Senior Sense

Your Resources

Heating Your Home This Winter

As the nights turn cooler, more people worry about the cost of heating their home this winter. Rising energy costs often tempt people to make unwise choices, such as using the oven for heat and candles for light. These are very dangerous and should not be done!

A better choice is to make your home more energy efficient. A good place to start is to contact your utility company to see if they conduct free energy assessments for their customers. This analysis will help you determine what changes can be made to improve the energy efficiency of your home. Some of the changes can be relatively inexpensive, such as adding weatherstripping or caulk around leaky windows and doors, repairing broken windows, installing storm windows or adding insulation to your attic. These small changes can result in significant savings this winter.

If you live on a fixed income with no extra funds available to make changes to your home, you may qualify for the Weatherization Program. This program is provided by the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) and administered through the community action agency in your community. Financial assistance is available to low-income seniors to repair or renovate homes and make them more energy efficient. For more information, contact your local community action agency.

Assistance to help pay high utility bills is available to low-income persons 65 years of age and older from a variety of organizations. Your local utility provider will generally offer a discount on the monthly base charge for utilities. To learn more, contact your utility provider or call the Georgia Public Service Commission at (800) 282-5813. Other energy assistance programs for low-income seniors are available through the local community action agency or Salvation Army.

If you are considering using a space heater
this winter, please remember to think safety first. One of the leading causes of home fires is supplemental room heaters, which include wood or coal burning stoves/fireplaces, kerosene heaters, gas space heaters and electric heaters. Generally it is best to not use a space heater. However, if you choose to use one, follow these safety tips.

- Place it on the floor, away from combustible materials and out of high-traffic areas.
- Use coal, kerosene and propane heaters in well-ventilated areas since they can produce deadly fumes and carbon monoxide, which can lead to unconsciousness and death.
- Never place anything on top of your heater.
- Do not leave the heater on when you are away from your home or when you are sleeping.

Stay safe and warm this winter.

For more energy saving tips, contact your local Cooperative Extension office and ask for “Energy Tips for Homes in Georgia.” Visit our website at: http://www.gafamilies.com/housing

Your Relationships

Young Caregivers

Nationwide, more than a million young people provide regular care for older family members and friends. This number is more than the total number of students in grades 3-12 in New York City, Chicago, and the District of Columbia.

Until recently, caregivers who are children or teens have not been studied. A 2005 study by the National Alliance for Caregiving, however, provides a fascinating look inside the lives of these young people. Here are some of those findings:

- One-third of young caregivers are between the ages of 8 and 11, one-third are ages 12 to 15, and the remaining third are ages 16 to 18.
- Young caregivers are evenly balanced by gender (male 49%, female 51%).
- Seven in ten young caregivers are caring for a parent or grandparent.
- Two-thirds of young caregivers live in the same household as their care recipient.
- The majority of the care recipients are in two age ranges: 40 to 59 (32%) and 60 to 79 (25%).
- Over half of the young caregivers help their care recipient with at least one activity of daily living (ADL), such as
bathing, dressing, getting in and out of beds and chairs, toileting, and feeding. Nearly all help with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), such as shopping, household tasks, and meal preparation.

- Of the 14 caregiving responsibilities examined in this study, the most common are keeping the care recipient company (96%), helping with chores (85%), helping with grocery shopping (65%) and meal preparation (63%).

How does caregiving affect young people?

Caregiving can provide a stronger bond between young caregivers and their care recipients. For example, a significant number of young caregivers say that the care recipient confides in them, telling them things they don't talk to anyone else about. Confiding is more likely to occur in minority households (31% vs. 12%) and where caregiver and care recipient live in the same household (20% vs. 8%).

Caregiving may also be related to relationship problems for youngsters. Young caregivers are more likely than non-caregivers to feel at least some of the time that no one loves them. In addition, a larger share of caregivers age 12 to 18 behave antisocially than non-caregivers of the same age. In particular, they are more likely than non-caregivers to have trouble getting along with teachers, to bully or act mean towards others, and to associate with kids who get in trouble.

Some young caregivers report that their caregiving responsibilities have affected their school work or school activities. One in five say their caregiving has made them miss a school activity or an after-school activity, 15% say it has kept them from doing school work, and 8% say it has made them miss homework.

