Long-Term Care Concerns

As you grow older, you might become concerned about how you will pay for any help you might need to live on your own. You might also wonder what will happen to you if you can’t live on your own anymore. Or perhaps you have an older neighbor who is already voicing these concerns and you’d like to help. Here are some ways to find out your options.

Georgia has a Division of Aging Services, a unit of the Georgia Department of Human Resources, to support older people in maintaining the highest possible quality of life. In addition, there is an area agency on aging (AAA) serving your county that can offer information and referral services to link you to a service provider in your community. AAA’s are usually listed in the business section of the phone book under “Agency on Aging” or “Council on Aging.” There is also a national service, the Eldercare Locator, that finds services for older adults all over the country. When you call 1-800-677-1116 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. EST, you can access more than 4,800 state and local service providers. Whether you want to know about home-delivered meals, legal services, or finding a caregiver, if you know the zip code for the person who needs help, the Eldercare Locator should be able to send you in the right direction.

Once you find these services, though, how will you pay for them? First, do you have long-term care insurance? If you do, check your policy or call your insurance company to find out what your policy covers. If you don’t have this kind of insurance, there are other options. Many services, such as Meals on Wheels, for example, are based on need. If your resources are very limited, you should consider applying for Medicaid. If your resources are...
application is approved, Medicaid pays
for many kinds of assistance.

The Georgia legislature recently
approved an increase in funding of
$10.5 million for long-term care
services, meaning that an additional
4,000 elderly clients will receive home-
and community-based services.

Make sure that your family and
friends know that you need help.
Friends can look in on each other,
provide transportation and support for
doctor visits, and even share a meal.
This kind of support system is often
lacking for seniors because many times
people assume that you are getting by

fine on your own if you don’t ask for
help. Even though this support isn’t
financial, it can still play a big role in
helping you and your fellow seniors to
live independently for as long as
possible.

Your Health

Is Fresh Food Always Better than
Processed?

You remember the good old days
when you picked the vegetables right
out of the garden, cooked them, and put
them on the table for the family to
enjoy. You knew they couldn’t be beat
as far as the taste and nutrition. Few of
us now take the time and labor to grow
our own produce. Instead, we rely on
fresh produce from our local grocery
store or “processed” fruits and
vegetables. Technology has made
almost all kinds of fresh produce
available any time of the year. But, is
our requirement for “fresh” produce to
achieve the highest quality taste and
nutritional value really warranted? Is
“fresh” produce from the local grocery
store always better than canned or
frozen produce?

Think about the time span between
picking the produce and putting it on
your table. First of all, the produce is
picked before it’s ripe so that it travels
without spoiling. Produce often takes
days to travel to your grocery store (if
the produce is not in season, it may
come from countries far from where
you live). Then it is put out to sell in
another day or so. Then you buy it a
few days later, take it home and keep it
in the refrigerator for another few days
(and sometimes longer) before you eat
it. By a week or so later, much of the nutritional value is lost and the flavor is not what you expected. So much for your “fresh” fruits and vegetables.

Compare the so-called “fresh” produce to frozen or canned fruits and vegetables. The produce is picked when it’s ripe and immediately processed. Although it may not have that “fresh” taste of just-picked garden produce, the quality is much more consistent throughout the year and vitamins and minerals are retained.

Of course, for the best flavor, it’s best to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables when they’re in season in our area. They won’t have to travel as far, so they’re more likely to taste much better and you won’t balk at the price. Buy only the amount of fresh produce that you can use within a few days. You may have to make more trips to the grocery store, but you also will end up throwing out less food. Or you can use the fresh food first, then rely on the canned or frozen food until your next trip to the store.

“Fresh” produce from the grocery store, unlike your garden fruits and vegetables, is not always the tastiest and the most nutritious. Canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are good alternatives when the “fresh” produce doesn’t quite meet your home-grown standards.

Sweet Potato and Apple Casserole
3 medium sweet potatoes
3 medium apples
1/4 cup sugar
1 Tbs. grated orange peel
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup orange juice

1. Microwave sweet potatoes on HIGH 8 minutes. Peel and cut into 1/2-inch slices.
2. Peel apples and slice crosswise into 1/2-inch rings; remove seeds.
3. Combine sugar, orange peel, nutmeg and salt in small bowl. Alternate slices of sweet potatoes and apples in deep 1 1/2 quart casserole. Sprinkle sugar mixture over each layer. Add orange juice and cover. Microwave on HIGH 6 minutes. Makes 6 servings.

Exchanges: 1 starch, 1 fruit

Nutrition Information:
Calories: 134
Carbohydrate: 33 grams
Protein: 1 gram
Fat: <1 gram
Cholesterol: 0 mg
Sodium: 103 mg
Talking with Senior Drivers about Safety

Just about all of us will have to give up the car keys one day. But most of us probably want to delay that day as long as possible. After all, driving a car is a sign of independence to many people, and most communities have developed with the assumption that most people will use cars. This is why driver safety is such a hot topic for seniors.

Family and friends are often the first people to notice when a parent or other senior is having trouble on the road. Talking to parents about driver safety can be very hard, but it’s also very important.

There are driving danger signs to watch for with seniors. They include:
- Parking too far from the curb
- Having trouble changing lanes
- Having several dents, scrapes, or minor accidents with the car
- Forgetting a route they should know by heart
- Having trouble getting onto or off the highway
- Stopping at green lights or in the middle of intersections
- Being confused by traffic signs
- Confusing the gas pedal and the brake pedal

If you see signs that your parent is not driving safely, take it seriously. Don’t nag or warn your parent -- treat him like an adult, but be direct. Tell him that you are worried about his safety and the safety of others. Some seniors may get angry at the thought of losing their independence. For some, the possibility of injuring others is the key to convincing them. Others may agree to give up driving when you help them find other ways to get around. If your parent has had a few fender-benders, his insurance may not be renewed -- another reason he should not be on the road.

First, help your parent get his driving skills tested to make sure he is still safe on the road. Local hospitals may have senior driver testing.
programs. Your family doctor may also test for problems with hearing, sight or thinking that could affect driving ability. If your parent’s skills are still good enough, he can take a refresher course to build on them. For example, the AARP offers a 55 Alive/Mature driving program in many communities.

If your parent is not safe to drive, your doctor may write a prescription saying that he should not drive. You may also send a letter of concern to the state Department of Public Safety, Driver Services Division, stating the specific concerns you have and the name and address of the senior driver. DPS may contact the senior and require license retesting.

If this happens, try to understand your parent’s feelings. Help him find other safe ways to get around. Most seniors do not want to be a “burden” on family and friends, so try to work out a system in which rides are available to the doctor, grocery, church, etc.

Talk about driving safety before it becomes a crisis. If you do, your parent is more likely to feel better about giving up the car keys.
Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Extension Service office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Extension Service office for more information on these and related topics.

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