

senior review

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A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Eau Claire



How to Have the “Assisted Living” Talk

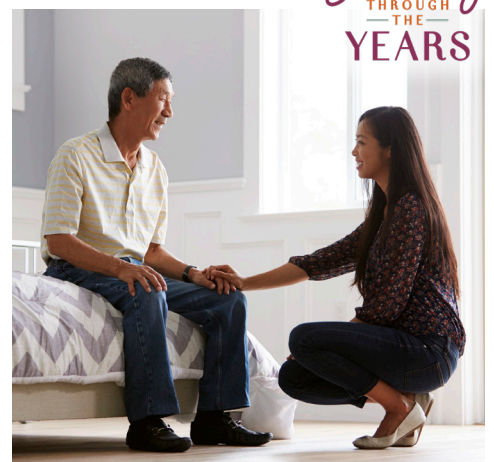
There are many strong opinions regarding in-home care versus assisted living facilities. Regardless of your stance, there may come a day when a facility is the best option for your loved one, even if they don't believe it is. Many senior adults do not want to leave their homes, so a conversation about moving to an assisted living facility can be difficult. Below are some tips on how to approach that discussion.

1. Talk with your loved one about their wishes early on and often as they age. Make sure everyone is on the same page, and discuss the possibility of moving to an assisted living facility if you feel the care required cannot be provided physically or financially by remaining in their home. Often the burdens of maintaining a home (repairs, lawn care and snow removal, etc) become too difficult to keep up with, especially if there are physical limitations. By talking about assisted living early and often, you can normalize the conversation and concept.
2. Research some facilities ahead of time so you have options to look at together. Create a spreadsheet with amenities or ask for a mailed brochure. If possible, take a tour of the facility with your loved one and make sure to ask the staff many questions. If they cannot answer all your questions to your satisfaction, it might not be the right choice. Involving your loved one in the process as much as possible will help them retain their independence and autonomy. It is still their life, afterall.

3. Do not force the issue. If they refuse to even talk about it, revisit the topic at a later date, asking if they've had a chance to think about or review any information you provided. Unfortunate events such as hospitalization can also be an appropriate time to carefully bring up the conversation. Let them know you're glad things weren't worse, AND that they might receive better and more constant support in a facility to hopefully avoid dangerous situations going forward.

4. Acknowledge that change can be hard, but it can also be good. Life in an assisted living facility can be an enriching experience. Many facilities offer a wide range of activities and socialization, juxtaposed by remaining at home where seniors often become isolated. Some developments also have themes and focuses that might align well with your loved one's desires and lifestyle.

Source: “Talking About Assisted Living.” *Today's Caregiver*. 21 Sept 2022. <https://caregiver.com/articles/talking-assisted-living>.



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Editor/Publisher: Arwen Rasmussen
Offices:
3315 Nimitz Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701
P: 715-831-0325
F: 715-831-7051
E: seniorreviewnewspapers@gmail.com

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Medicare Annual Enrollment Period Is Almost Here: Why Now Is the Time to Review Your Coverage

By Kailey Berendsen, Vice President of Buska Retirement Solutions and Buska Wealth Management

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) is one of the most important times of the year for Medicare beneficiaries. Running from October 15 through December 7, AEP allows individuals already enrolled in Medicare to review their current coverage and make changes for the upcoming year, if needed.

Even if you're satisfied with your current Medicare coverage, it's worth taking time to review your options. Medicare plans can change from year to year. Premiums, deductibles, copays, provider networks, and prescription drug formularies may all be updated. A plan that met your needs this year may not be the best fit next year.

Your own circumstances may have changed as well. Perhaps you've started taking a new medication, your preferred physician has changed practices, or you're anticipating different healthcare needs. Reviewing your coverage annually can help ensure your Medicare plan continues to align with your needs and budget.

During the Annual Enrollment Period, eligible beneficiaries may have the opportunity to:

- Change from one Medicare Advantage plan to another.
- Return to Original Medicare from a Medicare Advantage plan.
- Join, change, or drop a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.
- In some situations, make other allowable coverage changes based on Medicare rules.

Understanding what has changed before AEP begins can make the enrollment process less stressful. Many Medicare plan providers send an Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) each fall outlining any changes to your current coverage for the following year. Reviewing this document carefully is an important first step.

It's also helpful to compare your current coverage with other available options in your area. Since every individual's healthcare needs and financial situation are unique, there is no one-size-fits-



all Medicare solution. Taking the time to understand your choices can help you make an informed decision.

Educational workshops and one-on-one consultations can provide an opportunity to better understand Medicare terminology, enrollment rules, and the factors to consider when evaluating your coverage. Whether you ultimately decide to keep your current plan or make a change, becoming more informed can help you feel more confident about your decision.

If you're currently enrolled in Medicare, now is a great time to gather your Annual Notice of Change, make a list of your prescriptions and healthcare providers, and begin preparing for the Annual Enrollment Period. A little preparation today can help make your Medicare decisions easier when enrollment begins on October 15.

This article is provided for educational purposes only and is not intended as legal, tax, or medical advice. Medicare plan availability, benefits, and costs vary by location and individual circumstances.

Annual Enrollment Period Is Almost Here

Is Your Medicare Coverage Still Right for You?



The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period begins October 15. Your health needs, prescriptions, and plan costs can change from year to year. Now is the perfect time to review your current coverage and understand your options before enrollment begins.

Call us today to schedule your complimentary Medicare coverage review with one of our licensed agents.

Call 715.355.4445 (TTY: 711)

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Dusting off Some Local History: Summer Vacation

By Greg Kocken, Archivist, UW-Eau Claire, Kockeng@uwec.edu

This month, students across Wisconsin returned to school. Their leisurely months of summer vacations, highlighted by camps, swimming, family trips, and seemingly endless fun, come to an end as school bells ring and classroom doors swing open. Many of us hold fond memories of our summer vacations, but why do students across Wisconsin and the United States get summers off?

There is a widespread myth that schools close in the summer to support farm and agricultural labor. In 2012, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reinforced this misconception when he stated that the school calendar “has been based on the agrarian economy when almost none of our kids work in the field anymore.” It is a persistent idea, but anyone who has worked on a farm knows just how inaccurate this is! Farm labor is demanding year-round, but there are certainly seasons when demand peaks. If there is a slow season, which any farmer would deny, it is summer. Planting and harvesting, coinciding with the spring and the fall, are often the seasons when farm labor is in greatest demand, not midsummer.

In the late 19th century, as school calendars began to standardize, rural and urban schools catered to different needs. Many rural schools, with school boards cognizant of the needs of their local agrarian community, provided breaks that coincided with planting and harvesting. Urban areas, representing different socio-economic

factors, routinely closed schools during the hottest months. Records from the Eau Claire, Wisconsin County Superintendent of Schools (preserved in the UW-Eau Claire archives), reveal this reality. In the 1870s, many rural districts held summer sessions, while schools within the City of Eau Claire adopted summer recesses. Rural districts offered two short terms: a winter session from November to March and a summer session from May to August.

