

SeniorHOTLINE

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Senior Series

A partnership between
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Staying Safe on the Road

active aging



their lives, having a car and being able to get where they want to go plays an important part in maintaining an active, independent life.

Age alone should not be the sole indicator of driving ability. However, as we age, our vision, reflexes, flexibility, and hearing does change and may make safe driving a challenge. Aging drivers who make adjustments to deal with these changes are more likely to be safer drivers. The following are a few suggestions to help keep your driving skills at their peak level.

Good vision is crucial to safe driving. Ninety percent of the decisions you make while driving are based on information acquired through the eyes. Visit your eye doctor for regular eye exams to identify potential problems before they affect your driving. Limit your driving to daytime hours when more light is available. Keep your windows, headlights, and mirrors clean—including the glass inside the car.

Reaction time often slows as we age. To compensate for slower reaction time, increase the space between you and the car ahead of you. Eliminate distractions such as the radio, cell phones, and conversation with passengers. Plan your route ahead of time, eliminating last-minute decisions and confusion.

Driving means freedom as soon as we get our first driver's license and that feeling never goes away. As a result, the thought of not being able to drive concerns many older adults. For seniors who have driven all

Driving is a physical activity, so working on your strength, flexibility, and coordination will help you operate a vehicle safely. Regular exercise can keep you a safer driver. An active mind will help in driving situations when a quick decision is needed.

Read medication labels. Both over-the-counter and prescription medications can make a driver drowsy or distracted. If the label warns not to operate heavy machinery while using the drug, do not drive.

A refresher course is a good investment. Most communities offer courses to update drivers on new regulations, vehicle features, and defensive tactics. The American Automobile Association (AAA), your local Safety Council, and AARP may sponsor refresher courses for older drivers. Check with your local chapter for more information. Also, check to see if a local hospital offers comprehensive driver evaluation programs. If none are available in your community, you can order an interactive CD-ROM from the AAA, which allows seniors to measure, in the privacy of their home, the eight functional abilities shown to be the strongest predictors of crash risk among older drivers.

Being a safe driver means more than avoiding crashes. Making adjustments to compensate for your changing abilities will protect you and those around you from potentially dangerous situations.

By Deanna Clifford, Director of Community Relations, District XI Area Agency on Aging, Inc.

Sources: The Older and Wiser Driver and Drivers 55 Plus: Check Your Own Performance, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, www.aaafoundation.org

Cooking for One or Two



Preparing smaller amounts of foods at each meal will help cut back on food waste. The following are a few key ideas to keep in mind to help you prepare smaller meals.

- Prepare foods or meals in smaller pans and baking dishes.
- Purchase smaller quantities of foods and ingredients at the grocery store.
- Cut recipes in half so that the recipe is tailored to a smaller number of servings.
- Make use of cookbooks that have recipes that are designed for one or two people.

All of these suggestions will help to reduce the amount of food that can be prepared or included in an entire meal.

Planning meals in advance is a key to preparing appropriate and useful amounts of food. Try to plan meals on a weekly basis. Build your weekly menu around an entree dish for each main meal. Add whole grain breads/pastas/starches, vegetables, and fruits or fruit salads. Planning weekly meals allows for good use of leftovers and requires only one trip per week to the grocery store.

Using leftovers is a great way to have tasty food available for later meals. With careful planning, larger meals can be prepared earlier in the week and leftovers used for meals later in the week. For example, baked chicken breasts prepared for dinner on Monday can be used the next day chopped up on a salad or shredded in a chicken salad sandwich. Chili that is eaten for dinner can be used as a baked potato topping the next day for lunch. Multiple meal ideas are endless and can be suited to personal food preferences.

When keeping leftovers, it is important to date and store them properly. Storage containers and storage bags that seal are necessary to keep leftovers fresh and safe. Always date the leftovers so that they will not be kept too long in the freezer or refrigerator and possibly spoil. A general rule of thumb is that refrigerated leftovers may be kept for up to one week and that frozen leftovers may be kept up to three months. Remember to be aware of the expiration dates of all food items and leftovers—food does not last forever!

From Senior Series Fact Sheet SS-161-99 written by Denise Reed, Human Nutrition Graduate Student and Dietetic Intern, and Alma M. Saddam, Ph.D., RD, Extension Specialist, Nutrition.



1939: The Lost World of the Fair

by David Gelernter

For those lucky enough to remember the Thirties, "The World's Fair" means The New York World's Fair of 1939-40. No World's Fair since has created as many memories or left such an impact on a generation.

In *1939: The Lost World of the Fair* (Free Press, New York, 1995), David Gelernter takes us back to those exciting days with colorful details and diary entries of a semi-fictional couple whose romance develops there.

The theme, "Building the World of Tomorrow," introduced America to inventions that seemed inconceivable, but are part of everyday life now: long-distance calling, fax machines, television, fluorescent lighting, nylon stockings, dishwashers, interstate highways, and suburbs.

This World's Fair occurred after the Depression and lasted through the beginning of World War II. Never had the future seemed more possible and tangible. Gelernter urges readers to keep that innovative era's energetic optimism embedded in the American spirit still today.

Reviewed by Jenny Justi, Training Manager, The Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging.

