



Commission on Aging

SENIOR UPDATE
AREA AGENCY ON AGING
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING
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October/November/December 2018

Senior Update

...The Eyes and Ears of Alameda County Seniors

Happy Holidays from Chair Person, Donna Murphy

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Happy Holidays All,

Thank you Commissioners for all your hard work on behalf of Older Adults in Alameda County. Our collective voices are making a difference in advocacy efforts as we work on Housing and Homeless issues, CA4S-SI(Food Insecurity) and creating an Age Friendly Alameda County. There are many issues facing Older Adults to where you can lend your voices and expertise. Please continue the good works in your communities, join the Alameda County Senior Services Coalition and continue to lift our powerful voices on Federal, State and Local Older Adult Issues.

Our communities need our collective voices as a powerful voice for change.



Loneliness and the Holidays

**Rezsine Gonzalez, Program Specialist, Division of Adult Protection,
Department of Adult and Aging Services**

The joy and energy of the holidays is often infectious; however, it is not that way for everyone. During this season, when the hustle and bustle takes over for those with young kids or office parties to attend, the older adults in our life are assumed to be cared for and looked after by family members. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

For many of our older adults, loved ones and friends may have fallen ill or passed away. During the long holiday season children and grandchildren may be too far away for anything other than a quick phone call or a brief visit on a single day. Energy and mobility access may have decreased slowly over the year and the ability to independently participate in community and family events diminished. The focus on family and friends that pervades the air, can trigger feelings of loneliness and depression for some older adults.

If you believe that a parent, friend or neighbor may be lonely and isolating themselves this holiday season, please take action. With their permission there are several ways (big and small) that you can make a positive impact.

- 1) Make a point to drop by for a few visits either via Skype or in person at a semi-predictable time throughout the season, but especially during the height of the season and listen, really listen to them.....their stories, their fears and complaints, their traditions;
- 2) Check with their religious organization to see if there is an outreach team that will coordinate visits at homes and facilities. Many houses of worship do this, as well as coordinate transportation to events and festivities;
- 3) A small, very practical activity is to sit down with them as they open and review letters and cards. At this time of year, friends and family traditionally use cards to update each other on the events, health and passing of family members. For our isolated older adults, this can be very depressing and challenging to read and process. Encourage any mutual friends, or co-workers who are willing to volunteer, to take the time to send uplifting cards;
- 4) Bring love, laughter and stories to them: regardless of where they live (in their own home or in a long-term care facility) check to see if you can arrange a small low-key gathering of friends. Be mindful regarding noise and over-stimulation but remember laughter is tremendously healing;
- 5) For someone who always made the pies or strung the lights on the house, it is often very difficult to ask for help. Take note and make observations regarding the specific tasks and projects that are more difficult for them to execute this year and be there, ready to offer a hand;

Don't be Misled by False Medicare or Social Security Ads

Sarah Kim-Lee, Social Security Regional Public Affairs Specialist

Online and otherwise, there's a lot of information out there, and sometimes it's difficult to tell what sources are credible. With millions of people relying on Social Security, scammers target audiences who are looking for program and benefit information.

The law that addresses misleading Social Security and Medicare advertising prohibits people or non-government businesses from using words or emblems that mislead others. Their advertising can't lead people to believe that they represent, are somehow affiliated with, or endorsed or approved by Social Security or the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (Medicare).

People are often misled by advertisers who use the terms "Social Security" or "Medicare". Often, these companies offer Social Security services for a fee, even though the same services are available directly from Social Security free of charge. These services include getting:

- A corrected Social Security card showing a person's married name;
- A Social Security card to replace a lost card;
- A Social Security Statement; and
- A Social Security number for a child.

If you receive misleading information about Social Security, send the complete ad, including the envelope, to:

Office of the Inspector General Fraud Hotline
Social Security Administration
P.O. Box 17768
Baltimore, MD 21235



You can learn more about how we combat fraudulent advertisers by reading our publication *What You Need to Know About Misleading Advertising* at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/EN-05-10005.pdf.

You can also report Social Security fraud to the Office of the Inspector General at oig.ssa.gov/report.

