

# 5 Health Conditions That Affect Baby Boomers

## And 5 Ways to Avoid Them

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**T**he Baby Boomer generation is aging. And while they continue to thrive and embrace the beauty of it all, it's still important to stay in the know about health conditions that often make an appearance. It's true, genetics and other factors will play a role, but adopting healthy habits now can significantly reduce the risk of developing problems later.

**Let's stay proactive!** Here are five health conditions that commonly affect Baby Boomers and how to stay ahead of them.



# 1. Heart Disease

Adults over 60 are at significantly higher risk of [heart attack, stroke, and heart failure](#). In fact, heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women aged 65 and over. To reduce this risk, Baby Boomers should prioritize heart-healthy habits, starting now! Here are some proactive steps you can take today:

- **Quit smoking:** Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease and other chronic health conditions. [Quitting now](#) can significantly improve your health and longevity.
- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Being overweight or obese increases your risk of heart disease. Talk to your doctor about a healthy weight goal for you and create a plan to reach it in a safe and sustainable way.
- **Exercise regularly:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week, combined with strength training exercises two or more days a week. Consider programs like [Senior Fitness with Meredith](#) if you need guidance on getting started.
- **Eat a balanced diet:** Choose a variety of nutrient-rich foods from all food groups, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources. Limit unhealthy fats, added sugar, and sodium in your diet.
- **Learn how to manage stress:** Chronic stress can contribute to heart disease. Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as yoga, meditation, or spending time in nature.
- **Don't neglect your doctor's appointments:** Regular checkups with your doctor are crucial for monitoring your health and identifying potential problems early on.

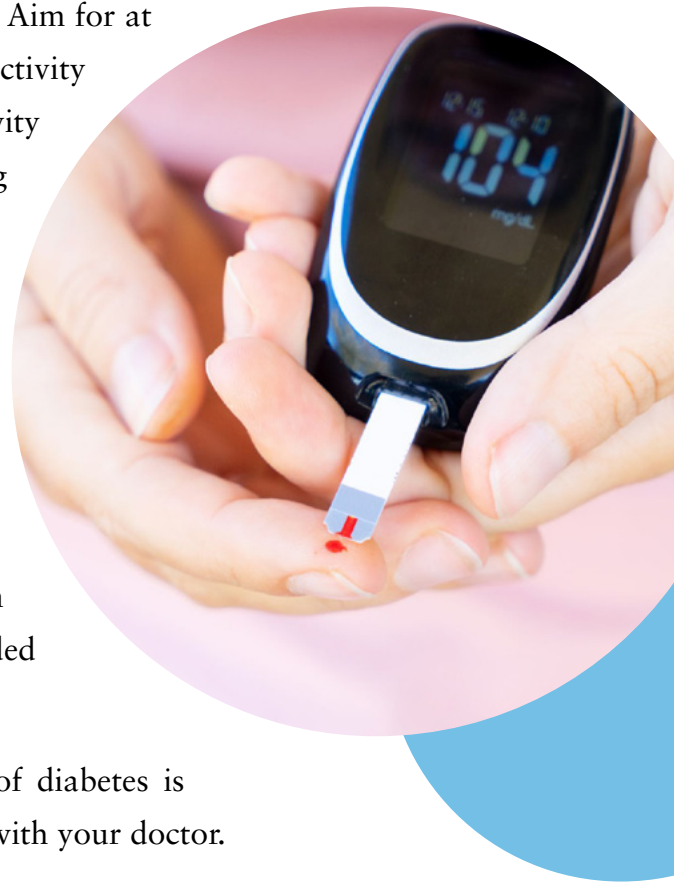
## 2. Diabetes

The number of adults with [diabetes](#) has more than tripled in the past two decades, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Baby Boomers are at an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a condition where your body either doesn't produce enough insulin or becomes resistant to its effects. This can lead to an increased risk of various health problems, including high blood pressure, kidney disease, and cardiovascular disease.

Maintaining an active lifestyle and limiting processed sugars and refined carbohydrates in your diet are extremely important for managing diabetes risk. Here are some additional proactive steps you can take:

- **Incorporate regular exercise into your routine:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week, combined with strength training exercises two or more days a week. [Walking](#) is an excellent and accessible option!
- **Maintain a healthy weight:** Talk to your doctor about a [safe and sustainable weight loss plan](#) if needed.
- **Opt for whole foods over refined ones:** Choose whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean protein sources instead of processed foods with added sugars and unhealthy fats.
- **Schedule regular screenings:** Early detection of diabetes is crucial. Discuss appropriate screening intervals with your doctor.
- **[Monitor blood sugar](#) regularly (if you have diabetes):** Consistent monitoring helps manage diabetes effectively.



