

60-Year Trend Reverses: Multigenerational Living is On the Upswing

Recent U.S. Census data reveals that for the first time since 1940, the percentage of seniors who live in the same household as adult children is rising.



What's behind the comeback? Today's economy, housing

prices and the growing senior population are big factors. For many, it makes good economic sense to share living costs in one household. More grandparents are now providing childcare. And when older loved ones themselves need care, many family caregivers find living together to be the best arrangement.

Caring Right at Home is pleased to offer information and support for seniors and family caregivers—in whatever living arrangement they choose.

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Learn more about healthy aging and family caregiving. Sign up for the free monthly online edition of *Caring Right at Home* at www.caringnews.com.



At Your Next Reunion, Create a Family Health History

"Evan's new baby looks just like Grandpa Harry!" "Janet, you have your mother's eyes." "And doesn't Caitlin smile just like Cousin Gracie!"

Family reunions are the time when we catch up with loved ones, get acquainted with new babies and enjoy spending time together. If your family is like most, an unofficial family historian will take this opportunity to inscribe the latest branches on the family tree, and record the recent happenings of the clan.




Family reunions also provide a perfect opportunity to create a document to help keep our loved ones healthier: a family health history.

Certain diseases and conditions can run in families. These include

heart disease, stroke, depression, diabetes and certain cancers. According to the CDC, if one or more relatives has one of these conditions, this puts other relatives at higher statistical risk. Genes and environment both may come into play: families share not only DNA, but also habits.

At your next family reunion, take the time to talk about your family's health. Compile and share a written health history document. You can find a free online "Family Health Portrait" tool at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory. Ask senior family members about their own parents and grandparents' health. We can't change our genes, but knowing which health conditions seem to run in our family can motivate us to reduce our personal risk. A family health history also helps our doctor diagnose and treat diseases, and catch them earlier.

Creating a family health history is a gift your family can give themselves, and leaves a valuable legacy for future generations. 

How Much Do You Know About Seniors and Nutrition?

While the basic guidelines for a healthy diet are pretty much the same for people of every age, older adults have special needs and concerns. Nutrition affects the all-around health of seniors, a senior's ability to properly absorb medications, and is a factor in disorders and diseases that are common as we get older. If your loved one's nutrition habits aren't supporting good health, it might be time to sit down over a good meal and bring up the topic. And if you've never given much thought to nutrition, now might be the time to take a look at your own dietary choices!

1. The average person gains 10 to 20 pounds from age 45 to 65. This is...

- A. Normal and desirable. We need body fat to keep us warm.
- B. To be avoided. A person's recommended weight remains the same throughout adulthood.
- C. Unusual. Few people gain weight as they grow older.
- D. Caused only by growing older, and not by inactivity or overeating.

Answer: B. Avoiding excess weight gain as we grow older helps us remain active and independent. Maintaining a healthy weight is important for preventing or managing conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and arthritis.

2. Being significantly underweight...

- A. Is a "red flag" for possible health problems.
- B. Is great – the thinner the better!



- C. Can lead to fatigue, mental confusion and depression.
- D. A and C

Answer: D. Recent studies confirm that a slight weight "reserve" is beneficial for elders. When we lose too much weight, we are at greater risk for osteoporosis and other health problems. Report unexplained weight loss to the healthcare provider right away.

3. Poor diet in older adults can lead to...

- A. Osteoporosis
- B. Mental confusion
- C. Increased risk of falls
- D. All of the above

Answer: D. During our senior years, it's as important as ever to consume the nutrients our bodies need for good health. Sometimes without anyone noticing right away, seniors can be caught up in a cycle of poor nutrition and health problems. It's important to address the problems that lead to appetite loss.

4. Loss of appetite can be caused by...

- A. Depression and loneliness
- B. Medications
- C. Tooth or denture problems
- D. All of the above

Answer: D. Mood disorders; some medications taken for conditions such as heart disease and pain control; and tooth problems or poorly fitted dentures are all

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common causes of appetite loss in seniors. The first step is to address these problems. The healthcare provider may also recommend nutritional supplements if weight loss continues to be a problem.



5. If a person has Parkinson's, had a stroke, arthritis or another condition that makes eating difficult, he or she...

- A. Will never be able to relearn independent eating.
- B. Should not rely on adaptive devices like long-handled spoons.
- C. Can get help from a rehabilitation therapist.
- D. Should be discouraged from trying to feed him- or herself.

Answer: C. Physical limitations are another major cause of poor nutrition. If eating is difficult or discouraging, an occupational therapist can offer innovative ways to eat as independently as possible. Speech-language therapists provide help for swallowing disorders. And a home health aide can assist with safe eating.

