

Senior Series

The Ohio
Department of
Aging



Senior Series - Ohio State University Extension and Ohio Aging Networks
Working Together to Address Older Adult Issues

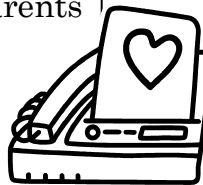
Senior Hotline Volume 8, Issue 4

... a newsletter for older adults or those who care for an older adult

Keeping in Touch with Your Grandchildren

For those who live hundreds or even thousands of miles from their children and grandchildren, communicating can be a challenge. For many grandparents today, keeping in touch doesn't always mean going to visit in person. Frequently, grandparents might have to rely on letters, phone calls, e-mails, videos, or audiotapes to keep in touch. Taking time to "visit" with your grandchildren whether it be in person, using mail or modern technology, is an important way to share your family heritage, traditions, and to build a strong relationship.

Why not develop a pen pal relationship with your grandchild? Decide on how often you want to write each other and how you will do it (mail or e-mail). Be sure that both of you agree on the plan before you get started. In your letters, share your thoughts and ideas, family photos, news clippings, favorite stories or poems, or describe what life was like when you were growing up. Asking




questions that they can respond to is a good way to get the process going.

Consider asking your grandchildren to share similar things in the letters that they send to you.

For preschoolers, parents can read your letters to them, and help them to include a picture or drawing in return. Another idea is to set up a regular day and time for a phone visit. This will give you both something to look forward to.

If you are fortunate enough to have a grandchild living near you, try to set up a time to visit with each other or attend a school or sporting event. They'll really appreciate you taking an interest in their activities.

Keeping in touch with grandchildren can be a meaningful and important part of your life! 

Author: Cindy Oliveri, OSU Extension South District FCS Specialist. Reference: Moyer, S. & Oliveri, C. (1996). Strengthening Families and Communities by Sharing Life Stories. Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet, HYG5227-96.

First Aid for Heat Illness



A rather simple way to avoid most heat-related health problems is to drink—water that is! The body's main defense to rising temperatures is perspiration.

Sweating helps to carry the heat away from the body. In that process, your body loses its store of fluids and you could become dehydrated.

Heat exhaustion occurs when your body fluids are 5% to 10% below normal. This is not life threatening. However, if you don't head off things at this point, it could progress to heatstroke.

Heatstroke occurs when your core body temperature rises so much that your body is not able to control it. When this happens, you may stop sweating altogether. Heatstroke is life threatening.

Even though everyone is at risk of heat-related illness, it is often the oldest among us who get into trouble. As we age, the sensation of thirst is impaired, thereby decreasing the body's reserve of water. Medications, such as diuretics for hypertension, can interfere with the body's cooling system. It is important to drink until your thirst is satisfied and then drink some more! Water is best, but a caffeine-free, low-sodium, low-sugar beverage will also work.

How can you be sure that you're drinking enough? A good way to determine if you're drinking enough is to look at your urine, it should be clear. Another way is to continuously sip water throughout the day instead of only drinking when you're thirsty.

It is important to recognize the signs of dehydration and overheating and learn

how to respond appropriately. Here is a list of the danger signs:

- Severe thirst and dry tongue
- Feeling of impatience or irritability
- Lightheadedness/dizziness, fainting
- Heavy sweating
- Pale, cold, clammy skin
- Cramps in the abdomen, legs, or arms
- Headache and/or diarrhea
- Rapid weak pulse
- Nausea and vomiting

What can you do?

- ☞ If you begin to feel the signs of overheating, get out of the sun. Drink cool, caffeine-free fluids. Spray yourself with water and rest until you feel better.
- ☞ If you are with someone who is experiencing heat-related illness, lay that person down, loosen any tight clothing, and elevate their legs.
- ☞ If the symptoms worsen, call 911 or get to an emergency room. Heatstroke is life threatening.
- ☞ Lower the body temperature by wetting the skin and fanning vigorously. If possible, immerse the person in cool water, such as in a bathtub, although do not leave them unattended.
- ☞ Give the person small amounts of cool liquids. Be prepared for vomiting.

Author: Lisa Marie Gibson,
OSU Ext., Franklin Co.
Source: *Focus On Healthy
Aging, Maintaining
Health and Vitality in
Middle Age and Beyond*, 4
(8), August 2001.



Safe and Healthy Summer Fare

Summer is the season to indulge in one of America's favorite traditions – gathering family and friends for a picnic. But before packing your basket and heading for the park, read the following tips to help you get off to a healthy start.

Give Food a Boost with New Flavors and Food Combinations

- ☞ Tuck sandwich fillings into pita bread, tortillas, sourdough rolls, or French loaves instead of ordinary bread. Focaccia (Italian flat bread) also makes an interesting sandwich base.
- ☞ Substitute brown rice, couscous, or bulgur (cracked wheat) for pasta in salads. Add chickpeas or other beans for a fiber boost.
- ☞ Add color and flavor to potato or pasta salads by adding plenty of chopped green, yellow, and red vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, and sliced summer squash.
- ☞ When preparing mayonnaise-based

salads, use less than the amount suggested. Low-fat plain yogurt can be substituted for half of the mayonnaise.

- ☞ Chopped grapes, peaches, or apricots add zip to an ordinary chicken or turkey salad. Use a fruit-flavored dressing.
- ☞ Cool off and cut the sweetness of frozen fruit juices by adding an extra can of water when mixing.