Education reformers of the 19th and 20th centuries sought to standardize these competing schedules into the unified school calendars we use today. Sweltering summer heat, before the introduction of air conditioning, made schools uncomfortable during summer months. Meanwhile, wealthy urbanites and a growing middle class sought to escape this heat by leaving cities during the summer months. For these reformers, the summer months became the logical time for recess. Furthermore, reformers believed the summer recess would serve as a time for teachers to pursue continuing education opportunities. These reformers were ultimately successful convincing policymakers to adopt the standardized school year calendars that are today a hallmark of American public education.

Is there a local history mystery or topic you want to know more about? Do you have a suggestion for an upcoming column of “Dusting Off?” Please contact Greg at the UW-Eau Claire archives. He would love to hear from you.



Sunnyview school, seen in this ca. 1964 photograph, opened in 1882 the Town of Washington just outside Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Schools like this often adopted calendars tailored to the specific needs of their local communities. Following school consolidation in the early 1960s, Sunnyview was relocated to the Chippewa Valley Museum where it is preserved today. Image courtesy of the Chippewa Valley Museum.

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A New Approach to Pain and Mobility: Shockwave Therapy

By Dr. Lucas Emmerich, Central Health

As we get older, aches and pains can sometimes become a regular part of life. Whether it's a stubborn heel, sore knee, painful shoulder, or discomfort that has lingered for months, finding ways to stay active and mobile is important for maintaining independence and quality of life.

At Central Health, we are excited to offer **shockwave therapy**, a non-invasive treatment option that may help support the body's natural healing processes and improve pain and function.

What Is Shockwave Therapy?

Despite its name, shockwave therapy does not involve electricity or anything being “shocked” into the body. It uses carefully controlled sound-wave energy that is delivered to a specific area of the body.

These sound waves stimulate the tissues in the treatment area and may help promote circulation, cellular activity, and the body's natural repair processes. Shockwave therapy has been used for years in sports medicine and physical rehabilitation and is increasingly being used for chronic musculoskeletal conditions.

What Can It Help With?

Shockwave therapy is commonly used for persistent tendon, muscle, and soft-tissue problems. At Central Health, we may consider it for conditions such as:

- Plantar fasciitis and chronic heel pain
- Achilles tendon problems
- Shoulder and rotator cuff pain
- Tennis or golfer's elbow
- Knee and tendon pain
- Neuropathy
- Certain conditions involving reduced circulation or nerve-related symptoms

Shockwave therapy isn't appropriate for every condition, and we always begin with an evaluation to determine whether it makes sense for you.

What Does a Treatment Feel Like?

Treatment is performed while you are comfortably positioned. A handheld applicator delivers the sound-wave energy to the targeted area.

You may feel tapping, pressure, or some mild discomfort during treatment. The intensity can be adjusted based on your comfort level and the area being treated. Most sessions are relatively short, and there is generally little to no downtime afterward.

One of the benefits of shockwave therapy is that it is **non-invasive**. There are no needles, incisions, or medications involved.

Why Consider It?

For some people, pain becomes frustrating because it limits the activities they enjoy — walking, gardening, golfing, exercising, playing with grandchildren, or simply getting through the day comfortably.

Shockwave therapy is not a “magic cure,” but it can be a useful tool as part of a comprehensive approach to improving mobility and reducing pain. Depending on the problem, treatment may be combined with chiropractic care, mobility exercises, strengthening, and other therapies.

Stay Active. Keep Moving.

Maintaining mobility is one of the most important things we can do as we age. If pain is keeping you from doing the activities you enjoy, there may be more options available than simply “living with it.”

If you have a stubborn area of pain that hasn't responded to your usual treatments, **ask the team at Central Health** whether shockwave therapy may be appropriate for you.

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National Assisted Living Week is September 13-19 and acknowledges the importance of these facilities and the crucial role that they play in the lives of elderly people and people with disabilities. The week-long celebration recognizes everyone involved in assisted living facilities, including family members, residents, assisted living resident assistants, volunteers, and other staff.



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Things to Consider About Assisted Living

Weigh the advantages for your particular stage of life

By Carl A. Trapani, MA, MS, LPC, Chippewa Manor Campus Chaplain

It's no secret that neighbors in rural Wisconsin tend to know each other. They look after each other's interests and help each other through life's seasons. The best assisted living communities follow that tradition. They don't simply provide housing—they create neighborhoods where people know your name, notice when you're missing from dinner, celebrate birthdays, lend a helping hand, and remind you that you still belong. Their goal isn't just adding years to your life—it's adding life to those years.



Let's be honest. Assisted living has drawbacks. "This Isn't My House." Home isn't just a building. It's where birthdays happened. It's where grandchildren took their first steps. It's a garden where loving care went into every tomato, turnip or rose plant. It's where every scratch on the dining room table tells a story. Leaving that behind hurts. Even when the move is the right decision.

Quality assisted living isn't inexpensive. It costs real money. Like everything else, rates have continued

If you ask ten seniors what they think about assisted living, you'll probably get eleven opinions. One person says, "I'd rather leave feet first than move out of my house." Another says, "I should have moved here five years ago!" The truth? Both may be right. Choosing assisted living isn't about finding the perfect place—because no place is perfect. It's about deciding whether the advantages outweigh the disadvantages for your particular stage of life. Let's look honestly at both sides.

Many seniors don't realize how isolated they've become. It starts gradually. The children and neighbors move away. Driving becomes difficult. Friends pass away or relocate. Before long, an entire day may pass without speaking to another person. One survey found that about 40% of adults over age 45 report feeling lonely, and loneliness has been linked to poorer physical and emotional health. Something unexpected happens after moving into assisted living. Instead of eating dinner alone while watching television – you have someone to debate with whether the Packers or the Bears have the better quarterback.

You will eat better. Cooking for one person isn't much fun. Many seniors admit that dinner is often a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, cold cereal, or whatever is left in the refrigerator. In assisted living, meals are freshly prepared. Someone else shops, cooks, serves, and washes the dishes. Many residents enjoy meals because they become social occasions instead of chores.

Assisted living isn't a nursing home. Most residents are still independent but may need help with things like bathing, dressing, medications, or mobility. There's tremendous peace of mind in knowing that if something goes wrong, help isn't twenty miles away. It's down the hallway. Adult children are relieved of an invisible burden. "Did Mom remember her medicine?" "Has Dad fallen?" "Why isn't he answering the phone?" After a move, many families say the greatest gift isn't convenience. It's relief. Visits become visits again—not rescue missions.

to rise in recent years. So before deciding to move, families should ask detailed questions about, medication fees, personal care, charges, transportation, laundry and level of care increases. Keeping in mind that the current prices will not be permanent.

Discovering that not every community is excellent - is perhaps the most important point.

Some assisted living communities are outstanding. Others struggle with communication, or consistency. So before you sign up – visit a place more than once. Visit at lunchtime. Visit on weekends. Talk to residents—not just the marketing director.

So...Who Should Consider Assisted Living? It may be a wise choice if:

- You're falling frequently.
- Cooking has become difficult.
- You're missing medications.
- The house has become overwhelming.
- You're lonely most days.
- You no longer can drive safely.
- Family caregivers are becoming exhausted.