6. People with heart disease should limit the intake of...

- A. Cholesterol and saturated fat
- B. Citrus fruit
- C. Whole grains
- D. Nuts

Answer: A. Limiting cholesterol intake is important for preventing and managing heart disease. High fat and cholesterol diets are also linked with increased risk of stroke, cancer and other disorders. Choices B, C and D on the list are all foods that promote heart health.

7. Which of these foods does not contain cholesterol?

- A. Avocado
- B. Beef
- C. Cheese
- D. Eggs

Answer: A. Avocados, while higher in calories than most fruits and vegetables, contain a healthy type of fat. Cholesterol is only found in meat and dairy products.

8. Older adults are the age group most likely to...

- A. Get all the nutrients they need from food sources alone.
- B. Be targeted by sellers of

fraudulent nutritional products and supplements.

- C. Prepare a home-cooked meal every night.
- D. Eat in a social setting.

Answer: B. Seniors are often targeted by unscrupulous companies who sell useless and possibly dangerous vitamins or food supplements. These companies make attractive but impossible claims about "miracle anti-aging" products. Encourage seniors to consult a doctor about the appropriate vitamins and nutritional supplements. 🍎

Is Eating Well a Challenge for Your Loved One?

If a senior relative is having trouble preparing nourishing meals, home care can help! See the March 2010 issue of the *Caring Right at Home* online newsletter (www.caringnews.com) to learn how a professional in-home caregiver can provide tempting meals and snacks, help your loved one eat and ensure compliance with special dietary needs.



Home Care Helps Seniors Beat the Cycle of Inactivity

- ✓ A University of Georgia study suggests that regular walking cuts in half the disability risk in elders.
- ✓ According to the Arthritis Association, physical activity is a natural pain reliever.
- ✓ The American Academy of Neurology suggests that regular physical activity may protect against cognitive impairment.
- ✓ The National Institute on Aging says exercise is one of the best treatments for depression.
- ✓ Exercise reduces blood pressure, according to several studies from the American Heart Association.

You have probably seen these and other recent research studies confirming how important exercise is for seniors. Research in aging over the past 30 years has shown conclusively that regular physical activity is the most important contributor to healthy aging.

Yet just at the stage in life when physical activity is more important than ever for well-being, chronic medical conditions can make it harder to be active. Living with disability can create the fear of falling. Pain, or the fear of it, causes people to shy away from an active lifestyle. And giving up driving may make it harder to get out of the house.

The Cycle of Inactivity

Decreased exercise leads to weakness and fatigue...which leads to decreased physical activity...which in turn leads to increased disability. Gerontologists call this "the cycle of decline," and interrupting this cycle is vital to the health of older adults. The single most important thing you can do for senior loved ones is to help them break that cycle and get moving!



Family members can take an active role in encouraging their older loved ones to be active. And when family can't be there, professional home care services can be the key to a sustained, effective activity plan for your loved one. An in-home caregiver can:

Provide an extra measure of confidence. Many families report that with a trained professional caregiver nearby, their loved one is less afraid to go out for a walk or to work in the garden. And for seniors with Alzheimer's or other dementia, the caregiver can provide watchful supervision and a sense of independence.

Transport your loved one to exercise opportunities. Today, exercise programs are available for everyone, no matter their health condition. Your loved one's healthcare provider can recommend appropriate choices. What about low-impact water aerobics at a local health club? Wii™ bowling or wheelchair dance classes at the senior center? A Tai Chi class? A walk

at the local mall? Don't let the term "home care" mislead you: a professional caregiver can open the door to outside activities for your loved one.

Help with medication management. Seniors take medications for many health conditions. But medications themselves can have side effects, such as drowsiness and confusion, that impede physical activity. A home health aide can be sure your loved one is taking his or her medications correctly, and can report any side effects.

Support pain management. Exercise is an important tool for pain control – yet physical pain can be a deterrent to keeping active. Your loved one's physician or a pain control specialist can create a plan for lessening the pain-inactivity cycle. Then, the in-home caregiver can be sure your loved one takes pain medications correctly, and complies with physical therapy or other prescribed treatments. 🏠



Exercise: the Best Prescription!

Physical activity can help seniors feel better about themselves and about life in general. This puzzle contains the names of 20 conditions and body systems that are improved by adding physical activity to our daily lives. Can you find them all? (Solution is on page 6.)



- ANXIETY
- APPETITE
- ARTHRITIS
- BLOOD PRESSURE
- CANCER
- CARDIOVASCULAR
- CHOLESTEROL
- DEMENTIA
- DEPRESSION
- DIABETES
- DIGESTION
- FALL RISK
- IMMUNE SYSTEM
- MEMORY
- OBESITY
- OSTEOPOROSIS
- RESPIRATION
- STAMINA
- STRESS
- STROKE

Read more about the newest research that demonstrates the benefits of physical activity in the June 2010 issue of the *Caring Right at Home* online newsletter at www.caringnews.com.



