



 fitbit | HEALTH SOLUTIONS

Creating healthy habits at any age

Why seniors are never too old to reap the benefits of healthy behavior change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Is it too late for seniors to change their habits at 60? What about 70 – or even 90? And if they did, would it make a difference? According to a growing body of scientific research, the answer is a resounding yes.

While some seniors may be intimidated by the idea of changing up their lifestyle, studies have shown that making behavior changes later in life—even after decades of less-than-ideal habits—can have a dramatic positive impact on both physical and mental health, as well as life expectancy.

In this ebook, we'll explore:

—The current state of senior health and why behavior change is necessary

—How healthy habit adoption drives health improvements, even later in life

—4 key areas where new habits can make an impact on quality of life and lifespan

—The impact wearables have on meaningful health behavior change for seniors

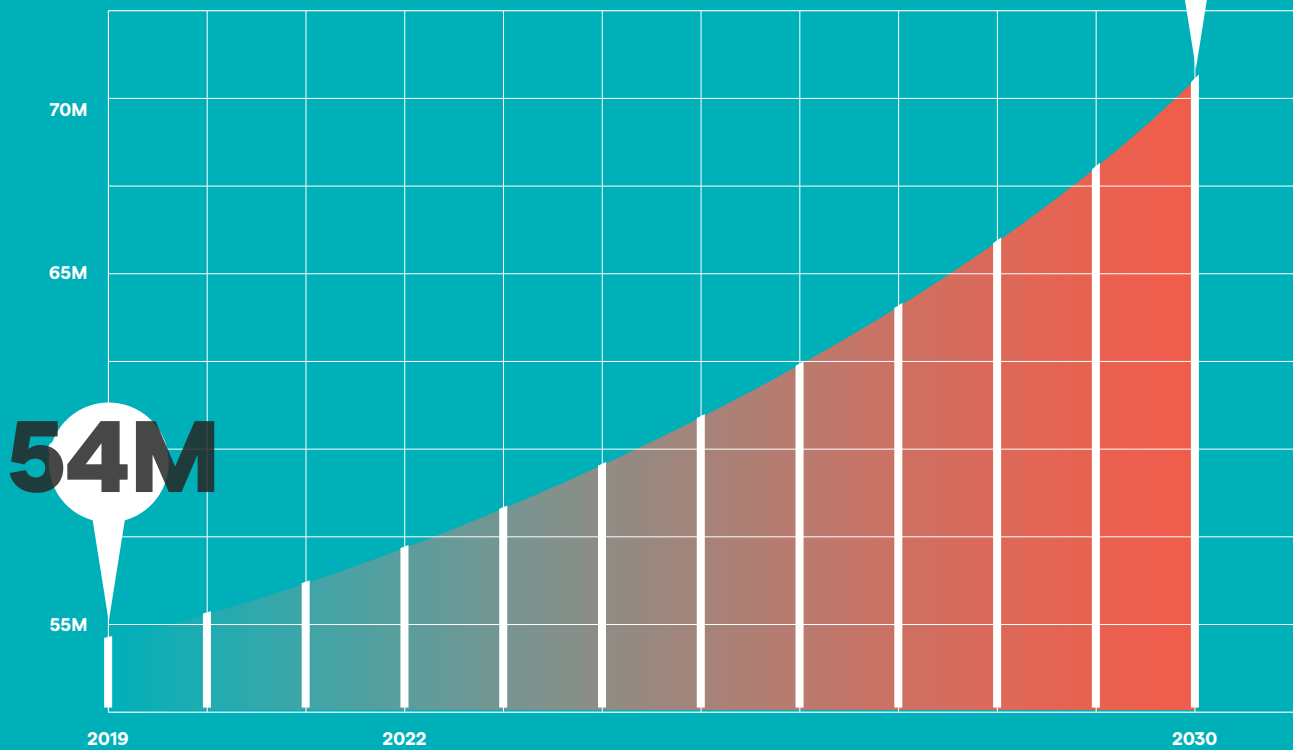
Why empower older adults to embark on healthy behavior change?

When it comes to senior health, it's not about preventing all health problems—that's not realistic. But the state of health in Medicare-age adults is declining, and at the same time, the population is growing. Here's what the stats say:



By 2030, the number of U.S. adults over 65 will reach 71 million (compared to 54 million in 2019).¹

71M



ADULTS OVER 65



According to the CDC, 80 percent of older adults have one chronic condition, and 50 percent have two.²



Key indicators of health risk behaviors include lack of activity, eating fewer than five fruits and vegetables per day, obesity, and smoking.³



There's still time to take control of senior health and make positive changes. After all, older adults aren't done learning and growing. Behavior change is possible at any age; it may just require a different approach to help Medicare-age seniors succeed.

