

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Cooperative Extension office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians. Please contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information on these and related topics.



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RELATIONSHIPS

MAKING THE MOST OF NURSING HOME VISITING

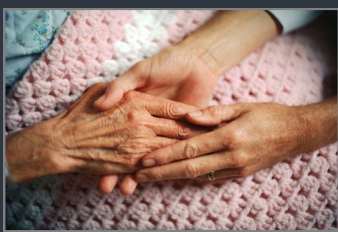
Most residents of nursing homes today require skilled nursing care. This includes custodial care as well as medical care. Nursing homes provide short-term rehabilitation as well as longer-term care. Persons who don't need skilled nursing care usually choose other, less expensive care options such as assisted living or supported home care.

For this reason, most nursing home residents today have significant limitations in their ability to walk, to care for themselves, and even to interact with family and friends. If residents' abilities to chat with visitors, or even to recognize them, declines, visits can become awkward and uncomfortable.

Here are some ideas to make these visits more meaningful for everyone:

- Check with staff to determine the best times for visits. Residents and staff have routines for eating, sleeping, bathing and other caregiving activities, so you don't want to interfere with those. Be sure to show up when the resident is expecting you.
- Share a meal with the resident. Most facilities will be happy for you to purchase your meal and share some time with the resident. Remember that eating can be a slow and messy process for some residents.





- Talk with the resident about neighborhood and family news. Maybe bring a newspaper and read some articles out loud. The resident may not be able to respond, but just hearing your voice may bring her comfort.
 - Reminisce about pleasant memories with the resident. You may be surprised at what long-term memories may come to light, even if they are not totally accurate. Some seniors have vivid dreams that seem real, and these dreams get confused with actual events from the past. Don't challenge the senior's recollections on unimportant issues.
 - Bring some items with you that the senior may recognize. These could include photos, favorite clothes, flowers, music or snacks. Be sure to check with staff before bringing items.
 - Many nursing homes recognize the special appeal of pets, especially companion dogs. Ask staff if you can bring a pet with you for visit, especially if it was a pet that the senior cared for at home. Be prepared to be very popular among many of the residents.
 - Take the resident for a stroll, especially if the weather is pleasant outdoors. If the resident is able and staff agrees, take him for a drive around familiar neighborhoods.
 - Offer to write letters and cards that the resident could dictate to you.
 - Ask if the resident would enjoy some hand lotion or a back rub. Loving touch is sadly lacking in many nursing home environments.
 - Bring a board game such as checkers or cards, or a craft such as cross stitch or knitting, if the resident enjoys these.
 - Consider including children in some visits. Some young children may be frightened by the strange environment or the resident's condition, so prepare them before the visit. Bring an activity for the child if he may get bored.
- These are just a few ideas to trigger your thinking about how to make these visits meaningful for you and the resident. Of course, some activities are not practical, depending on your circumstances – but don't let these minor challenges get in the way of visiting as often as possible.

WHAT TO BRING:

Flowers

Photos

Music

Snacks

Pets

Games

Crafts



BE SMART:

When selecting lighting, choose energy efficient bulbs. Recent changes in lighting require shoppers to think in lumens (brightness) rather than watts (energy consumed) when shopping for lighting. For example, if you want to replace the 60-watt bulb in your table lamp, then you need to buy a bulb with at least 800 lumens. Select compact fluorescent lights (CFL) or LEDs to save the most energy and money. You can learn more about lighting online at:

http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=lighting.pr_lighting_landing



RESOURCES

SELECTING LIGHTING FOR YOUR HOME

As people age, proper lighting becomes increasingly important. On average, a 65-year-old needs about twice the light as the average 20-year-old. Aging eyes see less sharply and the lens inside the eyes becomes thicker, giving things a yellow cast.

So what can you do to adjust the lighting in your home? In general, you should increase the overall light levels inside your home by 25 to 50 percent. Below are some guidelines to help you adjust the lighting in your home to better meet the needs of aging eyes. The lighting in your home should be:

1. **High.** Increase lighting in dark areas, such as closets, stairs, hallways and walkways. Good options are to add LED nightlights that turn on automatically at dark; outdoor lights activated by a motion sensor; and solar-powered lighting along walkways and on outdoor steps.