Helpful Resources for Family Caregivers



The MetLife Guide to Reverse Mortgages

This new online booklet from the MetLife Mature Market Institute tells how reverse mortgages work, who is eligible, what the costs are and how to select the right lender. To download the guide, go to www.metlife.com/mmi and click on "The Essentials."



Prescription Drugs for Older Adults: Managing Your Medicines

This online brochure from the Eldercare Locator team provides useful tools and information to help seniors manage and pay for the prescription drugs they need. Visit www.eldercare.gov and click on "Brochures" to find this guide and other resources.



Visit the Right at Home Senior Home Care Blog

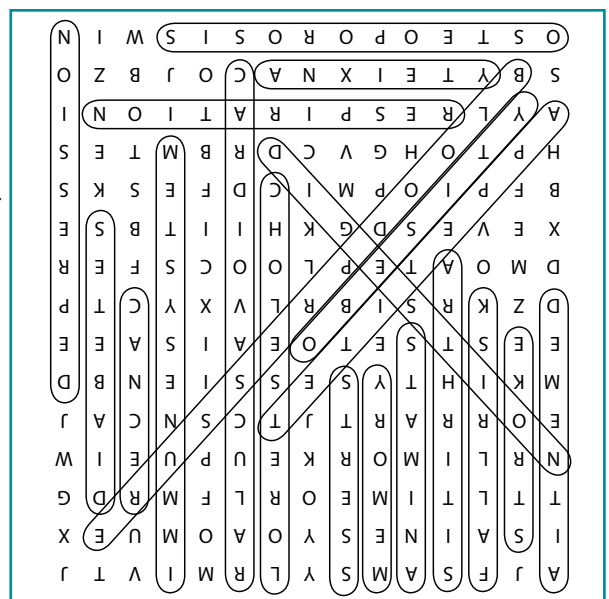
Right at Home offers news and updates about issues of interest to seniors family caregivers. Visit the blog at www.rightathome.net/seniorhomecare. We would love to hear from you, and we welcome your questions about eldercare topics.

Learn About Medicare on YouTube

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services now offers video information on their new CMS YouTube Channel (www.YouTube.com/CMSHHSGov). Content includes the "Caregiver Broadcasts" series and "Welcome to Medicare" for new enrollees.



Answers to "Exercise: the Best Prescription" wordfind



“Wandering” is a Challenge of Alzheimer’s Caregiving



“Wandering” is high on the list of concerns for family caregivers whose loved one has Alzheimer’s disease or other dementia. “One minute Dad is there, and suddenly he is gone,” reports one daughter, whose father periodically tries to “go to the office,” even though he now lives in his daughter’s city – thousands of miles

away from the company where he worked before becoming ill.

Here are some suggestions from the National Institute on Aging’s Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center, to help keep the person safe and give the caregiver greater peace of mind:

- Make sure your loved one carries ID or wears a medical bracelet. If he gets lost and can’t communicate clearly, an ID will let others know about his illness, and tells where he lives.

- Consider enrolling your loved one in the Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return Program (see www.alz.org or call 1-888-572-8566 to find the program in your area).
- Let neighbors and the local police know that your loved one has Alzheimer’s disease and tends to wander.
- Keep a recent photograph or video recording of your loved one to help police if your loved one becomes lost.
- Keep doors locked. Consider a keyed dead-bolt. If your loved one can open a lock, you may need to get a new latch or lock.
- Install an “announcing system” that chimes when the door opens. 🏠

Learn more in the June 2010 issue of the Caring Right at Home online newsletter (www.caringnews.com).



Right at Home Provides Respite

Are you caring for an aging loved one?

Right at Home can help you care for your loved one by offering comfort and security while providing you with respite and peace of mind. We work with you to develop a personalized care plan tailored to fit your family’s needs. Our caregivers assist with daily activities such as light housework, laundry, meal preparation, local transportation, medication reminders, and more.

Call Right at Home today for a free in-home assessment to see if home care is an option for your situation.

To learn more and to find a Right at Home location near your loved one, visit www.rightathome.net or call 877-697-7537.

Maintaining **Independence**
is an **Option.**

**Right
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Do You Know the Signs of Medical Identity Theft?

Medical identity theft happens when a scammer steals your personal information (such as your name, Social Security number or medical insurance/Medicare number) and uses it to obtain medical care, buy drugs or submit fraudulent billings.



This crime can cost money, damage your credit rating and even endanger your health if someone else's information ends up in your medical records.

Always check your medical bills carefully. If you see questionable charges, contact your healthcare provider first. If you still suspect there's a problem, contact your insurance company or your Medicare office, and file a police report.

Learn more about protecting older loved ones from medical identity theft in the July 2010 issue of the *Caring Right at Home* online newsletter. Go to www.caringnews.com to sign up for a FREE subscription. You'll receive an email reminder each month when the new issue is published.



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