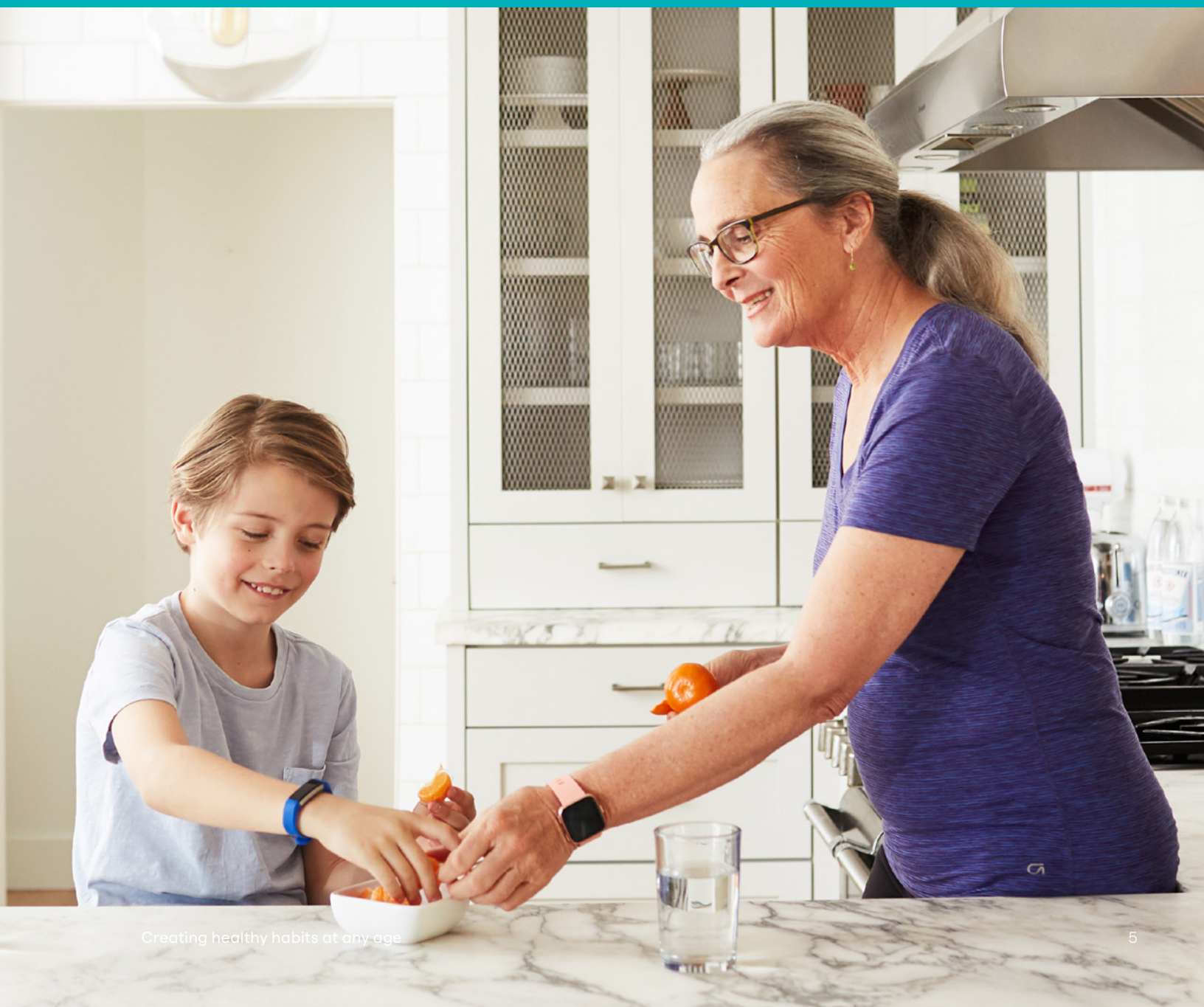
It's true that seniors tend to have entrenched lifestyle habits that may make it harder to initiate change. In fact, there's sound evidence that older adults lead more routine and less varied lives than young adults, which means they're not always as open to change. But surprisingly, researchers have found that adopting new habits isn't any harder for a Baby Boomer than it is for a teenager.⁴

Once they do form a new habit, the Medicare-age population is actually more likely to maintain any changes and stick to a routine that they find effective.⁵ Medication adherence, for example, is better among older adults than middle-aged adults, attributed in part to those stable daily routines. And psychotherapy efficacy is as good with adults between the ages of 61 and 90 as with their younger counterparts ages 21 to 59.