Assisted living isn't about giving up. It's about choosing the place where you can live your best life. For some people, that's the family farmhouse. For others, it's an apartment where someone else shovels the snow while they enjoy coffee with friends. Sometimes moving doesn't mean life gets smaller. Sometimes it simply means life gets shared.

Carl Trapani, MA, MS, LPC serves as campus Chaplain at Chippewa Manor. He has more than 50 years of pastoral service and professional counseling experience. For more information please call (715) 723-4437 or email him at carl.trapani@chippewamanor.com.



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Community Based Residential Facility (CBRF) CBRF's are staffed, group living arrangements that provide room, board, supervision and other supportive services to 5 or more unrelated adult residents. Typically, residents have either a private or shared sleeping room and bathroom, and share living and dining space with other residents of the facility. CBRFs are intended for people who cannot live independently, but are neither acutely ill nor need extensive amounts of skilled nursing care. Up to 3 hours of skilled nursing care per week may be provided. Unlimited amounts of supportive and personal care are provided. Facilities vary in size from 5 residents to over 100.

Residential Care Apartment Complex (RCAC) An RCAC is a place where five or more adults reside. Apartments must each have a lockable entrance and exit, a kitchen, including a stove (or microwave oven), and individual bathroom, sleeping and living areas. This living option provides no more than 28 hours per week of supportive services, personal assistance and skilled nursing services.

Adult Family Homes Adult Family Homes— where 3 or 4 adults who are not related to the operator reside and receive care, treatment or services that are above the level of room and board. May include up to 7 hours per week of nursing care per resident.

Source: Eau Claire ADRC



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Is It Time for Assisted Living? Signs Families Shouldn't Ignore

By Cambridge Senior Living

For many families, deciding whether a loved one should move to assisted living isn't prompted by one dramatic event. More often, it's a collection of small changes that gradually become harder to overlook.

Maybe Mom has stopped cooking regularly. Dad has fallen twice in six months. The house isn't as tidy, medications are being missed, or family members are spending more time helping with everyday tasks. While none of these automatically means someone needs assisted living, several changes together may signal that living alone is no longer the safest or best option.

Everyday Tasks Are Becoming Difficult

Pay attention to changes in activities that were once routine. Is your loved one wearing the same clothes for several days? Has bathing become less frequent? Is the refrigerator filled with expired food? Are unopened bills accumulating? Older adults can become good at adapting. Someone who no longer feels comfortable using the stove, for example, may quietly begin living on cereal, sandwiches or frozen meals. When several daily activities become difficult, additional support may improve both safety and quality of life.

Falls—or the Fear of Falling—Are Increasing

A fall can be an important warning sign, but so can a near fall. Look for unexplained bruises, difficulty getting out of a chair, holding onto furniture while walking or avoiding stairs.

Some people don't tell their families about falls because they fear a conversation about moving. Fear of falling can also cause someone to stop showering, doing laundry, walking to the mailbox or leaving home. Assisted living can provide a safer environment and assistance with activities that have become difficult.

Medications Aren't Being Taken Correctly

Medication management becomes complicated when someone takes several prescriptions throughout the day. Look for pills remaining in a medication organizer, missed refills or medications accidentally being taken twice.

Repeated medication problems deserve attention. Many assisted living communities offer medication management or assistance as part of a resident's care plan.

Nutrition and Weight Are Changing

Look beyond whether there is food in the house. Is your loved one preparing and eating nutritious meals? Have you noticed unexpected weight loss, rarely used dishes or difficulty getting groceries? Cooking for one can also become less appealing. Assisted living provides regular meals, along with the opportunity to share them with other residents.

Isolation Is Becoming the Norm

One overlooked reason to consider assisted living is loneliness. A spouse may have passed away, friends may have moved or died, or driving may have become difficult. Church services, card games and visits with friends can gradually disappear.

Someone may be capable of living alone—but that doesn't necessarily mean they're thriving. Activities, friendships, meals and everyday conversations can help restore a social life they may not realize they've lost.

The House Is Telling You Something

Look around the home. Is laundry piling up? Are there spoiled foods in the refrigerator? Has cleanliness changed? Are there unexplained dents on the car? One forgotten task doesn't necessarily mean anything, but a noticeable pattern of changes deserves attention.

Family Caregiving Is Becoming Overwhelming

Sometimes the clearest sign comes from the family. One person organizes medications, another handles groceries and lawn care, while someone else

prepares meals, arranges appointments and does laundry.

Ask yourself: If the family stopped providing assistance for one week, what would happen? If your loved one couldn't safely manage at home, it may be time to discuss additional support.

Don't Wait for a Crisis

Families often postpone discussing assisted living because they don't want to upset someone or take away their independence. Unfortunately, that can mean the decision is finally made after a fall, hospitalization or medication error.

Exploring assisted living doesn't mean you've decided to move. Tour communities, ask questions, have lunch and learn what services and costs are involved. Most importantly, include your loved one in the conversation whenever possible.

The goal shouldn't simply be, "Can Mom or Dad still live at home?" A better question may be: "Where can Mom or Dad be safest, happiest and most independent for the years ahead?" Sometimes home will still be the answer. But when everyday life becomes harder, less safe or increasingly lonely, assisted living may not represent a loss of independence—it may be an opportunity to regain some of it.



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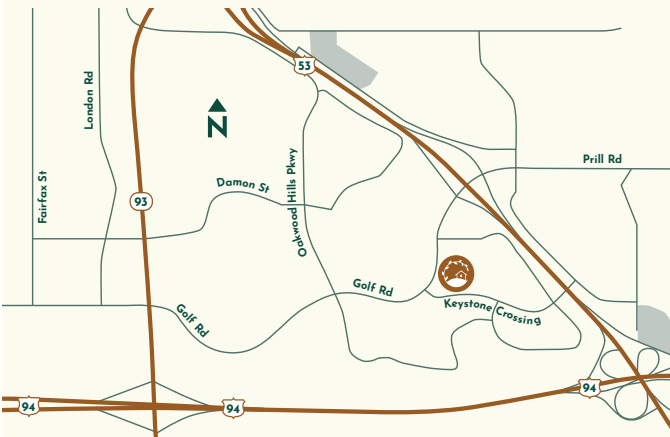


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How Assisted Living Can Enhance Quality of Life

By Shelley Krupa, Business Operations Coordinator at Lake Hallie Memory Care

As people age, their needs evolve, and sometimes living independently can become challenging. Assisted living facilities offer a blend of independence and support, ensuring that seniors can enjoy a higher quality of life. Here are several ways in which assisted living can significantly enhance the lives of residents.

Safety and Security

Assisted living facilities are designed with seniors in mind, featuring emergency call systems, handrails, non-slip flooring, and 24/7 staffing. For seniors prone to falls or medical emergencies, having immediate access to help can be life-saving. The constant presence of staff ensures that any health issues are promptly addressed, providing peace of mind for both residents and their families.