Sophie



My senior friend has blue eyes and a tawny coat with stripes. She is furry and has four

legs and a tail. This past December, she was 18 years old—in her senior years. As you may have guessed, my senior friend, Sophie, is a cat.

When we think about friends we often think of those who share our interests, listen to us, are happy to see us, and miss us when we are away. We think of shared companionship, loyalty,

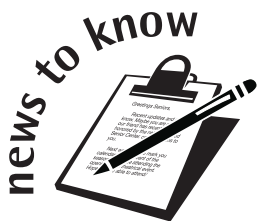
and unconditional love. The friendship I share with Sophie has all of these characteristics and more. She has been with me through college, graduate school, new jobs, cross-country moves, bad hair days, boyfriends, and prayers for the future. She shares my love of sleeping, sunshine, warm blankets, TV couch time, and quiet afternoons. She makes sure creepy crawly things are sufficiently dead before I have to pick them up and alerts me to unfamiliar people by running for a hiding spot. She greets me every morning with enthusiasm and never forgets

to ask about my day when I get home.

Sophie serves as a reminder that being rich in friendship does not mean counting the names in an address book. The friendships we treasure most come in many forms—some with tails and some without. The important parts of friendship are mutual acceptance and devotion. My friendship with Sophie is priceless and gives me memories to cherish for years to come.

By Christine Price, Ph.D., Extension State Gerontology Specialist, The Ohio State University.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage



The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 has ushered in some of the most sweeping changes in the 40-year history of the Medicare program. Information was sent to all Medicare-eligible individu-

als in the "Medicare and You 2006" book mailed in October.

Key points Medicare consumers need to remember are:

1. Everyone on Medicare is eligible for this coverage, regardless of income or current health. Participation is voluntary. The prescription drug benefit is insurance and monthly premiums will be charged. There may also be deductibles and co-pays to be paid by the individual.
2. The initial six-month enrollment period began November 15, 2005, and ends May 15, 2006.

Coverage begins the first of the month following enrollment.

3. Once coverage begins, you may change plans once before May 15, 2006, if necessary.
4. After May 15, 2006, you may change plans only during the annual open enrollment period (November 15 through December 31, 2006).
5. If you do not enroll in a prescription drug program during the initial enrollment period, you will need to wait until the year-end open enrollment period in 2006. Doing so will result in a late enrollment penalty added to all your future monthly premiums.
6. Questions? Call Ohio Senior Health Insurance Information Program at **1-800-686-1578** to help you compare plans and make an informed decision. Additional information is available from **1-800-MEDICARE** or visit **www.medicare.gov**.

*Submitted by Lynn Dobb, Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging.
Source: www.medicare.gov*

Two Simple Words—"I'm Sorry"



"I'm sorry," is one of the most important phrases we can say. It is important to the giver and the receiver, and it can signal a fresh start after heartfelt remorse. The emotional benefits of an apology are well documented. An important social ritual, an apology is a way of showing respect and empathy for the wronged

person. It cannot undo harmful past actions, but can undo the negative effects of those actions if offered sincerely and effectively. It helps you move past the anger and not get stuck while preventing further misunderstandings.

Apologies can impact our physical health. Research shows that an apology has a noticeable, positive physical effect on the body. An apology actually affects the bodily functions of the person receiving it—blood pressure decreases, heart rate slows, and breathing becomes steadier. Research also shows that people who learn to forgive effectively experience a reduction in the physical symptoms of stress.

It can be difficult to apologize, but knowing how can help. A meaningful apology communicates the three R's: regret, responsibility, and remedy.

Start with a statement of **regret** for having caused the hurt or damage. While your intention may not have been to cause harm, you recognize that your action or inaction nevertheless did hurt this person. This regret needs to be communicated and includes an expression of empathy with an acknowledgment of the injustice you caused.

Next, communicate an acceptance of **responsibility** for your actions. This means not blaming anyone else and not making excuses for what you did. For an apology to be effective, it must be clear that you are accepting total responsibility for your action or inaction.

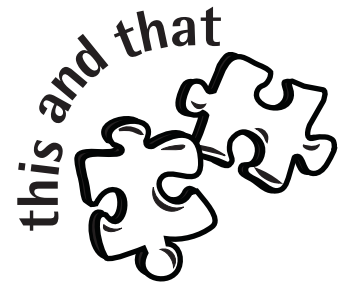
Lastly, share a statement of willingness to **remedy** the situation. While you can't undo the past, you can repair the harm you caused by offering a promise to take action so that you will not repeat the behavior.

Unless all three of these elements are present, the other person will sense that something is missing in your apology. By apologizing and taking responsibility for your actions, your feelings of guilt are often diminished. When you develop the courage to admit the wrong and work past your own resistance to apologizing, you develop a deep sense of self-respect.

By Kathy K. Oliver, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Hardin County.

Sources: Engel, B. (2002). I'm sorry. Psychology Today, 8/2002. Retrieved December 14, 2005, from http://health.yahoo.com/centers/relationships/_2326.

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What a Difference ...

What a difference a smile makes,

It is a simple yet meaningful joy to those who see it.

What a difference a hug makes,

It warms the heart and makes one feel safe.

What a difference a call makes,

It reminds us that someone is thinking about us.

What a difference each one of us makes,

By sharing a smile, offering a hug, and picking up the phone!

By Karen Puterbaugh, Greene County Council on Aging.

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