So, what can motivate them to change? More time with their families.

Spending more time with family can help motivate seniors to change

A Johns Hopkins-led study found that people ages 44-84 who made good-for-you changes such as quitting smoking, following a healthy diet, and getting regular exercise decreased their risk of death in that time period by 80 percent.⁶





1.

Let's get physical: Adding regular exercise



Think it's too late for seniors to start an exercise routine? Think again. There's a common misconception that older adults should focus less on physical activity, so they don't risk hurting themselves. Yet researchers disagree—regular exercise can reduce the risk of chronic disease, strengthen muscles, improve balance, and more.⁷

Plus, physically active seniors are actually less likely to experience falls, and if they do fall, are less likely to be seriously injured.⁸

According to a JAMA study of older adults: when comparing adults who do not exercise regularly to those who were lifelong exercisers, the lifelong exercisers had a 36 percent lower risk of dying during the study period. Makes sense, right?

But what's even more interesting is that those who were inactive as younger adults but had taken up regular exercise in their 40s, 50s, or 60s had a 35 percent lower risk of death when compared to non-exercisers—only one percent lower than the lifelong exercisers.⁹



2.

Jumpstart social connection: Reducing stress from loneliness

Stress and loneliness not only have a huge impact on mental health and quality of life, but also affect physical health.

To truly help seniors become healthier people, it's important to confront the overwhelming prevalence of social isolation.

Older adults are at increased risk for social isolation because they are more likely to live alone. Currently, 24 percent of Americans 65 and older are considered socially isolated, and 43 percent of adults 60 and older report feeling lonely.

That's a serious problem. According to the National Academy of Medicine, social isolation significantly increases a person's risk of premature death from all causes, a risk that may rival

those of smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity. On the other hand, social connectedness enables older adults to age more successfully. By connecting with others, seniors can:

- Lower risks of disease
- Lower rates of anxiety
- Strengthen their immune system
- Improve cognitive function

Other research shows that strong social connections are linked not only to a better chance of staying physically healthy, but having increased longevity. Specifically, one study that included more than 308,000 participants found that participants who created strong social connections had a 50 percent increased likelihood of survival across age, sex, and initial health status.



3.

Fueling up: Encouraging healthy eating habits

Dietary needs evolve as people age and so should eating habits. As metabolism slows and the body becomes less effective at absorbing and utilizing nutrients,¹⁶ it's important to focus on adjusting what seniors eat and drink accordingly.

The good news is that dietary changes later in life have a positive impact on health; even small changes can lead to a healthier life.¹⁷

A systematic review of 22 studies that encouraged dietary changes during the retirement transition for adults aged 55-70 concluded that interventions were successful at getting seniors to eat more fruits, vegetables, and fish while decreasing meat intake.¹⁸

In another study of death rates among 74,000 men and women, researchers found participants who added more fruits and vegeta-

bles to their diets had a lower risk of early death. Study participants who had poorer eating habits had between a six and 12 percent higher risk of dying early.¹⁹

Considering fruits and vegetables are often identified as the most important part of a diet in preventing age-related disease,²⁰ that's highly promising news—and showcases a promising path forward for seniors.



4.

Catching Zzz's: Getting good, consistent sleep

Between 40-70% of older adults have chronic sleep issues and up to half of cases may be undiagnosed.²¹



Sleep is an essential part of how the body recovers and functions. For Medicare-age adults, that recovery element is even more critical.

The results can be extremely harmful:

- Persistent short sleep duration at age 50, 60, and 70 compared to persistent normal sleep duration is associated with a 30 percent increased dementia risk.²²
- Poor sleep activates biological aging and inflames chronic diseases.²³

In stark contrast, older adults who maintain consistent sleep-wake schedules and optimal levels of sleep live longer than those with poor sleep patterns.²⁴ That's not all; they also have better quality of life, improved mental and physical health, increased cognition, and more.²⁵

How Fitbit helps seniors create and sustain healthy behavior change

Seniors are ready and able to embrace change. They just need the tools to help them do it.