Loneliness and the Holidays Continued from page 2

- 6) During this busy season their regular ride to the market or care provider may have less time for them, help make sure that their cupboards and refrigerator are stocked with food;
- 7) Search together for online listings for age friendly activities. Throughout the holiday season, recreation centers, libraries, museums, places of worship and local colleges host free and low-cost community events.
- 8) Use technology as a tool to coordinate meal or grocery delivery (this is something you can do from work down the street or across the country) or perhaps set up Uber or Lyft to facilitate their rides to and from the market or social activities.
- 9) Encourage new and familiar hobbies, perhaps sign up for that holiday baking class they've always wanted to take or gift that art class they always wanted to take, offer to take them and stay with them until they feel established within the new class/group. (later use the Uber or Lyft you set up.)
- 10) Seek medical advice. If these tips don't seem to work, talk with the older adults about making a medical appointment to see their doctor for other resources and potential treatments.

Your actions may provide joy and healing for someone in need this holiday season. You have a valuable gift in your hands.

If you suspect abuse or neglect including self-neglect please call APS or the Long Term Care Ombudsman to make a confidential report.

Adult Protective Services: 1-800-CALL APS

Ombudsman—510-638-6878 or 1-800-231-4024 (After Hours Only)

Alameda County Long Term Care Ombudsman Denyse McCowan, Regional Program Coordinator

The Alameda County Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTC) program is looking for volunteers. If you are passionate about advocating for residents of long-term care facilities, are observant, reliable, and can use your interpersonal skills to help resolve issues, you may want to consider joining the Ombudsman team.

You and other volunteers will participate in a 36 hour volunteer training program in September, and then spend a few hours a week helping people in need by responding to and investigating complaints.

For more information, please contact Denyse McCowan or Andrea Hall at ombuds@acgov.org, or Phone (510) 638-6878 if you have any questions.

Upcoming training dates to be determined for March 2019.



Salt and Sodium and Your Health

Mary Louise Zernicke, Area Agency on Aging, Senior Nutritionist



For years we have heard that most Americans eat too much sodium, and that excessive sodium can raise blood pressure—causing serious consequences. High sodium intake is associated with an increased risk of both heart attacks and stroke. In the US, heart attacks and strokes are leading causes of mortality.

While the body needs small amounts of sodium to function, estimates are that over 80% of us take in too much sodium. What is the difference between sodium and salt? Sodium is one of the two chemical elements of salt, the other being chloride. The use of salt and sodium can be confusing, as the front of a package may say “no salt added” or unsalted” but the food label will still show that there is sodium in the food item.

Many foods that do not have a salty taste may still contain high levels of sodium, so taste alone is not an accurate way to judge sodium content. For example, a small order of French fries from McDonalds contains 160 mg of sodium, but a Big Mac contains a whopping 950 mg of sodium, about 2/3 of the recommended 1500 mg level of sodium per day for an older adult. Yet, most people guess that the fries are saltier than the burger. Even a small hamburger from McDonalds contains 480 mg of sodium, about 1/3 of recommendations.

About 75% of the sodium we take in comes from processed foods. Salt is a flavor enhancer, so it makes sense that it is added to foods that are highly processed in order to give back flavor. Limiting processed foods will greatly reduce sodium intake for the entire family, from children to grandparents.

Eating fruits and vegetables can help reduce blood pressure as well. They are naturally low in sodium, but they also contain high levels of potassium. Potassium will actually LOWER blood pressure. The new recommendations from the US government is to make half our plate fruits and vegetables. Simply following that advice can help lower blood pressure. Frozen vegetables don't usually have lots of sodium but be sure to read the label, just in case. Canned or frozen fruits are not likely to have much sodium, but check the label for added sugars.

Food author/expert Michael Pollen's suggestion to “eat real food, not too much, mostly plants” works well here. It keeps the nutrition advice simple while supporting taste, health and our environment. Enjoy!

Join Medication Safety!

Marjory Tilley, Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley, Medication Safety Program Manager



Talk with your Doctor about your Medication!

For many older adults, taking medication is a regular part of their daily routine, and they depend on these medications to treat disease and improve health. Taking your medicine as prescribed or medication adherence is important for controlling chronic conditions, treating temporary conditions, and overall long-term health and well-being. Doctors play an integral role in medication adherence.

Make the most of your visit with your doctor.

What do you need to tell your doctor? Think about what you want to discuss with your doctor before the actual visit. Organize your thoughts on a piece of paper. List and rank the concerns you wish to discuss with your doctor (in order, from the most important to the least important). It is important to share information about how you feel physically, emotionally and mentally.

