



National Health & Aging Trends Study

how daily life changes as we age

NHATS & you

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Welcome and Thank you

This year marks the 10th year of interviews for the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS). We'd like to welcome back the thousands of participants who have been an important part of this study for many years.



NHATS is being used by an increasing number of researchers and policymakers to understand how daily life changes as we age—information that can be helpful to improve the experience of aging in the United States.

NHATS by the Numbers

12,000+ Number of NHATS participants to date

4,000+ Researchers using NHATS data

300+ Publications in scientific journals

100+ Journals where research is published

The contributions NHATS is making are due to the continued participation of people like you. As one of our NHATS data collectors put it, “Respondents truly believe in this study.”

As in past newsletters, we have included a sampling of findings from NHATS that we hope you will find interesting.

The Doctor will Read Your Email now



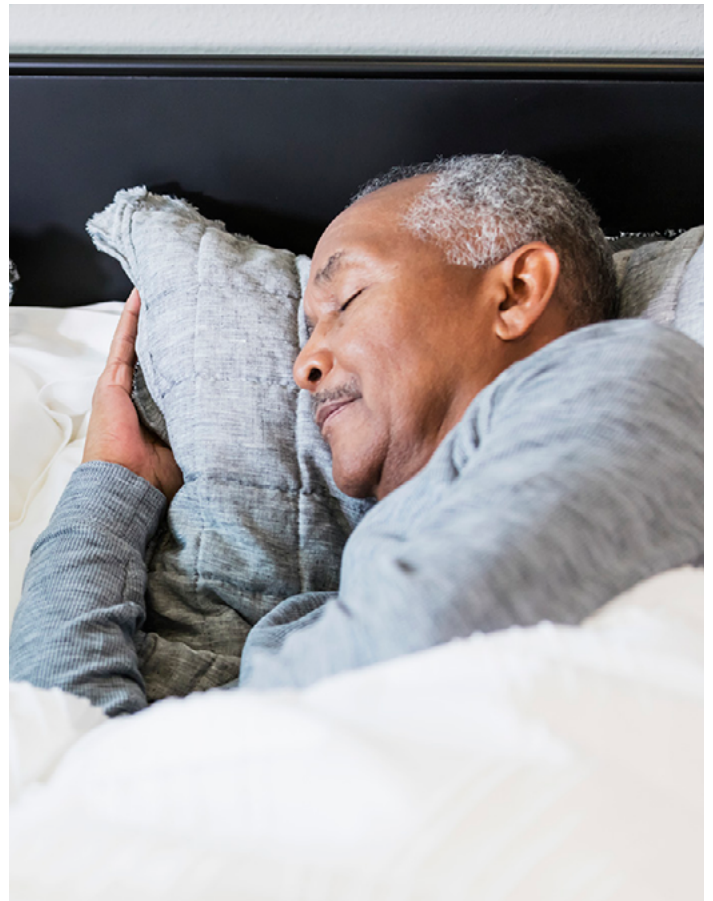
The Internet is here to stay and the number of older adults who now go online for important daily tasks has increased sharply in just the past decade. In 2011, only 4 out of every 10 older adults went online; in 2018, this number rose to 6 out of 10.

A growing number of older adults are going online to contact their medical providers. In 2011, only 7 percent went online to contact a doctor or other health care provider. By 2018, 22 percent did so. There are still substantial age differences: only about 1 in 10 people age 85 and older went online to contact a medical professional whereas 30 percent of people ages 65-74 did so.

Time for bed

We all know the value of a good night's sleep, but some people face challenges when trying to sleep. NHATS collects information that can be used to study the sleep patterns of older adults.

On average, about 20 percent of people take 30 or more minutes to fall asleep every night or most nights. About 14 percent of older adults have trouble maintaining sleep; that is, they report trouble falling back asleep if their sleep is interrupted. This information can be used with other data collected in NHATS to look at potential links between sleep and health.



Why Does Walking Speed Matter?