How can you empower your Medicare-age community? Let's partner up.

Fitbit devices serve as a 24/7 health companion, giving every user a personalized health experience. They can extend and expand health and wellbeing initiatives by:



Tracking health indicators

- Electrodermal activity (EDA) stress detection
- Electrocardiogram (ECG) heart-rate sensor
- Blood glucose tracking, so users can monitor their levels and see trends alongside other daily health behaviors
- FDA-approved photoplethysmography (PPG) algorithm and irregular heart rate notifications, which helps identify potential signs of Atrial Fibrillation





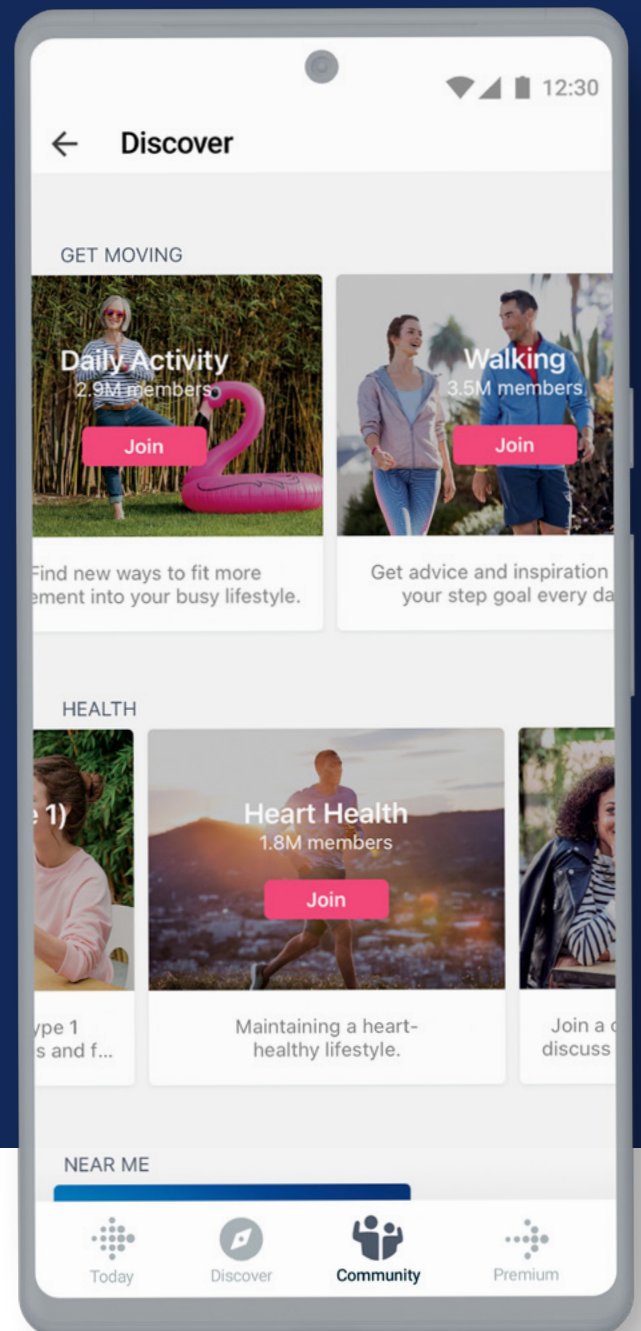
Encouraging physical activity in a manageable way for seniors

- Hourly nudge to reach 250 steps
- A library of on-demand video and audio workouts for every skill level, with topics like *Increase Your Flexibility*, *Move with Confidence*, and *Gait, Balance and Coordination*.