The effects of caregiving on a youngsters appear to be stronger when one of three factors is present: when the child performs one or more personal care tasks, when the child lives in the same household as the care recipient, and when the child lives in a minority household. The first two factors are interrelated, because caregivers who live with their care recipient are more likely than other caregivers to perform three of the five ADLs.

Among younger children (age 8 to 11), caregivers' increased likelihood to show anxiety/depression and antisocial behavior is more pronounced when the care recipient and caregiver live in the same household. The most pronounced difference is in the frequency of being sad or depressed; 56% of those in the same household report feeling sad or depressed often or sometimes, compared to 19% not living in the same household.
In other nations, young caregivers often have access to support groups, Internet chat rooms, and other supports for their caregiving. These resources are lacking in most US communities. Young people’s familiarity with computers, however, may hold great potential for helping them access online information and support. Many high schools now offer coursework such as Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) courses that can also help prepare youngsters for roles at home as well as possible careers.


**Your Health**

**New Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Begins January 2006**

January 1, 2006 marks the beginning of the Medicare prescription drug plans for people who choose to enroll in them. This is the new “Part D” plan of Medicare. Enrollment in the new drug plan begins November 15, 2005. If you do not enroll within 6 months of the date you become eligible for Part D, Medicare may charge you a higher premium for your drug coverage. If you are currently on Medicare, you should enroll from November 15, 2005 to May 15, 2006. Until the plan takes effect, Medicare-approved drug discount cards are available now.

If you need additional information about Medicare, you may call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) or 1-877-486-2048 for TTY users. You may also get information from the Medicare web site: http://www.medicare.gov

**Medicare Preventive Services**

Everyone who has Medicare insurance now can use the new Part B-covered preventive care benefits. This coverage will help doctors to diagnose and treat medical conditions at earlier stages so you can avoid serious illness. Talk to your health care provider about which of these preventive services may be right for you.

- Welcome to Medicare Physical Exam. If your Medicare Part B coverage began on or after January 2005, Medicare will now pay for a complete physical exam. **You must have this exam during the first 6 months after you enroll for Part B Medicare.** You pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount for the exam after you have met the yearly Part B deductible ($110 this year). Since this may be your first exam for the year, you may pay a large amount of the exam cost out-of-pocket.
This can be applied to your yearly deductible.

- **Diabetes Screening.** Medicare will now pay for tests to diagnose diabetes if you are at risk. The approved tests check your fasting blood glucose (sugar) levels. If you are obese or overweight, have high blood pressure or cholesterol or have other risk factors, you may qualify for up to two of these tests per year.

If you are eligible, the blood test is fully covered, but you may have to pay 20% of the cost of the doctor visit after the yearly deductible is met. This is not for people who already have diabetes.

- Screening for heart and blood vessel disease. Medicare covers cardiovascular screenings that check your cholesterol and other blood fat (lipid) levels. This benefit covers testing every five years. If you qualify, the blood test is fully covered, but again you may have to pay 20 percent of the doctor visit cost after your deductible is met.

**Medicare will now pay for tests to diagnose diabetes if you are at risk.**

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**Broccoli Sesame Salad**

This recipe is great to take to a church supper or a family gathering. It can be cut in half for a smaller number of people.

- 1 bunch of broccoli
- ¼ cup rice wine vinegar
- ¼ cup reduced sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 4 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted

1. Wash hands and assemble clean utensils.
2. Wash broccoli. Discard leaves and toughest part of stems. Break off florets. Peel and cut remaining stems into 2-inch pieces. Put in microwave-safe casserole dish and microwave on high for approximately 4 minutes.
3. Whisk together the vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil and 3 tablespoons of the sesame seeds in a small bowl.
4. When the broccoli is done, pour dressing over it, stirring to coat.
5. Sprinkle on the remaining sesame seeds and serve. Makes 8 servings.

**Nutrition Information:**

- Calories: 72
- Carbohydrate: 4 grams
- Fat: 5 grams
- Protein: 2 grams
- Cholesterol: 0 milligrams
- Sodium: 146 milligrams

Diabetic Exchanges: 1 vegetable 1 fat
Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Cooperative Extension 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 Cooperative Extension office for more information on these and related topics.

Learning for Life

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