

Rush Generations

A Healthier Today and a Vital Tomorrow

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RUSH Rush is a not-for-profit health care, education and research enterprise comprising Rush University Medical Center, Rush University, Rush Oak Park Hospital and Rush Health.

PLEASE NOTE: All physicians featured in this publication are on the medical staff of Rush University Medical Center. Some of the physicians are in private practice and, as independent practitioners, are not employees or agents of Rush University Medical Center.

5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ OLDER ADULTS

- 1 | Places you already know might have resources you don't know about.** Some of the community organizations you already know have resources tailored to the needs of older LGBTQ adults. Center on Halsted, for example, offers meals, social and recreational programs, and housing and employment assistance just for LGBTQ older adults.
- 2 | You can easily find dentists, primary care physicians, therapists and other providers who self-identify as LGBTQ-competent.** The Gay and Lesbian Medical Association maintains a directory, searchable by ZIP code, of medical and mental health providers who self-identify as LGBTQ-competent. Visit the directory at rsh.md/glma-directory.
- 3 | You can also find information on supportive long-term care facilities.** Many older LGBTQ adults worry about how they might be treated by staff and fellow residents if they spend time in a long-term care facility. Center on Halsted and Howard Brown surveyed a number of long-term care and supported living facilities about the policies and programs they have in place to protect and support the well-being of LGBTQ residents. You can find these survey results by visiting rsh.md/long-term-survey.
- 4 | Rush can help.** Our department of health and aging has social workers with clinical expertise in LGBTQ aging who can provide competent and affirming counseling services. Call (312) 563-2703 for more information.
- 5 | Rush is committed to equity and inclusion.** The Human Rights Campaign evaluates health care facilities' policies and practices as they relate to the equity and inclusion of LGBT patients, visitors and employees. During the organization's last survey, the Medical Center received a perfect score.

For additional assistance navigating resources specific to LGBTQ older adults, please contact our resource center help line at **(800) 757-0202**.

→ YOUR HEALTH



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Stay in the Game — Safely



Adam Yanke, MD
Orthopedic Surgeon

Everyone knows exercise is good for your body, mind and spirit. But as life goes on, your body recovers and repairs itself more slowly, and you begin to have less energy. That doesn't mean you should stop being active. In fact, the opposite is true: Lifelong physical activity helps keep you healthy and strong. The older we get, though, the more careful we need to be about preventing injuries.

Stretch

One way to do this is to stretch before and after your workouts. "It's impossible to over-emphasize how crucial stretching is to preventing long-

term overuse issues," says Adam Yanke, MD, a sports medicine orthopedic surgeon at Rush. "And yet, people tend to dive straight into the activity because that's the fun part."

This eagerness can have consequences. Tight tendons and muscles are more likely to be strained and snapped. To protect yourself, always do 10 minutes of static stretches — meaning no bouncing — before you start exercising. Hold each pose for 30 seconds for optimal stretch. Do the same thing after you work out to help your muscles relax and your heart rate recover.

Mix it up

In between, try different things. "If you do one sport too much, you can overwork those muscles and joints," Yanke says. "So test your body in different ways by working different muscles." For instance, if you are an avid jogger, try swimming once in a while instead.

Play it safe

It's also important to listen to your body. If you can't dart around the tennis court like you used to, find a partner and start playing doubles instead of singles. You'll get to enjoy the sport while putting less stress on your body.

Don't let your ego get in the way. "The desire to play at a high level can get you in trouble," Yanke says. "I won't say it's impossible to do what you used to do, but it may take more effort to maintain the same level of fitness. And it's better to play it safe than to risk getting hurt."

For more tips from Adam Yanke, MD, read an expanded version of this article at rsh.md/in-the-game.

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→ Join us Friday, May 20, for the annual Rush Generations member luncheon, where you will have the opportunity to meet other members and hear from an expert panel about aging initiatives at Rush and nationwide. See calendar insert for details.

Rush Generations

Brought to you by Rush Health and Aging

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Looping Advocate Ira Brand



Ira Brand has been attending Rush Generations programs for six years. He particularly enjoys our annual men's health events. But as a person with

impaired hearing, he found that he could not hear the presenters as well as he had hoped.

So he took action, reaching out to the Rush Generations staff to request that a looping system be installed in the Brainard Conference Center, where many Rush Generations events take place.

Thanks to his advocacy, the Medical Center will soon install a loop, which is a wire that circles the room and connects to a sound system. The loop transmits sound electromagnetically to people's hearing aids or cochlear implants, making it much easier to hear.

Brand, a member of the Hearing Loss Association of America who works closely with the association's looping advocates, hopes that every hospital in Chicago will eventually install a looping system. After a career spent in the field of education and in the U.S. Navy, he hopes to spend his retirement promoting looping for as many people as possible, from children to older adults and veterans.