Talk with your doctor by sharing your **symptoms**; giving information about all your **medications**; discussing your **habits**; and by letting the doctor know about any **major changes** in your life.

Symptoms are evidence of a disease or disorder in the body. Be clear and concise when describing your symptoms as they help the doctor identify your problem. Consider asking yourself the following questions:

What are my symptoms?

Are the symptoms constant? If not, when do I experience them?

Does anything I do make the symptoms better or worse?

Do the symptoms affect my daily activities? Activities of Daily Living, (ADL) include: bathing, dressing, grooming, mouth care, toileting, transferring from bed/chair, walking, climbing stairs and eating. Instrumental Activities of Daily Living, (IADLs) are activities related to independent living such as: shopping, cooking, managing medications, use of telephone and looking up numbers, doing housework, doing laundry, driving or using public transportations and managing finances.

Your doctor needs to know about all the **medication** you take, including any non-prescription drugs (known as, over-the counter medications), herbal supplements or herbal remedies. Do not forget to tell your doctor about any eye drops, vitamins, and/or laxatives that you are using.

Make a list and bring the list to the visit. Tell the doctor how often and at what time of the day you take the medication. Describe any reactions you have experienced when taking the medicines; tell your doctor about any allergies or sensitivities that you might have; and report

Join Medication Safety! continued

anything that could affect your ability to take medicine, such as difficulty swallowing or remembering to take them.

Make a habit of showing your list of medications to all your health care professionals at every visit to the doctor, the pharmacy, and to the hospital. Share a copy of this list with a family member or friend.

Some doctors work with their patients to do a “paper bag check-up.” This involves putting all your prescriptions and over-the-counter medications into a paper bag and bringing them into your doctor’s office to be checked by the doctor.

Be sure that your doctor has up-to-date information about the name and phone number of the pharmacy you use including your mail order pharmacy contact information.

Speak Up

As a member of your healthcare team, your doctor needs to know what your life is like. Be open and honest with your doctor. Share what is happening in your life that may be medically useful. Let the doctor know about any stresses in your life, such as a death of a loved one, or a divorce. A personal connection with your healthcare provider or pharmacist is an important part of medication adherence.

Discuss any diagnoses with your doctor. A diagnosis identifies your disease or physical problem. Doctors make diagnoses based on the symptoms you are experiencing, the results of the physical examination, laboratory work, and other tests. Ask the doctor to tell you the name of the condition and why he or she thinks you have it; ask how the condition will impact you; how long it will last; how you can learn more about your condition; and what will be the long-term effect on your life.

Talk with your doctor about any medication he or she might prescribe. Make sure that you know the name of the drug and understand why it was prescribed. Ask the doctor to write down how often and how long you should take the drug; the time of day you take the medicine; how to store the drug safely; any special instructions; how long it will take the drug to work; when you should stop taking the drug; what to do should you miss a dose; side effects you should know about; when you should call a doctor if you are having side effects; and if you can safely mix the drug with the remedies, vitamins, and OTC you are currently taking. Let the doctor know if your medicine does not seem to be working or is causing any problems.

Join Medication Safety!

To locate a Medication Safety program near you, older adults in Alameda County can contact Carol Powers, Senior Injury Prevention Coordinator, EMS, (510) 667-2050.

Save the Date: The National Prescription Drug Take Back Day will be Saturday, 27 October 2018 and aims to provide a safe, convenient, and responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs.

To learn more : (www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/content/national-take-back-day)





Senior Update
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Senior Information

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We're On The Web!

http://www.alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/elders_and_disabled_adults/aaa.cfm

Senior Update Editorial Board: Donna Ireland, Sarah Kim-Lee, Delbert Walker, Jose Villaflor

Dates to Remember:

Columbus Day- October 8

Veterans Day- November 11,
observed November 12

Thanksgiving Holidays- November 22 and 23

Holiday Food Baskets- December 20

Winter Solstice- December 21

Christmas Day- December 25

New Year's Eve- December 31

Upcoming Meetings:

ACA Meeting- October 8, 2018

ACA Meeting- November 13, 2018

I & A Roundtable- November 16, 2018

ACA Meeting- December 10, 2018