Professional Care and Support

Assisted living facilities offer professional care and support tailored to individual needs. This includes assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, medication management, and meal preparation. For many seniors, managing these tasks independently can become increasingly difficult and stressful. Trained caregivers can provide personalized care plans with the appropriate level of support needed, allowing residents to maintain their dignity and independence.

Social Interaction and Community

Loneliness and social isolation are common issues among seniors, which can lead to depression and a decline in physical health. Assisted living communities foster a vibrant social environment with numerous opportunities for interaction. Residents can participate in organized activities, outings, and events that cater to a variety of interests. Communal dining areas encourage socialization during meals, helping residents form friendships and stay engaged. The sense of community and belonging that develops in assisted living can significantly improve mental and emotional health.

Nutritious Meals and Dining Experience

Maintaining a healthy diet is crucial for seniors, but it can be challenging to prepare nutritious meals consistently. Assisted living facilities provide balanced, dietitian-approved meals that cater to the dietary needs and preferences of residents. The communal dining experience not only ensures that residents receive proper nutrition but also promotes social interaction. Special dietary needs, such as low-sodium or diabetic-friendly options, are also accommodated, ensuring that each resident's health is prioritized.

Opportunities for Physical and Mental Stimulation

Assisted living communities offer a range of activities designed to promote physical and mental stimulation. Exercise classes, gardening, arts and crafts, and educational programs keep residents active and engaged. Physical activity is essential for maintaining mobility and overall health, while mental stimulation helps prevent cognitive decline.

Maintenance-Free Living

One of the significant advantages of assisted living is the maintenance-free lifestyle it offers. Residents no longer need to worry about household chores, home maintenance, or yard work. This freedom from daily responsibilities allows them to focus on enjoying their hobbies and interests. Housekeeping, laundry, and transportation services are also typically included.

Peace of Mind for Families

Knowing that a loved one is safe, well-cared-for, and enjoying life can provide immense peace of mind for families. Assisted living facilities keep families informed about their loved one's well-being and involve them in care plans and activities. This open communication ensures that families feel connected and reassured about their loved one's happiness and health.



Assisted living facilities offer a comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality of life for seniors. By providing a safe environment, professional care, social opportunities, nutritious meals, and a maintenance-free lifestyle, these communities help seniors live their golden years with dignity, joy, and fulfillment. For many families, choosing assisted living is a positive step toward ensuring their loved one's health, happiness, and well-being.

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Start the Conversation Before Life Makes the Decision for You

By Jenny Swanson, Assisted Living Advisors

Most families don't begin exploring senior living until a crisis forces them to. Planning ahead gives you more choices, less stress, and the confidence to make the right decision—on your timeline, not during an emergency.

A fall. A hospitalization. A memory diagnosis. Caregiver exhaustion.

For many families, one of these unexpected moments means they must find senior living—and fast. In fact, 59% of aging care professionals report that families seek guidance only after a serious event has occurred. By then, emotions are high, time is limited, and important decisions must be made quickly.

But it doesn't have to be that way. You don't have to wait for an emergency to learn about your options. One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself and your loved one is having the conversation early.

Planning ahead allows older adults to participate in one of the most important decisions of their lives. Instead of feeling a move is being made for them, they have the opportunity to tour communities, meet staff and residents, ask questions, enjoy a meal, and picture what life could look like in a new home. Time to process those choices makes the transition easier and gives everyone greater peace of mind.

Planning ahead also offers more choices. Every senior living community is different, with varying care levels, apartment styles, amenities, activities, pricing, and specialized services. Some have waiting lists, while others have immediate openings. Beginning early gives you freedom to compare options thoughtfully rather than settle for what is available during a crisis.



At Assisted Living Advisors (ALA), we believe families deserve to make informed decisions—not rushed ones. We have information on every senior living community in the area, including independent living, assisted living, enhanced assisted living, memory care, and other licensed senior housing options. Because we communicate daily with local communities, we know their availability, care, pricing, and what makes each unique.



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Assisted Living

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Instead of spending days researching online, making countless phone calls, scheduling tours, and comparing communities on your own, make one phone call instead of hundreds.

We'll help identify communities that fit your loved one's care needs, budget, personality, and preferred location. We'll explain care levels, discuss payment options such as private pay, long-term care insurance, Veterans benefits, and Medicaid, coordinate tours, and remain by your side throughout the process.

Most importantly, our services are completely FREE to the individuals and families we help. Assisted Living Advisors is compensated through partnerships with participating senior living communities, allowing us to provide personalized guidance, expert recommendations, and ongoing support at no cost to you. There are no hidden fees, obligations, or pressure to decide.

You don't have to wait until life forces you to make one of the biggest decisions your family will face. Start the conversation now, explore your options, and create a plan that brings confidence instead of uncertainty.

One phone call. Every senior living option. Trusted local guidance. Always free for families.

Start the conversation today—before life makes the decision for you.



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Our services are always
100% FREE
to you!

HERE'S HOW ALA HELPS:

 One Call —♡— You call, we listen. Tell us your needs and we'll handle the rest.	 Personalized Options —♡— We research local communities that fit your needs, budget and preferences.	 Tours Made Easy —♡— We schedule and accompany you on in-person or virtual tours—saving you time and stress.
 Compare & Understand —♡— We help you compare choices, understand levels of care and costs so you can make informed decisions.	 Support Every Step —♡— From decision to move-in, we're there for you. We even check in after move-in to make sure all is well.	 Trusted Local Resource —♡— We connect you with other trusted local resources like home health, hospice, elder law, VA benefits and more.

We Help With:

- ✓ Independent Living, Assisted Living & Memory Care
- ✓ Understanding care options and costs
- ✓ Finding the right community for now or the future
- ✓ Guidance with a caring, local expert
- ✓ Peace of mind for the whole family

“When you call ALA, you get more than information—you get a partner who truly cares.”

♡

“Jenny is such a great person to work with, she really cares about helping people find the best place for their loved ones!”

★★★★★

– Google Review



Jenny Swanson
SENIOR LIVING ADVISOR

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Here for your family. ♡

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The Hidden Blessings of Assisted Living!

By Dave Olson, Realtor®, SRES™ RE/MAX EXCEL

For you who know me, you know that my interest in helping Seniors with Real Estate began with my wife's personal passion for older people. My wife Candy has long had a heart for older folks, and that led her to pursue her master's degree in Gerontology which she completed with honors. Gerontology is the study of the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging. She simply loves older people and chose to make her passion her life's work to serve people as they age. Her heart led her to a career serving people in the Assisted Living setting as their Activities Director at our local premier Assisted Living Center.

Through her work, I see firsthand the benefits of quality Assisted Living care. Assisted living is the right choice when people are high functioning, but may need help with managing medications, or may need a more structured environment with services and benefits available as needed. The provided care, meals, cleaning, nursing and caregiving are all wonderful benefits when the time is right to seek assistance in the day-to-day functions we all need.

While those functions are very important, I was surprised to learn how the more intangible benefits she personally helps provide bless the people she serves. As an Activity Director, her primary job is to help as many people as she can engage to have as much fun as she can provide. She takes her work very seriously and strives to provide the best possible full schedule of varied activities and events.