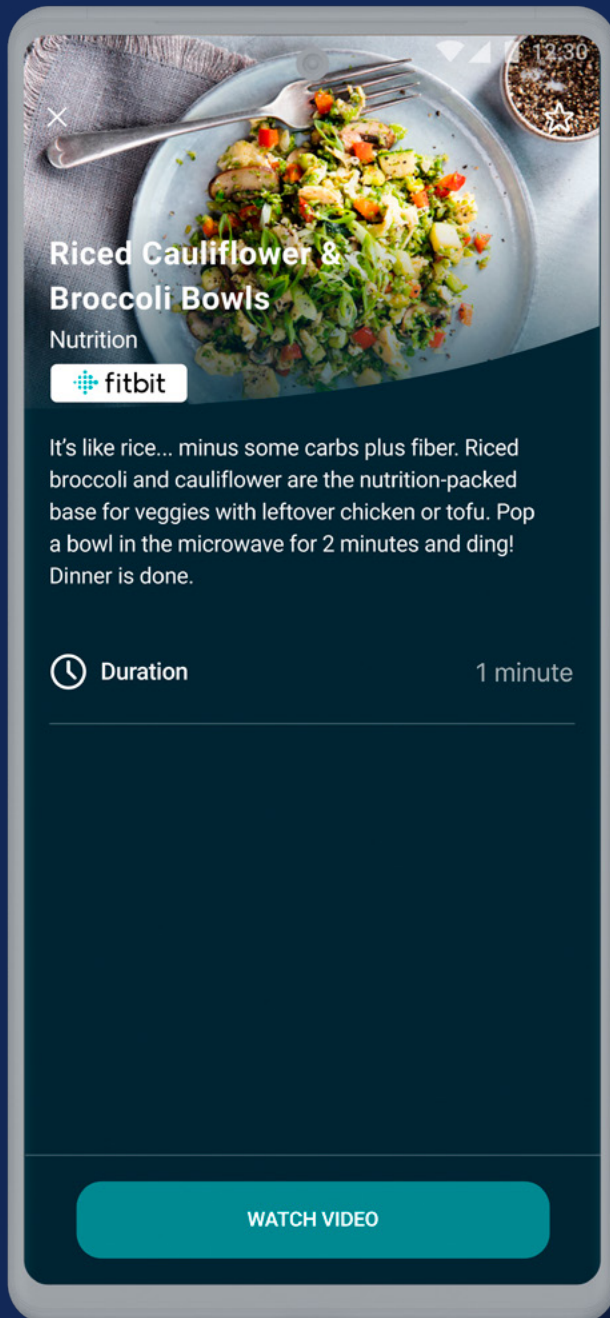


Empowering social connectivity with peers and family members—connections that enhance health and wellbeing

—Over 120,000 active members in the Fit Senior community group

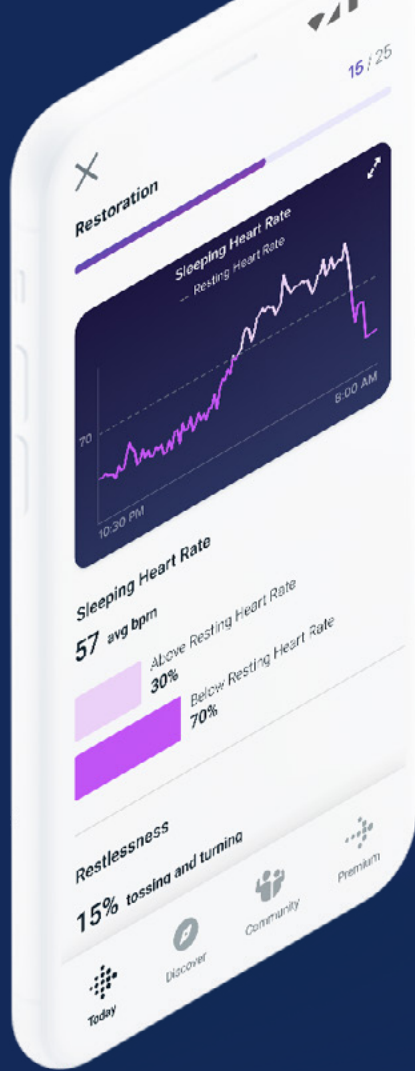


Supporting healthy eating and daily nutrient goals



- Nutrition logging and analysis for all the major nutrients. This is particularly helpful for seniors, who may also need to track nutrition with chronic conditions and existing food restrictions in mind
- Library of healthy recipes with instructional videos and the ability to filter based on recipe types like, *Diabetes-Friendly*, *Heart-Healthy*, *under five ingredients*, and more