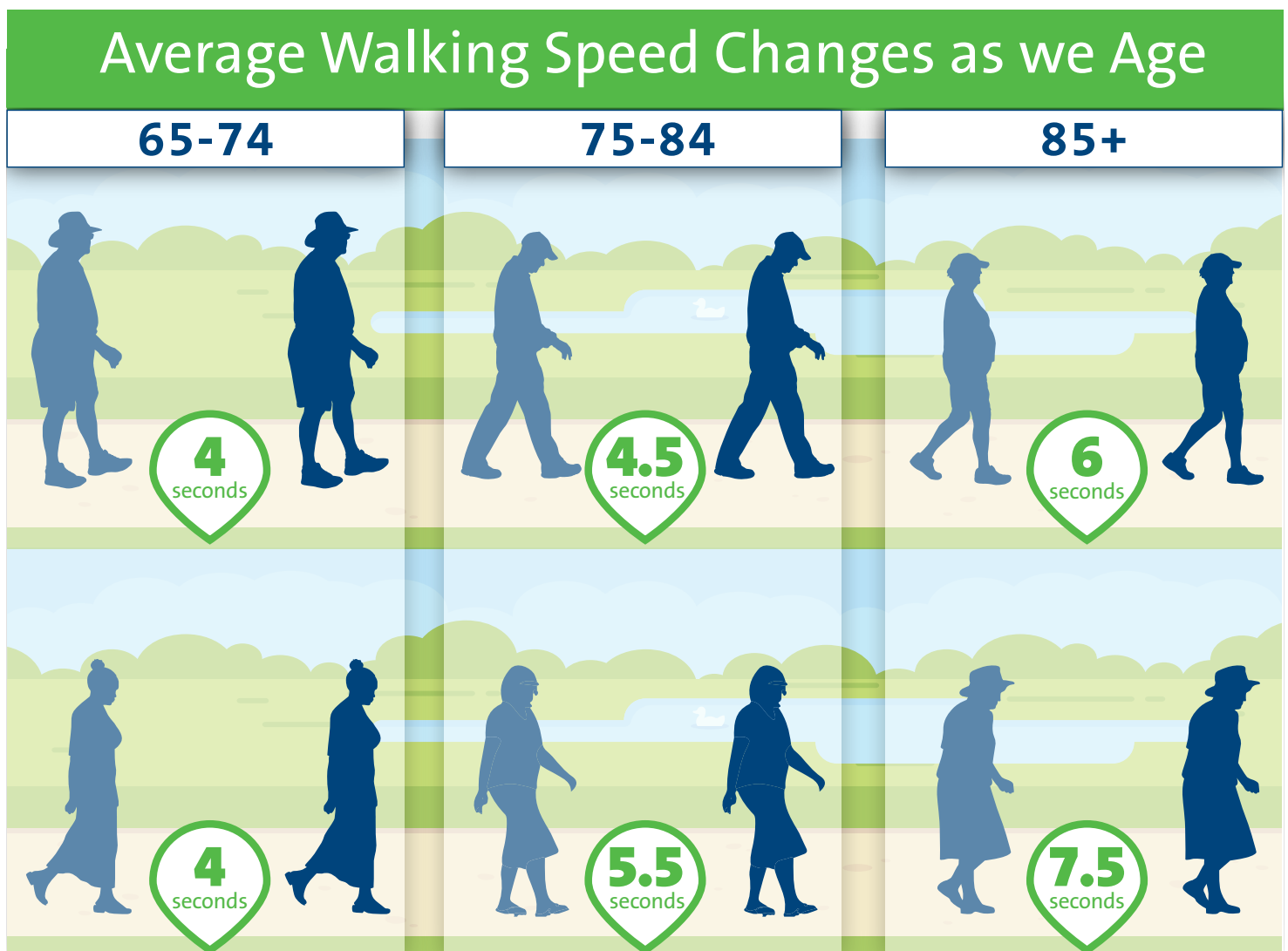
During the NHATS interview, participants are asked to walk across the room—about 10 feet—at their normal pace. This part of the interview provides information to calculate usual walking speed.

How fast or slow someone walks, even over a short distance, can tell us important information about their health and wellbeing.

Walking speed changes with age for both men and women.

Both women and men ages 65-74 walk 10 feet in about 4 seconds. The time to walk this distance increases with age and more so for women than men. Women ages 85 and older take on average 7.5 seconds to walk 10 feet while men take about 6 seconds.

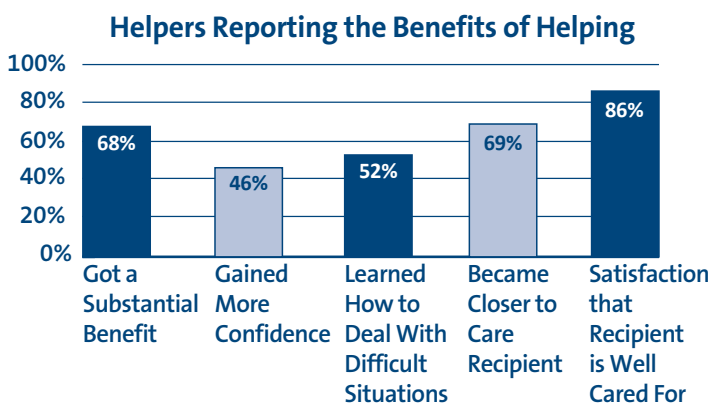
National data like these can be used to develop guidelines for what is typical for men and women at certain ages. Walking speed could be used to identify people who may soon need help with getting around. Like other health issues, early identification can be key to preventing decline.



Spotlight on Caregiving

As a follow up to the NHATS study, we also interview family members and friends who have helped NHATS participants with their daily activities. This part of the study is called the National Study of Caregiving (NSOC).

NSOC is an important source of information at the national level about caregiving from family and friends. Using NSOC, a groundbreaking report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine found that 18 million friends and family members provide 1.3 billion hours of help each month to the more than 9 million older adults who need assistance with daily activities. While there are challenges associated with helping older adults, 7 out of 10 helpers report substantial benefits of helping. Over 80 percent report that helping gives them satisfaction that their relative is well cared for.



Future rounds of NSOC will allow researchers to continue studying how caregiving changes over time. NHATS participants can help make NSOC a success by providing contact information for family members and others who help with daily activities.

What's New in 2020?

One of the unique features of NHATS is that we not only interview participants but we ask them to complete a series of activities that help measure their ability to get around, their strength, and their memory.

We have added some exciting new activities for 2020 to help measure vision and hearing as well as some new memory activities. And, a small subgroup of participants will be asked to wear a special activity watch designed to measure how much they move through the day and night.



In the coming months, an NHATS interviewer will contact you to schedule your annual interview. We look forward to your participation in 2020. Thank you again for helping to make NHATS a success!

www.mynhats.org

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