When done well, activities provided and the level of connection made with the residents truly set apart premier facilities from others. Quality activities reach the heart and soul and make life truly enriched.

The light bulb came on for me as I learned how people blossom when they "plug in" early on to the activities and social resources available to them at a high-quality Assisted Living. As a result of her work, I've seen people flourish in making new friends, develop enjoyable new activities and explore common interests, and personal interests too. "Plugged in" residents enjoy their days and look forward to the activity calendar each week. They remain more active and choose to gather socially. Residents often develop organic friendships as an unplanned benefit from participating in structured activities. Once they've connected personally, their lives are more enriched by new friends that live in community with them.

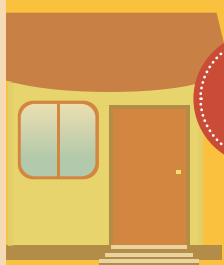


Community volunteers make a big difference at a well-managed Assisted Living. Just last week the local high school football team showed up on Friday for the Happy Hour music event! The boys were a big hit and brought smiles to a lot of faces. Church groups and choirs often come for the holidays and the effect they have on the hearts of those they come to serve is obvious.

A vibrant Assisted Living can certainly BLESS the hearts of the people they serve and make lives richer and happier along the way.

THE BIG DECISION ►

► LIVING AT HOME



Living Alone

11.3 million seniors live alone in their homes

A recent study shows loneliness increases the odds of dementia by **64%**

Unintentionally Unhealthy

Some major concerns among families with seniors living at home are malnutrition & missing meds.

Cooking healthy meals consistently is a major issue for those **OVER 65**

Struggles w/Daily Tasks

For those 65+ falls are the most common reason for hospital trauma admissions and cause of injuries resulting in death.

1 in 3 adults over 65 fall each year

Impact on Family

It can be difficult to take care of elderly parents & juggle other parts of life.

55% of seniors living at home alone said they felt too afraid to walk outside at night.

Recreational Activities

Social interaction, activities, and hobbies are significant factors in a person's quality of life

94% of assisted living residents say they are happy with their overall quality of life

Support Healthy Living

Assisted living offers easy access to nutritious food and can help with daily living tasks like medication management.

90% of assisted living residents say they are satisfied with overall quality of care

Daily Task Help

Assisted Living communities provide support w/daily living tasks.

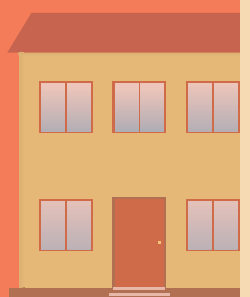
93% of assisted living residents say they are satisfied w/the level of personal attention paid by staff

► ASSISTED LIVING

Family's Peace of Mind

Assisted Living communities provide safety

99% of assisted living residents report feeling completely safe.



L.E. Phillips Senior Center to Host Fourth Annual Senior Resource Fair

The L.E. Phillips Senior Center will bring together dozens of area businesses, organizations and community resources for its Fourth Annual Senior Resource Fair on Tuesday, September 15, 2026.

The event will be held from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the L.E. Phillips Senior Center, 1616 Bellinger Street in Eau Claire. Admission is free, and the event is open to people of all ages.

The annual fair is designed to showcase businesses and organizations that provide products, services and resources specifically geared toward the area's growing aging population. This year's event will feature more than 70 vendor booths, giving attendees an opportunity to meet representatives, ask questions and learn about services available throughout the Chippewa Valley.

The fair offers much more than informational booths. Visitors can take advantage of tours of the senior center, browse craft and bake sales, and participate in a gift basket raffle. More than \$1,000 in door prizes will also be awarded throughout the event. Lunch will be available for purchase, making it easy for visitors to spend several hours exploring the fair and connecting with vendors.

The event is held in recognition of the important role senior centers play in helping older adults remain active, connected and informed. The L.E. Phillips Senior Center serves adults age 50 and older and provides opportunities for fitness, social connection, education, recreation and community involvement.

"We feel this is a great opportunity for the community to see all the Center has to offer and interact with many incredible businesses and organizations, there is something for everyone!" said Jackie Minor, senior center director.



For those who may have difficulty finding parking near the center, additional parking and a shuttle will be available at the Stella Blues parking lot on Madison Street.

The 2026 Resource Fair is proudly sponsored by Royal Credit Union and Celebration of Life Center at Chippewa Valley Cremation Services, along with additional community sponsors including Escher Real Estate, Central Health, American Senior Benefits, Lakeland Therapy, Lakeland Home Healthcare, BeeHive Homes of Eau Claire, Cambridge Senior Living and B&E Business and Estate Advisers.

With its combination of community resources, shopping, food, entertainment, education and opportunities to connect, the Senior Resource Fair provides a welcoming way for older adults, caregivers, family members and community residents to discover what the Chippewa Valley has to offer.

For more information about the Resource Fair or other programs and services available through the L.E. Phillips Senior Center, call 715-839-4909 or visit lep-sc.org



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- Tours of the Center
- Craft & bake sales
- Gift basket raffle
- \$1,000+ in door prizes
- Lunch available for purchase
- Open to all ages
- FREE Admission




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Visit: lep-sc.org

Additional parking & a shuttle will be available at the Stella Blues Parking Lot on Madison Street.

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Slow Down: Back to School Means Sharing the Road

By National Safety Council

School days bring congestion: School buses are picking up their passengers, kids on bikes are hurrying to get to school before the bell rings, harried parents are trying to drop their kids off before work. It's never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when kids are present – especially before and after school.

If You're Dropping Off

Schools often have very specific drop-off procedures for the school year. Make sure you know them for the safety of all kids. The following apply to all school zones:

- Don't double park; it blocks visibility for other children and vehicles
- Don't load or unload children across the street from the school
- Carpool to reduce the number of vehicles at the school

Sharing the Road with Young Pedestrians

According to research by the National Safety Council, most of the children who lose their lives in bus-related incidents are 4 to 7 years old, and they're walking. They are hit by the bus, or by a motorist illegally passing a stopped bus. A few precautions go a long way toward keeping children safe:

- Don't block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn, forcing pedestrians to go around you; this could put them in the path of moving traffic
- In a school zone when flashers are blinking, stop and yield to pedestrians crossing the crosswalk or intersection

- Always stop for a school patrol officer or crossing guard holding up a stop sign
- Take extra care to look for children in school zones, near playgrounds and parks, and in all residential areas
- Don't honk or rev your engine to scare a pedestrian, even if you have the right of way
- Never pass a vehicle stopped for pedestrians
- Always use extreme caution to avoid striking pedestrians wherever they may be, no matter who has the right of way



Sharing the Road with School Buses

If you're driving behind a bus, allow a greater following distance than if you were driving behind a car. It will give you more time to stop once the yellow lights start flashing. It is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that is stopped to load or unload children.