Play it Safe

- ☞ Cooked foods should be thoroughly chilled before packing.
- ☞ Place perishable foods close to and under the ice or frozen ice packs in the cooler.
- ☞ Leftovers should be placed immediately back into the cooler. Meat, dairy, or perishable foods will last about 1 – 2 hours. Discard any food about which you have questions. ☞

Author: Jenny Even, OSU Extension FCS Agent, Hamilton County. Source: American Institute for Cancer Research Newsletter, Summer 1995, Issue 48.

Choices?

**Either...or?
This or that?
Chocolate?
Strawberry?
Vanilla?
Fudge ripple?**



**Independence?
Autonomy?
Home care?
Day care?
Assisted living?
Nursing home?**

CHOICES I HAVE ...

CHOICES I WANT !!!

By Judy Hardy, ODA

Meet My Senior Friend

My senior friends are two sisters who work, live, and play together so often that I simply can't see one sister without thinking of – and looking for – the other! Doris and Dixie have been close friends all their lives. Doris said that they've been able to stay close because they've *"always had the same likes."* They dated together as teenagers and raised their children as a team, too. Their husbands and children also got along well, *"and that helps!"* they laughed.



Doris and Dixie maintain separate homes – unless one is ill and her sister is caring for her – but they travel together often. They've taken some challenging vacations with each other's support. While white-water rafting on

the New River in West Virginia with a group from church, *"they certainly showed the younger members that age is just an attitude!"* (according to a fellow rafter).

The sisters continue to do a lot of church and other volunteer work. In fact, one of the most remarkable things about both Doris and Dixie is that they're nearly always available and willing to help. If you ask one of the sisters if she's busy next Tuesday, she won't ask *"Why?"* Unless they're heading off on a trip or other adventure, she'll simply say, *"I don't think so. What do you need?"* They're not only my senior friends, they're my role models, too. ☪

Author: Joyce J. Brown, OSU Extension FCS Agent, Athens County.

Ohio's Families and Seniors Need Choices in Long-Term Care

There is no single answer to long-term care needs. For some, it may mean minimal help, such as home-delivered meals. For others, it may mean a nurse stopping by a few times each week. For family caregivers, it may mean having an adult daycare facility available during their working hours.

The bottom line is that one size does not fit all when it comes to long-term care.

In a recent survey of older adults in Ohio, 94% of respondents said that if they needed long-term care it would be important to receive that care **at home**.

Many state organizations are promoting an advocacy campaign to address Ohio's

future long-term plans for a fiscally responsible and comprehensive network of long-term care choices.

How can you and your family participate?

Contact your elected officials regarding long-term care issues that concern you now and in the future.

If you are interested in becoming part of this campaign, call (614) 481-3511 and your name will be added to the advocate database. You will get occasional mailings regarding Ohio's direction in establishing long-term care choices for families. ☪

Submitted by: Susan Oliver, Meigs County Council on Aging, Inc. Sources: AARP, Scripps Gerontology Center.

The Medicine Check-Up

The right medicines taken in the right ways are safe and effective tools for good health. However, most people seem to “collect” medicines, buying the latest over-the-counter remedies for minor illnesses, taking what is needed, and storing the remainder in the medicine cabinet. The result: a cluttered medicine cabinet and the potential for dangerous accidents!

The danger is often greater for older people who use more prescription and non-prescription medications.

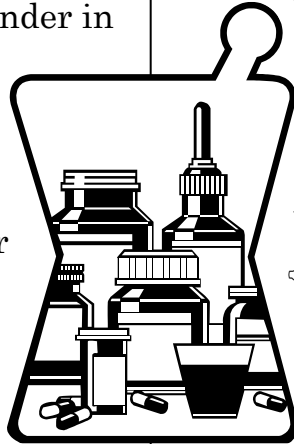
Because of the number of medicines used, older adults are more likely to get medications confused or use out-of-date products. They are also at a higher risk for adverse drug reactions.

The best way to lessen the danger is to take stock of all medications in your home.

- ☞ Get all medications together.
- ☞ Throw out all old prescription medications (unless they are for a chronic or recurring problem). Dispose of them properly (i.e., flush them down the toilet) so that children or pets are not exposed to them.
- ☞ Check expiration dates on all over-the-counter medicines. Those that have expired should be thrown away properly.
- ☞ Dispose of anything not labeled

or no longer in its original container.

- ☞ Dispose of any over-the-counter medications whose exact use you do not remember or do not expect to need again.
- ☞ Be sure all prescription drugs are labeled with the type of drug, the date, the person’s name, and the usage/dosage instructions.
- ☞ Because the bathroom is not the best place to store medication, due to heat and dampness, consider storing your medicine in a kitchen cabinet that is inaccessible to children.
- ☞ Store medicines by categories, keeping frequently used items in one area.
- ☞ Keep a first aid kit with emergency supplies and phone numbers.



Medicine check-ups can help find dangerous medicine combinations, unneeded or expired medicines, and medicine storage problems.

Clean out medicine chests and other storage areas annually. Throw out what isn’t needed, organize what is, and restock first aid supplies that should be kept on hand. ☞

Adapted by: Christine A. Price, OSU Extension State Gerontology Specialist. Source: Kathryn Beckham Mims for Family Information Services, Minneapolis, MN © 2001. Used with permission.


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Prepared by: *Kirk Bloir*

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Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Adm. and Director, OSU Extension. TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

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Sincerely,

**Extension Agent,
Family and Consumer Sciences**

For more information, contact the OSU Extension office at:



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