### 3. Arthritis

Arthritis, a condition causing joint pain and stiffness, affects many Baby Boomers—[osteoarthritis](#) being the most common type. This is often caused by the natural wear and tear on joints over time. While it affects millions of Americans, women over 50 have a higher risk of developing arthritis. Regular physical activity can offer significant benefits for arthritis management. Consider low-impact exercises like swimming, walking, or yoga to improve joint flexibility and strengthen surrounding muscles.

### 4. Cancer

Baby Boomers are at an increased risk of developing certain types of cancer, including:

- **Breast cancer:** Women should discuss their individual risk factors and screening options with their doctor. Mammograms are a recommended screening tool, but their frequency and starting age may vary based on individual risk.
- **Prostate cancer:** Men should consult their doctor about their individual risk factors and potential benefits and risks of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening. This test has limitations, and the decision to be screened involves weighing potential benefits and drawbacks.
- **Lung cancer:** Individuals with a history of smoking are at higher risk. Early detection through low-dose CT scans might be beneficial for high-risk individuals, but it's crucial to discuss this with a doctor to assess suitability.
- **Colorectal cancer:** Regular screening through colonoscopies or other recommended tests is crucial for early detection and risk reduction.

Early detection through appropriate screenings is essential for effective cancer management. While eliminating all cancer risk is not possible, maintaining a healthy lifestyle can contribute to overall well-being and potentially reduce risks.

Here are some recommendations:

- **Maintain a balanced diet:** Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein, while limiting processed foods, red meat, and sugary drinks.
- **Engage in regular physical activity:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week, combined with strength training exercises two or more days a week.
- **Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption:** Smoking is a major risk factor for various cancers, and excessive alcohol intake can also increase cancer risk.
- **Protect your skin from harmful UV rays:** Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher daily and avoid excessive sun exposure, especially during peak hours.



## 5. Osteoporosis

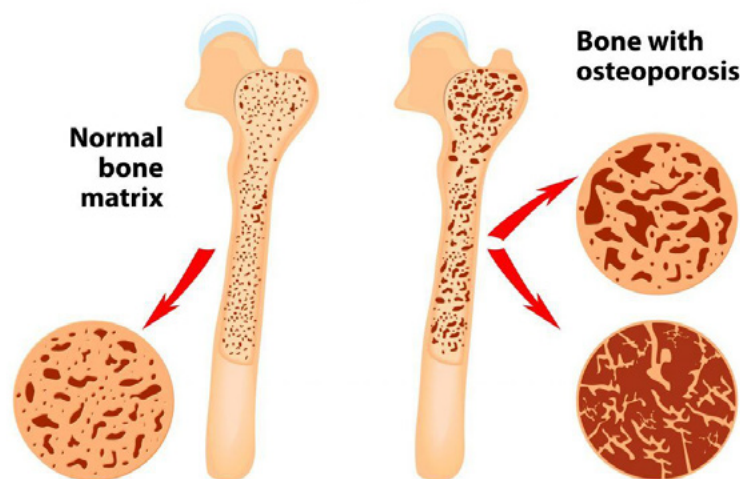
**Osteoporosis** develops when bone mineral density and bone mass decrease, or when the structure and strength of your bones change. Weakened bones mean harder falls and easier breaks.

While preventing osteoporosis entirely may not be possible for everyone, several lifestyle factors can significantly reduce your risk:

- **Calcium intake:** Ensuring adequate dietary calcium intake is

essential for building and maintaining strong bones. Aim for 1,000 mg per day for adults under 50 and 1,200 mg daily for adults 50 and over. Calcium-rich foods like dairy products, leafy green vegetables, and fortified foods can contribute to your daily intake. Consulting a doctor or registered dietitian can help determine if you need additional calcium supplements.

- **Vitamin D:** Vitamin D plays a vital role in calcium absorption and bone health. Aim for 600 IU (International Units) of vitamin D daily for adults. Sunlight exposure can contribute to vitamin D production; however, sun exposure recommendations vary based on individual factors like skin type and geographical location. Consider talking to your doctor about vitamin D levels and potential supplementation needs.
- **Healthy diet:** A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains provides essential nutrients for overall health, including bone health.
- **Regular exercise:** Weight-bearing exercises that stress and strengthen bones are crucial for preventing osteoporosis. Examples include walking, jogging, dancing, and strength training. Consulting with a healthcare professional or certified personal trainer can help you develop an appropriate exercise program.



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