- Never pass a bus from behind – or from either direction if you're on an undivided road – if it is stopped to load or unload children
- If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop
- The area 10 feet around a school bus is the most dangerous for children; stop far enough back to allow space to safely enter and exit the bus
- Be alert; children often are unpredictable, and they tend to ignore hazards and take risks

Sharing the Road with Bicyclists

On most roads, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as vehicles, but bikes can be hard to see. Children riding bikes create special problems for drivers because usually they are not able to properly determine traffic conditions. The most common cause of collision is a driver turning left in front of a bicyclist.

- When passing a bicyclist, proceed in the same direction slowly, and leave 3 feet between your car and the cyclist
- When turning left and a bicyclist is approaching in the opposite direction, wait for the rider to pass
- If you're turning right and a bicyclist is approaching from behind on the right, let the rider go through the intersection first, and always use your turn signals
- Watch bike riders turning in front of you without looking or signaling; children especially have a tendency to do this
- Be extra vigilant in school zones and residential neighborhoods
- Watch for bikes coming from driveways or behind parked cars
- Check side mirrors before opening your door

By exercising a little extra care and caution, drivers and pedestrians can co-exist safely in school zones.



IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS A DISABILITY WISPACT IS HERE TO HELP PROVIDE MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BETTER LIFE.

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LIVING BEYOND LIMITATIONS



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Essential Questions to Ask Wispact Before Establishing a Trust

For individuals with disabilities and their families, a Special Needs Trust can be a powerful planning tool—preserving access to vital public benefits while improving long-term quality of life. In Wisconsin, Wispact is a nonprofit organization that administers pooled Special Needs Trusts. Before moving forward, however, it is important to understand how the trust will function in practice. Asking the right questions upfront can help ensure the trust aligns with your goals and expectations.

Here are three of the most important questions to ask Wispact before establishing a trust.

1. How Will This Trust Protect Public Benefits?

One of the primary reasons people choose Wispact is to preserve eligibility for means-tested benefits such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Before establishing a trust, ask for a clear explanation of how Wispact manages the trust to remain compliant with state and federal benefit rules.

Specifically, you should understand:

- Which expenses the trust can pay for without affecting benefits
- Which purchases or payments could jeopardize eligibility
- How Wispact reviews and approves distributions

This conversation helps set realistic expectations. While a Special Needs Trust can pay for many quality-of-life items that are for the sole benefit of the trust beneficiary—such as clothing, furniture, communication needs, enrichment, transportation, education, and personal supports—it is not designed to replace public benefits. Understanding these boundaries early can prevent frustration later.

2. What Are the Fees and Ongoing Administrative Responsibilities?

Trust administration involves costs, and transparency is essential. Ask Wispact for a detailed breakdown of all fees, including:

- Initial enrollment or setup fees
- Annual administrative fees
- Investment or trustee fees
- Any additional charges for special services

Because Wispact operates pooled trusts, management costs are lower than those associated with individually managed trusts.

It is also important to ask what administrative tasks Wispact handles versus what responsibilities remain with the beneficiary or family. Understanding who submits distribution requests, manages documentation, and communicates with benefit agencies will clarify day-to-day expectations and help families plan accordingly.

3. How Flexible Is the Trust as Needs Change Over Time?

Disability-related needs rarely stay the same. A trust that works well today should still function effectively years—or decades—from now. Ask Wispact how the trust can adapt as circumstances change.

Key points to explore include:

- How easy it is to request distributions for new or unexpected needs
- How life transitions, such as housing changes or employment, are handled
- What happens if benefit rules or eligibility standards change

Wispact assigns a Beneficiary Specialist to each trust and understanding how that relationship works can provide reassurance that guidance will be available as needs evolve. The Wispact Specialist works with both the beneficiary of the trust and any advisors named to the trust such as family members or guardians.

Final Thoughts

Establishing a Special Needs Trust is a significant decision with long-term implications. By asking these three questions—about benefit protection, fees and administration, and long-term flexibility—you can enter the process with clarity and confidence.

Wispact can be a valuable partner for many Wisconsin families, but the best outcomes occur when trust creators are informed, prepared, and engaged from the start. For more information, see www.wispact.org.



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At UW-Stout Polytechnic Continuing Education & Conferences, we believe learning doesn't stop after retirement. Whether you want to explore new interests close to home, develop a new skill, connect with others, or simply have an exciting and engaging experience, we offer a growing selection of personal enrichment classes on the Stout campus.

This fall, community members can explore Japanese culture through our "Discovering Japan: Culture and Community Workshop Series," featuring two hands-on experiences with Japanese washi paper and traditional archery. Those interested in communication and community engagement can participate in our "Constructive Dialogue Workshop Series," a three-session program focused on navigating challenging conversations and building stronger dialogue skills - join one or all three.

Creative learners may enjoy "From Memories to Memoir: Crafting Your Story," a multi-week class that helps participants turn life experiences into meaningful written stories. Additional hands-on opportunities include "Bend, Bead, Wear: A Beginner's Guide to Wire Earrings" and "Hook, Loop, Create: Beginner Crochet for New Makers."

We are also pleased to offer free classes and opportunities, including "Insurance Literacy for Retirees: The ABCs & Ds of Medicare and Other Insurance Essentials" and the "Freshwater Friday" faculty lecture series.

Our aim is to offer fun, informative classes designed to cultivate new skills, hobbies, and connections. To learn more about these and other upcoming offerings, we invite you to visit our website and explore our full catalog of classes and events. Because we are continually adding new classes throughout the year, we also encourage you to sign up for our bi-monthly newsletter to stay informed about upcoming classes, educational experiences, and special events designed for curious adults. And if you don't see a class that matches your interests, we'd love to hear from you. Our programs are shaped by community interests and feedback, and your ideas may help inspire future learning opportunities. Whether you're exploring a longtime passion or discovering something entirely new, we're here to support your lifelong learning journey.

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Types of Eligible Work:

- Roof & window replacement
- Plumbing repairs or upgrading
- Accessibility Modifications
- Electrical repairs or upgrading
- Carpentry repairs
- Heating system replacement
- Energy saving repairs
- Siding repairs or replacement

Applicant Eligibility Requirements:

- City of Eau Claire resident
- The assessed value of the property may not exceed \$165,750
- Property must be a minimum of 25 years old
- Owner occupied (at least one year)
- Good credit history
- HUD income guidelines apply: not to exceed 80% of area median income



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Labor Day By HISTORY.com Editors

Labor Day 2026 occurs on Monday, September 7. Labor Day pays tribute to the contributions and achievements of American workers and is traditionally observed on the first Monday in September. It was created by the labor movement in the late 19th century and became a federal holiday in 1894. Labor Day weekend also symbolizes the end of summer for many Americans and is celebrated with parties, street parades and athletic events.

When Is Labor Day?

Labor Day is always observed on the first Monday in September. Labor Day 2026 takes place on Monday, September 7.

Why Do We Celebrate Labor Day?

Labor Day, an annual celebration of workers and their achievements, originated during one of American labor history's most dismal chapters. In the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to eke out a basic living. Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as 5 or 6 toiled in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages.

People of all ages, particularly the very poor and recent immigrants, often faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks.