Intimacy After Cancer



Catalina Lawsin, PhD
Clinical Psychologist

Depending on the type of cancer they have, 40 to 100 percent of people experience changes in their sexual function after cancer treatment.

These changes are largely due to cancer treatments that can cause hair loss, fatigue, pain, vaginal dryness and impotence, among other symptoms that decrease people's desire and ability to be intimate.

"Symptoms like these can, in turn, affect partners," explains Rush psychologist Catalina Lawsin, PhD.

"And the partner usually doesn't want to pressure the patient. But then the patient may feel like the partner isn't as attracted to them."

This can become a vicious cycle, but it doesn't have to. There are many ways of improving or reigniting your sex life after a serious illness or injury.

Talk about your needs and fears

Among these, talking about your needs is one of the most important — whether you're in a long-term relationship or just dipping into the dating pool.

"In many long-standing sexual relationships, people settle into routines," Lawsin says. "So couples might not be in the habit of actually talking about sex." But talking is exactly what you need to do if your body suddenly changes in a way that makes having sex more difficult or less appealing: Only when you've talked honestly with your partner can you start working together to find solutions.

For example, if a woman's vagina becomes tight or dry, penetration may become painful. By saying so, she can direct her partner toward other activities that may give her more pleasure and less pain. Similarly, if man has trouble getting an erection, it can help to talk through possible solutions — such as medications, penile pumps or activities that don't require an erection — that he and his partner can incorporate into their routine.

Know that help is available

If you don't feel comfortable talking with a partner, or if you want help figuring out what medications or devices might work for you, talk with your doctor or a psychologist.

Lawsin, for example, offers psychotherapy for people who are unsure how to discuss changing sexual needs or who want help adjusting to a new body image after a surgical procedure or the loss of weight or hair. Other specialists offer medical interventions to help with physical symptoms.

Because people's sexual needs and desires vary so widely, there's no one-size-fit-all approach to dealing with sexual challenges after cancer. "But we'll work with you toward your individual goals," Lawsin says.

Join us on Wednesday, April 20, for a panel discussion on prostate cancer, sexual health and other men's health topics. See calendar insert for details.

How Cleaning in All Seasons Keeps You Healthy



Jennifer McDonnell, MD
Primary Care Physician

"I hate housework. You make the beds, you wash the dishes and six months later you have to start all over again." — Joan Rivers

For health and safety's sake, it's probably best to get house cleaning on your calendar a little more often than once or twice a year.

In fact, putting off cleaning and letting clutter pile up can actually have serious effects on your physical and mental health:

Respiratory issues

The problem: Dust and pet dander are major triggers for asthma. So are mold, mildew, and dust that's contaminated with droppings from mice, cockroaches or other pests.

Solutions: Cluttered homes tend to harbor a lot of dust — after all, the less stuff you have, the fewer places dust can collect — so general decluttering is a great place to start. To stay on top of dust and dander, vacuum frequently with a vacuum that has a high-efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filter.

Frequent cleaning can also help keep household pests from settling in. "Make sure you get rid of any potential food sources for rodents or bugs," says Jennifer McDonnell, MD, an internal medicine physician at Rush. And watch for damp areas that can provide a place for mold and mildew to flourish. McDonnell recommends cleaning with a diluted bleach solution and making sure that the room is well ventilated to keep humidity down and discourage mold's regrowth.

Dangerous falls

The problem: Every year, one in three adults age 65 or older falls. And more than 2.5 million of them are treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries

such as hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries. About half of all falls happen inside the home, where clutter can be a serious hazard.

Solutions: "Getting rid of throw rugs is the first thing I recommend," says McDonnell, "since they're so easy to trip on." She also suggests keeping floors as obstacle-free as possible by removing items like papers, books, clothes and shoes from stairs and other places where you walk.

Disrupted concentration

The problem: One not-obvious effect of living in a cluttered environment: Your ability to focus can suffer. A 2011 study that mapped the brain's response to clutter found that when we're surrounded by stuff, we're much more distractible.

Solutions: General decluttering not only helps you keep your home cleaner, it helps you think more clearly. Try going through closets, cabinets and drawers once or twice a year to see what you can toss or donate.

If you're helping an older relative or friend with housecleaning, McDonnell suggests doing it gradually rather than all at once, since disruptions in surroundings and routine can be hard to adapt to, especially for people with dementia.

→ Keep it clean

Once you've set your sights on what needs cleaning, how you clean it is important as well. For example, if you're buckling down to clean because someone in your house has respiratory issues, you need to pay attention to the cleaning products you use. Many products, especially those scented with citrus or pine, contain ingredients that can aggravate asthma.

And after your spring deep cleaning is done, keeping up with it will help keep you healthier. "I'm big on slow and steady as opposed to infrequent, stressful major cleanings," McDonnell says. "You need to find the approach that you're most likely to stick with."

→ Interested in more housing resources?

Join us Monday, April 11, to learn about housing options for people with disabilities.

See calendar insert for details.