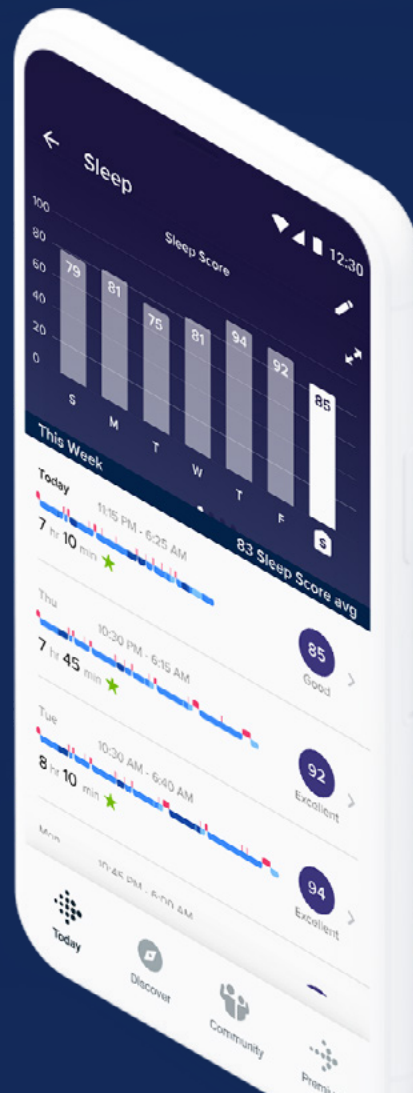




Providing a daily breakdown of quality and quantity of sleep

Fitbit Sleep Score

- Time spent in Light, REM, and Deep sleep stages
- Restlessness
- Sleeping heart rate
- Nightly snore report
- Skin temperature



The Power of Community

The proof is in the results. Here's how seniors are engaging with Fitbit and using their devices:



Over
60%

of active US users age 65+ have been on the Fitbit platform for more than 3 years.²⁶



Fitbit's older adult users are over

5%

MORE engaged than the general Fitbit population.²⁷



1 in 4

senior users has accumulated 150 or more active minutes per week for 75% of the weeks they've had their Fitbit.²⁹



Age

60-69

and

70-79

are the two most engaged age groups on Fitbit and 68 year olds in particular are the most engaged user group.²⁸

Change is possible at any age

Help seniors start today

It's never too late to effect change for your senior population. Whether they improve behaviors in leaps and bounds or start with baby steps, new habits can help them live longer, happier lives with the people they love most.

Fitbit devices give seniors all the tools they need to get active, understand their nutrition needs, stay on top of medical conditions, improve sleep, and connect with others socially.

Ready to learn how you can integrate the Fitbit experience into your Medicare Advantage plans? [Let's talk.](#)

ABOUT FITBIT HEALTH SOLUTIONS

Fitbit Health Solutions, now part of the Google family, works with payers, partners and employers to empower people to live healthier lives.

Fitbit's personalized health and wellbeing experience easily integrates into a wide variety of health interventions and wellbeing programs—including embedded health plan benefits, condition management point solutions, research studies and corporate wellness programs—and helps to extend and enhance their impact by driving higher participation levels, increasing physical activity, and helping to improve outcomes.



REFERENCES

- 1 Ibid
- 2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3717889/>
- 3 Ibid
- 4 <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/its-never-too-late-five-healthy-steps-at-any-age>
- 5 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK83771/>
- 6 <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/its-never-too-late-five-healthy-steps-at-any-age>
- 7 https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/older_adults/index.htm#:~:text=Adults%20aged%2065%20and%20older,of%20activities%20that%20strengthen%20muscles
- 8 https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Physical_Activity_Guidelines_2nd_edition.pdf#page=67
- 9 <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/its-never-too-late-to-start-exercising>
- 10 <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>
- 11 [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557972/#:~:text=Approximately%20one%20quarter%20\(24%20percent,adults%20aged%2060%20and%20older\)](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557972/#:~:text=Approximately%20one%20quarter%20(24%20percent,adults%20aged%2060%20and%20older))
- 12 <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/25663/social-isolation-and-loneliness-in-older-adults-opportunities-for-the>
- 13 http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/186463/9789240694811_eng.pdf
- 14 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22144732/>
- 15 <https://journals.plos.org/plosmedicine/article?id=10.1371/journal.pmed.1000316>
- 16 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22144732/>
- 17 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1613502>
- 18 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4021978/>
- 19 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa1613502>
- 20 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15523086/>
- 21 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28159095/>
- 22 <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-22354-2>
- 23 <https://www.prb.org/resources/new-evidence-on-sleeps-role-in-aging-and-chronic-disease/>
- 24 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4067693/>
- 25 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5300306/>
- 26 Based on Fitbit aggregate user data, Feb 2022
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Ibid
- 29 Ibid