As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture as the wellspring of American employment, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th century, grew more prominent and vocal. They began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay.

Many of these events turned violent during this period, including the infamous Haymarket Riot of 1886, in which several Chicago policemen and workers were killed. Others gave rise to

longstanding traditions: On September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, holding the first Labor Day parade in U.S. history.

The idea of a "workingmen's holiday," celebrated on the first Monday in September, caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it. Congress would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view. On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives.

On June 26, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide. To break the Pullman strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers.

Who Created Labor Day?

In the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories. On June 28, 1894, President Grover Cleveland signed it into law. More than a century later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified.

Many credit Peter J. McGuire, cofounder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday.

Labor Day Celebrations

Labor Day is still celebrated in cities and towns across the United States with parades, picnics, barbecues, fireworks displays and other public gatherings, especially over the long Labor Day weekend. For many Americans, particularly children and young adults, it represents the end of the summer and the start of the back-to-school season.





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September Food Month Spotlight: Chicken

A Healthy, Versatile Favorite

Chicken is one of the most popular proteins because it's affordable, easy to prepare, and packed with nutrients. Whether you're grilling, baking, roasting, or slow cooking, chicken can be the centerpiece of a delicious and nutritious meal.



Nutrition Highlights

A 3-ounce serving of cooked, skinless chicken breast provides approximately:

- 140 calories
- 26 grams of protein
- 3 grams of fat
- Rich in niacin (Vitamin B3) for energy production
- Excellent source of Vitamin B6 for brain health
- Provides phosphorus and selenium to support healthy bones and immune function

Protein helps build and repair muscles, keeps you feeling full longer, and supports overall health.

Buying Chicken

Choose chicken that is:

- Cold to the touch and well refrigerated
- Pink in color with little or no odor
- Packaged without tears or leaks
- Purchased last before checking out to keep it cold

If using fresh chicken, cook or freeze it within 1–2 days of purchase.

Safe Storage Tips

Refrigerator

- Raw chicken: 1–2 days
- Cooked chicken: 3–4 days

Freezer

- Raw chicken pieces: Up to 9 months
- Whole chicken: Up to 1 year
- Cooked chicken: 2–6 months

Food Safety Reminder

Always thaw chicken safely:

- In the refrigerator
- In cold water (change water every 30 minutes)
- In the microwave if cooking immediately afterward

Never thaw chicken on the countertop.

Cook chicken to an internal temperature of 165°F using a food thermometer.

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Easy Recipe: Lemon Garlic Baked Chicken

Ingredients

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Mix olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, and seasonings.
3. Coat chicken evenly with the mixture.
4. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until the internal temperature reaches 165°F.
5. Let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

Serve with: roasted vegetables, brown rice, or a fresh green salad.

Healthy Tip

Remove the skin before eating to reduce saturated fat, and try baking, grilling, or air frying instead of deep frying for a heart-healthy meal. Enjoy Chicken Month by trying a new recipe, adding colorful vegetables, and making protein the star of your plate!

Digging Into Wellness: The Health Benefits of Gardening for Older Adults

By Susan Krolow, SMP Volunteer Coordinator

Gardening is more than just a hobby – it's a powerful way for older adults to support healthy aging while enjoying the beauty of nature. Whether tending a backyard vegetable garden, planting flowers in containers, or simply pulling weeds and watering plants, gardening offers physical, mental, and emotional benefits that can improve overall well-being.



A Natural Way to Stay Active

Gardening encourages movement through activities like digging, planting, watering, and pruning. These motions help improve flexibility, strength, balance, and coordination. Even light gardening tasks can provide low-impact exercise that supports joint health and mobility. Regular physical activity can also help reduce the risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Boosting Mental Health and Reducing Stress

Spending time outdoors and connecting with nature has been shown to reduce stress and improve mood. Gardening can provide a sense of calm, purpose, and accomplishment. Many older adults find that caring for plants helps ease feelings of anxiety, loneliness, or depression. Watching something grow from seed to harvest can be deeply rewarding and uplifting.

Supporting Brain Health

Gardening engages the mind through planning, problem-solving, and learning. Remembering planting schedules, caring for different plants, and maintaining a garden can help keep the brain active and stimulated. Some studies suggest that regular gardening activities may even help reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

Encouraging Healthy Eating

For seniors, growing vegetables, herbs, or fruits can lead to healthier eating habits. Fresh produce from the garden is nutritious, flavorful, and often encourages people to eat more fruits and vegetables. Gardening can also increase appreciation for where food comes from

and inspire healthier meal choices.

Creating Social Connections Community gardens and gardening clubs offer opportunities for social interaction and friendship. Sharing gardening tips, exchanging plants, or working alongside others can help reduce isolation and foster meaningful connections. Gardening can also become a wonderful multigenerational activity to enjoy with children and grandchildren.

Gardening Safely

While gardening has many benefits, it's important for older adults to garden safely:

- Stretch before and after gardening
- Use lightweight tools with easy-grip handles
- Stay hydrated
- Wear sunscreen and a hat
- Take breaks when needed
- Consider raised garden beds or container gardening to reduce bending and strain

Gardening reminds us that growth, renewal, and beauty can flourish at every age. Whether planting a single flowerpot or cultivating a full garden, spending time with plants is a simple and enjoyable way to support healthy aging – one seed at a time.

NO NEW MEDICARE CARD

A photograph of a hand holding a Medicare card. The card is blue and white with the Medicare logo. The text on the card includes: Name/Nombre: JOHN L SMITH, Medicare Number/Número de Medicare: 1EG4-TE5-MK72, Entitled to/Con derecho a: HOSPITAL (PART A) MEDICAL (PART B), Coverage starts/Cobertura empieza: 03-01-2016. To the right of the card, there is text that reads: 'Have you been told you need a new Medicare card? STOP! It's a scam'.

Here's the truth

- Medicare is NOT issuing plastic cards
- You do NOT need to 'update' your Medicare Card
- Medicare will NEVER call or text you asking for your Medicare number

Protect Yourself

- Never give out your Medicare number to unexpected callers
- Hang up on anyone asking for personal information
- Report suspicious calls to SMP



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Preventing Medicare Fraud

SMPs are grant-funded projects of the federal U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), U.S. Administration for Community Living (ACL).



Help Yourself to Better Health Get Moving!

Federal guidelines recommend that adults get at least 150 minutes of physical activity each week – that's about 30 minutes on most days. Walk. Bike. Dance, if you like. When it's safe, swim or take an exercise class. If you haven't been active and want to get started, first check with your health care provider.

