

# SENIOR NUTRITION NEWSLETTER

Nutrition Information, Recipes, and Resources for Seniors



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

## AUTUMN 2023

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

### Autumn is a treat for all the senses

What are your favorite  
fall smells, sights, and  
sounds?



## 7 Facts To Get You Eating More Winter Squash

- 1** Winter squash can be one of four different species — *Curcubita maxima*, *C. moschata*, *C. pepo*, and *C. argyrosperma*.
- 2** The word squash comes from the Algonquin word “askutasquash,” which means “eaten raw.”
- 3** Winter squash is a good source of fiber, antioxidants, and potassium. These all help fight diseases like cancer and diabetes while promoting eye and heart health.



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## Days to Celebrate

### SEPTEMBER

- 1** National Food Bank Day
- 7** National Acorn Squash Day

### OCTOBER

- 6** World Smile Day
- 12** National Farmer's Day
- 16** World Food Day
- 28** National Make a Difference Day

### NOVEMBER

- 14** National Pickle Day
- 16** National Rural Health Day

- 4 In the United States, “pumpkin” refers to a group of round, orange winter squash — like jack o’ lanterns — but other countries use “pumpkin” for all winter squash.
- 5 Along with corn and beans, squash was grown by many indigenous Americans as part of the “Three Sisters.”
- 6 Even though they are naturally sweet, winter squash typically have half the carbohydrates of sweet potatoes, making them a great substitution for those with diabetes.
- 7 Squash plants are fast growing and can tolerate many soil types, so they are grown all across Washington State! If you have the opportunity to stock up now, check out storage tips for winter squash and other vegetables at the end of this newsletter. 🌱



## Dealing with Debt in Older Adulthood

More than ever, older adults are carrying debt into retirement and the average amount of debt has gotten larger too<sup>1</sup>. Medical debt, as well as debt from credit cards, mortgages/housing, utilities, and vehicles are the most frequently experienced by older adults<sup>1</sup>. While debt is obviously a barrier to financial wellbeing, it can influence your physical and mental health too, including anxiety and depression. Seniors with debt also report having to make “tradeoffs” because of their financial situation, like not getting needed home or car repairs, cutting medication doses, and skipping meals<sup>1</sup>. All of these can lead to new health conditions or worsen those that already exist.

People with debt may not be aware of the free tools and resources available to them. The National Council on Aging (NCOA) offers an online service called EconomicCheckUp ([economiccheckup.org](https://economiccheckup.org)) that can help you reduce debt, find work, cut spending, and learn about home equity.

Public benefit programs can help low-income older adults pay for healthcare, housing, food, transportation, and other expenses. Debt counseling, pro bono legal services, and other forms of financial

assistance may be available depending on your location and circumstances. To find the options available to you, check out [wa211.org](https://wa211.org) or contact your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) office by selecting your county on [dshs.wa.gov/ALTSA/resources](https://dshs.wa.gov/ALTSA/resources).

The Savvy Saving Seniors educational program from NCOA helps older adults and their families learn how to budget, avoid scams, apply for benefits, and more. Learn about the program at [ncoa.org/SavvySeniors](https://ncoa.org/SavvySeniors).

For older adults who need to stay or return to working, the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) from the U.S. Department of Labor may be able to help. The program matches low-income older adults aged 55+ with job training, employment search services, and experience working in community service organizations. Learn more about eligibility and who participates in Washington by going to [dol.gov/agencies/eta/seniors](https://dol.gov/agencies/eta/seniors). 🌱



<sup>1</sup> National Council on Aging (2023, June 30). *Get the Facts on Senior Debt* [Blog]. <https://ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-senior-debt>



# Preventing Slips and Falls: Stay Active and Be Prepared

*More than 25% of adults aged 65 and older fall each year<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, thousands of these older adults will also break a bone as a result. For people over 65, broken bones can be the start of more serious health problems and lead to long-term disability. Staying active and being prepared is the best way to prevent slips, falls, and serious consequences that can come after. As winter weather approaches, now is the time to start.*

## Maintain Your Balance and Strength

Regular exercise is an essential part of maintaining your health and preventing chronic disease. Daily exercise (moderately intense) can come in many forms, and MyPlate recommends working on your strength and balance at least twice per week. Building and maintaining muscle strength and balance can prevent slips and falls. Check the Spring 2023 version (volume 4, issue 4) of this newsletter for more information on strength-building and balance exercises.



