast, or do you prefer living in the city with more recreational opportunities? The best part about Gold Coast is that you will find several different living arrangements here and can enjoy the abundant sunshine and beaches for your senior years. You might also get discounts and concessions on your home if you are an eligible pensioner living in Gold Coast. **Visit Your New Home Or Retirement Place To Get A Floor Layout** Once you have decided what home or community you want to live in, you must pay a visit to get a layout of your new home. This will help you determine what things will fit in your new home so you can decide what belongings and furniture items you

can start packing and moving and which items you can leave out. You should also look for accessible features that will help you move around in your new home easily, like:

- Walk-in showers with grab rails
- Nightlights along pathways
- Ramp outside your front door
- Bathtub with protective rails

**Communicate With Your Family Members About The Move** Once you have surveyed your new home and decided it is the right place for you, you must tell your family about the move so they can help you. You must explain why you are moving, whether to downsize your space or be closer to family and friends and get their support for your move. **Survey And Book Your Professional Removalists In Advance** Even though you have your family's support, hiring professional removalists on the Gold Coast who will pack and move your belongings within your deadline is best. These reliable experts have advanced tools and equipment to make this move easier and will give you time for other moving tasks. Ideally, you should book your removalists as soon as you know you are moving to get the date and time you want and get good deals. It is also a good idea to let your removalists know what you are moving and how far so that they can give you an upfront quote to help you budget your move.

#### **4 Weeks Before The Move**

**Change And Update Your Mailing Address** Once you know your new home address, it is time to change your address online or at the post office so that you can get all your bills in your new home. You should also change your mailing address in time to keep receiving any social service or medical benefits you might be getting as a senior. **Get Your Medical Records In Order** You must also visit your physician or doctor and get all your medical records in order. Get a checkup to see if you are fit for the move, and get all your medicines ready. If you are moving to a new city or town, ask your physician for recommendations in your new neighbourhood and arrange all the necessary documents. **Involve Your Family Members in Downsizing** You must now start sorting and organising your items for the move so that you can take the things you need and lighten your load. As a senior, it is more difficult to let go of sentimental things, and you can either give these to your family members as heirlooms or keep them in a storage unit. Ask your local removalists Gold Coast about their storage options. Most of these professional services have climate-controlled storage units where they can pack and keep your belongings safe. For the rest of the items, you should donate them to a local charity and schedule a pickup at least a week before your move.

#### **2 Weeks Before**





Pack One Room At A Time For Your Move Ideally, you can start packing as soon as possible, but if you are pressed for time, you need to begin at least two weeks in advance. You can ask your family members for help packing and get them to arrange packing supplies, like moving boxes and bubble wrap. To make this packing process easier, it is best to follow the below tips:

- Start packing your non-essential and seasonal items first.
- Pack room by room and make inventory lists of your items.
- Pack fragile items with bubble wrap to keep them safe.
- Do not leave any gaps in the boxes; fill spaces with newspaper.
- Label all your boxes by room and list items to find them easily.
- Keep a bag of essentials for the first few days of your move.
- Pack your medicines, glasses, mobiles and chargers in an easily accessible bag.

Tip: Here are some more packing hacks for your move. If you find it difficult to complete your packing on time, you can hire removalists Gold Coast who will swiftly pack your belongings carefully. Moving Day: Get Set For Your New Home

- Check the logo and uniform of your movers and their trucks to ensure you are not getting scammed.
- Ask your family members and friends to be there for you during the move, so you have all the emotional support you need.
- Ensure all your utilities are in order and check if water and gas are running efficiently.
- Visit your local town and find your favourite walking spots and cafes so that you can enjoy your golden years.

Tip: Here are some useful tips to organise your new home after the move.

## **Conclusion**

Taking exceptional care of elderly parents is a journey of love, respect, and commitment. It requires understanding their changing needs, ensuring their safety and well-being, and fostering emotional connections that bring joy and comfort to their lives. By prioritizing open communication, creating a supportive environment, and seeking professional help when needed, we can provide them with the dignity and care they deserve.

Ultimately, this responsibility is an opportunity to show gratitude for the foundation they have built for us, deepening our bond and creating a legacy of love and respect for future generations. The efforts we invest today not only enrich their lives but also leave us with a profound sense of fulfillment and cherished memories to hold onto forever.

## **References:**

Recording Your Family Medical History | Very Well Health, Retrieved 25 Nov 2024, from

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/recording-family-medical-history-2615513>

Healthy eating over 60 | Health Direct, Retrieved 25 Nov 2024, from

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/healthy-eating-over-60>

What Can You Do To Help Your Aging Parents Get Healthier? | Forbes, Retrieved 25 Nov 2024, from

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/carolynrosenblatt/2021/12/09/what-can-you-do-to-help-your-aging-parents-get-healthier/>

How to Travel During the Holidays for Seniors | Wiki How, Retrieved 25 Nov 2024, from

<https://www.wikihow.life/Travel-During-the-Holidays-for-Seniors>

Moving Checklist: Packing And Moving Tips For Senior Citizens | Better Removalists Gold Coast, Retrieved 25 Nov 2024, from

<https://www.betterremovalistsgoldcoast.com.au/moving-checklist-packing-and-moving-tips-for-senior-citizens/>