2. **Focused.** Increase light levels by adding task lighting and locating the lights in front of or over your work area to avoid casting shadows. Light switches with glow in the dark switches will help you find the light switches at night.
3. **Glare-free.** Avoid lights that shine directly in your eyes or reflect off shiny surfaces, such as metal countertops or highly polished surfaces. Place the TV away from windows to reduce glare.
4. **Uniform.** Keep the lighting even throughout the room by adding table and floor lamps to increase the overall lighting in a room.

HEALTH

IS THERE A LINK BETWEEN DIABETES AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE? WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is Alzheimer's disease?

Alzheimer's disease is a disorder that gradually destroys important parts of the brain. It is the most common form of dementia and is the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. It leads to changes in memory, thinking and behavior.

WHAT IS DIABETES?

Diabetes is a disease that affects how the body controls blood glucose (sugar). Normally when the blood glucose rises, the pancreas releases insulin to lower it back down to normal. However, in diabetes, this system fails. In Type 1 diabetes, the body's immune system attacks and destroys the cells of the pancreas that produce insulin. In Type 2 diabetes, your body becomes resistant to the action of insulin even though your pancreas is still making it, sometimes in large amounts.

How Does Diabetes Increase the Risk for Alzheimer's Disease?

High blood glucose is one of the major risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. High blood glucose in the body can damage vital organs, including the brain.

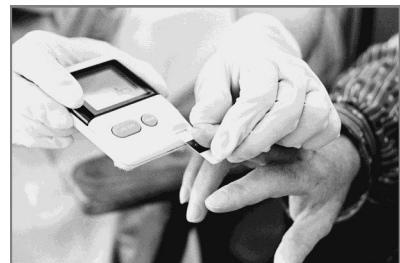
- Diabetes increases the risk for heart disease and stroke. Heart disease and stroke can damage the blood vessels of the brain, leading to Alzheimer's disease.
- High insulin levels may trigger Alzheimer's disease since it disrupts chemicals in the brain.
- Inflammation is caused by high blood glucose. This can also damage brain cells and lead to Alzheimer's disease.

What Can You Do to Lower Your Risk for Alzheimer's Disease?

1. If you have diabetes, aim for the best blood glucose control possible.
2. Exercise. Exercise lowers blood glucose and causes your body to be more sensitive to insulin. Exercise stimulates the brain and reduces the memory decline that happens with aging. Research also shows that older people who exercise have larger brains and a

smaller decline in their mental abilities than non-smokers.

3. Don't smoke. Smoking doubles the risk for developing Alzheimer's. It increases inflammation in the body and raises blood pressure. This can lead to blocked and diseased blood vessels in the brain.
4. Eat foods rich in antioxidants like fruits and vegetables. These foods keep the brain healthy and protect it from damage.
5. Eat moderate amounts of healthy fats like liquid vegetable oils, avocados, nuts and omega-3 fatty acids in fish. Healthy fats also reduce inflammation in the body and damage to the blood vessels.
6. Control your blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about the best blood pressure for you.
7. Challenge yourself mentally. Read, play games, play a musical instrument, work at a stimulating job, or take educational courses to stimulate your brain.



CROCK POT MINESTRONE SOUP

MAKE THIS SOUP AHEAD AND FREEZE IT IN SMALL CONTAINERS TO MICROWAVE AND SERVE LATER

NUTRITION ANALYSIS

Calories: 156

Carbohydrate: 18 g

Protein: 12 g

Fat: 4 g

Saturated Fat: 1 g

Cholesterol: 18 g

Sodium: 75 mg

Dietary Fiber: 3 g

NOTE:

If made with regular canned or boxed beef broth, sodium increases to 416 milligrams per serving.

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 12 ounces lean beef, cubed
- 1 sweet onion, sliced
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 2-3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 12-ounce bag frozen Italian-style vegetables
- 6 baby carrots, sliced
- 4 small potatoes, cubed
- 1 quart low sodium beef broth
- 8 grape tomatoes or 4 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 teaspoon each dry oregano and basil
- Additional water to cover if needed
- Black pepper to taste

Makes 8 servings

1. Heat a non-stick skillet and add the oil. Brown the beef with the onion, sweet pepper and garlic. Add the Italian vegetables and cook until just heated through.
2. Pour the beef and vegetable mixture into the crock pot, add remaining ingredients. Only add extra water if broth does not cover beef-vegetable mixture.
3. Cook on low for 8-10 hours or until potatoes and carrots are tender.





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