## Equip Yourself and Your Spaces

Preventing slips and falls may take a few supplies, and by starting early, you have more time to identify and save for these items before you really need them. As you prepare for the dark, wet Washington winters, here are some things to check for yourself and the space around you:

- Nonslip footwear (including socks).
- Indoor lights, especially nightlights.
- Indoor organization to reduce clutter and other hazards.
- Indoor stability bars and handles for bathrooms or entryways.
- Outdoor lights.
- Supplies to keep outdoor walkways clear, swept, and de-iced.



## Visit the Doctor

Regular visits to a doctor are another essential part of your health and wellbeing. When it comes to preventing slips and falls, your doctor can test your eyes, reflexes, and sometimes your balance. These are all factors in slips and falls for older adults, so knowing where you are is important. Your doctor can help you come up with a plan if there are things you need to improve. While you're there, ask your doctor to look at your medications and discuss any that might make you drowsy or otherwise increase your fall risk. 🌱



<sup>2</sup> National Institute on Aging. (2022, Sept. 12). *Falls and Fractures in Older Adults: Causes and Prevention* [Blog]. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/falls-and-fractures-older-adults-causes-and-prevention>

# Fall/Winter Storage Items and How to Store

Autumn can be a time for good deals on a farmer's seasonal bounty. Depending on what you're buying, use the guide below to try and maximize the shelf life of your fall and winter produce.

## STORAGE ZONE: COLD & HUMID

Temperature: 32 – 40°F

Humidity: 90 – 100%

Duration: 7 – 9 months

**Vegetables:** *beets, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, leeks, rutabagas, parsnips, and turnips*

## STORAGE ZONE: COOL & HUMID

Temperature: 32 – 40°F

Humidity: 80 – 90%

Duration: Up to 1 year

**Vegetables:** *potatoes, apples, pears, and cabbage*



## STORAGE ZONE: COLD & DRY

Temperature: 32 – 50°F

Humidity: 60 – 70%

Duration: 6 – 9 months

**Vegetables:** *onions, garlic, and dry beans*

## STORAGE ZONE: WARM & DRY

Temperature: 50 – 60°F

Humidity: 50 – 70 %

Duration: 1 – 3 months

**Vegetables:** *winter squash and sweet potatoes*

Cut out this section and save it as a reference ✂

## Sweet Potato Hash<sup>3</sup>

### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ tablespoons of vegetable oil
- ½ cup bell pepper, frozen or fresh, chopped
- ½ cup onion, frozen or fresh, chopped
- 1 pound of sweet potato (about 1 medium), peeled and cut into small cubes
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes, or to taste

Time: 40 minutes, Servings: 3

### Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Cook bell peppers and onions until tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Add remaining ingredients and reduce heat to medium.
4. Cook for 20 – 25 minutes, stirring every 2 – 3 minutes. Sweet potatoes may begin to stick to the skillet but continue to stir gently and they will cook through. Serve while hot.

Find hundreds of healthy, budget-friendly recipes at [myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen](https://myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen)

### Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1 cup	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>244</b>
<b>Total Fat</b>	<b>9 g</b>
Saturated Fat	1 g
<b>Sodium</b>	<b>407 mg</b>
<b>Carbohydrates</b>	<b>38 g</b>
Dietary Fiber	4 g
<b>Protein</b>	<b>3 g</b>

Sweet potato dishes often blend sweetness with savory. This easy hash recipe is sure to be a favorite for both breakfast and dinner. 🌱



<sup>3</sup> CalFresh. "Sweet Potato Hash" [Recipe]. <https://eatfresh.org/recipe/side-dish/sweet-potato-hash>



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### Food Assistance

Phone: (360) 725-5640

Email: [foodassistance@agr.wa.gov](mailto:foodassistance@agr.wa.gov)

### On the internet at:

[agr.wa.gov/services/food-access](https://agr.wa.gov/services/food-access)