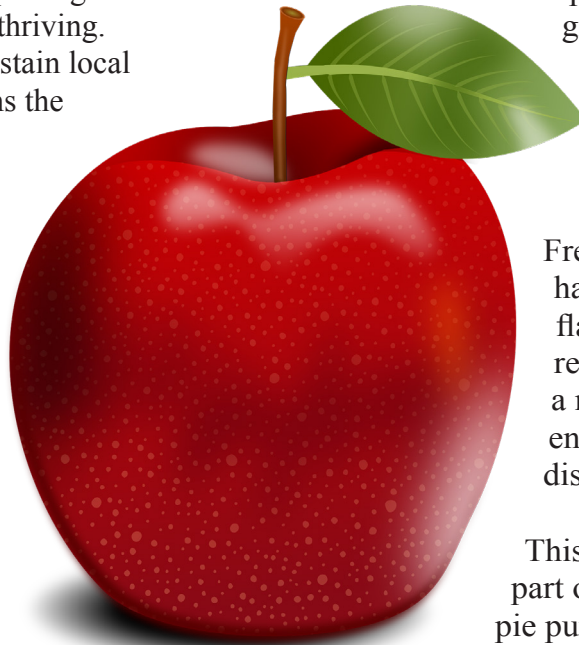
WHA
Wisconsin Institute
for Healthy Aging
wihealthyaging.org

Support Your Local Orchards

As autumn arrives, local orchards become more than just beautiful destinations filled with colorful leaves and crisp apples—they become an important part of supporting the families and farms that keep our communities thriving. Every visit to a neighborhood orchard helps sustain local agriculture, preserves farmland, and strengthens the regional economy.

When you purchase apples, pears, pumpkins, cider, honey, baked goods, or other seasonal products directly from an orchard, more of your money stays in the local community. These purchases help farmers cover the costs of planting, maintaining, and harvesting their crops while allowing them to invest in equipment, employees, and future growing seasons.

Supporting local orchards also helps protect valuable farmland from development. Many family-owned orchards have been passed down through generations, preserving agricultural traditions and providing fresh, locally grown food. By choosing to shop locally, consumers help ensure these farms remain productive for years to come.



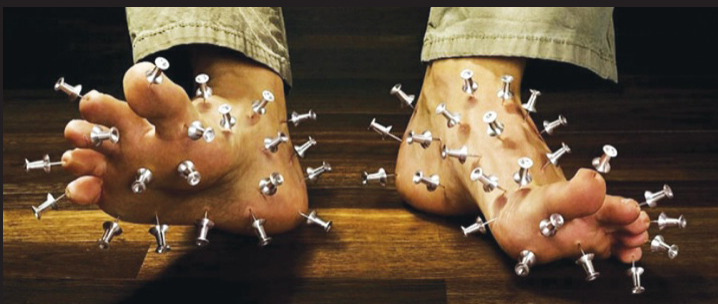
Beyond the economic benefits, local orchards offer opportunities for families to connect with agriculture firsthand. Visitors can pick their own fruit, learn how apples are grown, enjoy hayrides, navigate corn mazes, and experience the changing seasons together. These experiences foster a greater appreciation for the hard work and dedication that goes into producing fresh food.

Fresh produce from nearby orchards is often harvested at peak ripeness, providing exceptional flavor while reducing the transportation required to bring food to market. This supports a more sustainable food system and lowers the environmental impact associated with long-distance shipping.

This fall, consider making a trip to a local orchard part of your seasonal tradition. Every apple picked, pie purchased, and gallon of cider enjoyed is an investment in local farmers, local businesses, and the future of your community.

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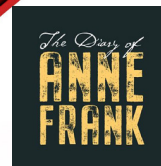


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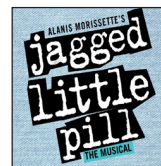
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6 Falls Prevention Steps to Help Your Older Loved Ones

For older adults, maintaining independence often means being able to move safely through the home without fear. Falls can threaten that independence. One in four older Americans experiences a fall each year, and it's a leading cause of serious injury among older adults.

After a fall, an older adult may become afraid of falling again. That fear can cause them to avoid experiencing life and, over time, becoming less active can lead to weaker muscles, poorer balance and a greater risk of falling.

These practical steps to reduce many of the risks:

Start with a conversation

Ask whether your loved one has noticed changes in balance, walking, or confidence. Make the discussion supportive rather than demanding, reassuring them that safety helps preserve independence. If they have fallen, experienced dizziness, or feel unsteady, encourage them to speak with their health care provider. A professional evaluation can identify risks and recommend appropriate treatment, exercise, or community programs.

Keep vision and lighting in mind

Good vision is essential for navigating safely. Make sure your loved one's eyeglass prescription is current and that they are wearing their glasses as recommended. Lighting is equally important. Hallways, stairways, bathrooms, and entrances should be well illuminated. A bedside lamp or easily accessible light can help prevent nighttime falls. A vision specialist may be able to recommend strategies and equipment to make everyday activities safer.

Look for changes in walking and balance

Sometimes the earliest warning signs of fall risk are visible in the way someone moves. Does your loved one hold onto furniture or walls while walking? Do they shuffle their feet or appear unsteady when turning? These changes should not simply be dismissed as a normal part of aging. A physical therapist can evaluate and develop an exercise program designed around the person's abilities.

A therapist may also recommend a cane or walker. Proper fit and instruction are important because an incorrectly adjusted mobility aid can actually make a fall more likely.

Staying physically active is one of the best ways to support continued mobility and independence.

Review medications regularly

Medications can play an important role in fall prevention. Some prescription and over-the-counter medications can cause dizziness, drowsiness, confusion or changes in blood pressure.

Encourage your loved one to have their medications reviewed, particularly whenever a new prescription is added. Make sure their health care provider and pharmacist know about all prescription medications, over-the-counter products and supplements they take.

Pay particular attention to products marketed as sleep aids. Some medications labeled "PM," including certain pain relievers, can cause drowsiness and affect balance. If sleep is a concern, encourage your loved one to discuss alternatives with a health care professional. Pill organizers, medication lists and automated reminders may also make managing medications easier.



Make the home safer

A home safety check can identify hazards before they cause a fall. Improve lighting, especially around stairs and hallways, and keep stairs clear with sturdy handrails. Add grab bars or a shower chair in the bathroom. Remove loose rugs, clutter, and cords, and keep frequently used items within easy reach to avoid climbing or stretching.

For additional assistance, an occupational therapist can provide a more comprehensive home assessment. Community programs can also help. Programs such as A Matter of Balance, Stepping On and Tai Chi are designed to help older adults improve balance, strength and confidence while learning strategies to prevent falls. Local Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Area Agencies on Aging can help families locate programs and services in their communities.

Finally, families may want to consider a medical alert system with fall detection, particularly for an older adult who lives alone. These systems can provide an added layer of security by helping connect someone to assistance when a fall occurs.

Fall prevention does not mean telling an older adult to stop doing the things they enjoy. It means identifying risks and making changes that allow them to continue doing those things safely. A conversation, medication review, vision appointment, exercise program or a few simple changes around the home can make a significant difference. The goal is not simply to prevent a fall—it is to help older adults maintain confidence, mobility and independence for as long as possible.

CHIPPEWA VALLEY EYE CLINIC

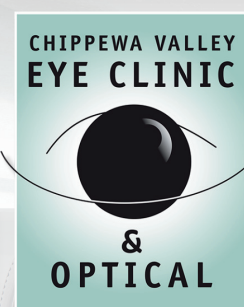
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