



SENIOR LIVING

Renovations for senior safety

As adults approach their golden years, the homes they once thought of as sanctuaries can become unsafe. Families wrestle with the decision to keep parents and grandparents in their homes or move them into assisted living facilities or other senior residences.

Modifying seniors' homes to make them safer is another option. The National Institute on Aging says that families may be able to have a senior stay at home by helping older relatives remain independent but safe. The following are a few ways to do just that.

- Remove fall hazards. The NIA reports that six out of 10 falls happen at home, where people spend the most time and fail to think about their safety. Seniors who want to be independent may overestimate their physical abilities. Because falls can be so dangerous, leading to cuts, abrasions, broken bones, and more, seniors and their families must take steps to prevent falls in homes. Improve lighting, especially at night when sight may become diminished. Install hand rails and grab bars where possible. Pick up clutter and remove tripping hazards, such as slippery rugs or electric cords. Install an electric stair climbing seat to make traversing stairs less risky.
- Improve visibility and ability to communicate. Vision loss may

accompany aging, but technology can help mitigate such losses.

Use big-button phones, remote controls and even keyboards so seniors can keep in touch. Voice-activated thermostats or smart home technology also can make it easier for seniors to voice their needs.

- Modify fixtures and other features. Dexterity may wane with age, and arthritis can make grasping or turning doorknobs and faucets more challenging. Take inventory of areas of the home that present the biggest obstacles to seniors. Replace knobs in the shower or on faucets with lever handles, which are easier to maneuver. Install new cabinets and doors that freely glide open and self-close. Replace toggle light switches with easier paddle-type switches that can be pushed with a hand or even arm. Motion-sensor lights also can be handy. Push-button oven controls may make cooking easier.
- Prepare for medical emergencies. Invest in medical alert systems, such as necklaces or bracelets, that can be used to contact police or emergency medical personnel directly. Make phones available in commonly used rooms in the home, such as bedrooms, the living room, bathrooms, and the kitchen.
- Install ramps and nonslip flooring. Ramps can make it easier to



reach the front door or cross over elevated doorway thresholds. Nonslip flooring also can prevent falls around the house, offering more traction for feet, walkers or canes.

- Repair cracks in walkways and driveways. Safety should also extend to the outdoors. Be sure to repair cracks or uneven pavement. Replace loose patio blocks or bricks with a more stable design or with concrete or asphalt. While outdoors, trim back bushes and make sure there are no tripping hazards outside as well.

A few modifications can make it possible for seniors to live comfortably in their homes for many years.

Cut the costs of your prescriptions

The costs of filling prescriptions is simply too big to bear for many people, even now that the Affordable Care Act has greatly reduced the amount of people who are uninsured. A survey from the Commonwealth Fund found that 35 million people in America failed to fill a prescription in 2014 because of the cost of the medication. That figure represents an improvement from 2010, when 48 million people did not fill their prescriptions due to the costs of those medications, but it still serves to highlight a need many people have to cut the costs of their medicine.

Though people who cannot afford to fill their prescriptions often feel helpless, there are a handful of ways they can cut the costs of their medications and start feeling better.

- Discuss changes with your physician. Perhaps the simplest way

to cut prescription costs is to discuss medication options with your physician. Brand-name drugs are typically more expensive than generic alternatives, so speak with your physician about generic drugs or less costly brand-name drugs that may treat your condition as well as expensive brand-name drugs do.

- Consider Patient Assistance Programs. Sometimes referred to as "Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs," Patient Assistance Programs, or PAPs, can greatly reduce the burden of prescription drug costs. Sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, PAPs distribute billions of dollars to patients who otherwise could not afford their medications. Eligibility criteria varies depending on the program, but men and women struggling to pay for their prescriptions can speak with their physicians about PAPs.

- Consult your member organizations. If you are a member of the AAA automotive group or the American Association of Retired Persons, you might be eligible for medication discount cards free of charge. These cards provide discounts on your medications, but some come with expensive fees upfront. Look for no-fee cards, such as those offered to AAA and AARP members or others offered by nonprofit organizations, before considering options offered by pharmaceutical companies or other for-profit businesses.

- Contact charitable organizations. Some charitable organizations, such as the National Organization for Rare Disorders and maybe even some local nonprofits, offer prescription assistance to people in need. Visit NORD online at www.rarediseases.org.

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

New Year, New You

Did you make a list of resolutions for the New Year? How are you doing so far? They say if we can keep a resolution for 21 days, we're likely to stick with it. Here are some ideas to make 2016 a healthier, more active year.

- If you always hear about local events after the fact, sign up for online notices for museum exhibits, special readings at the library, lectures and lunches at the senior center.
- Consider taking a class. Reducing the risk of falls and senior driving safety are both worthwhile. Check the education department course catalog for something new and fun. Classes even might be free for seniors.
- Do a puzzle a day. It doesn't matter what kind. Crossword, scrabble, solitaire are all good brain stretchers. Go online to AARP at games.aarp.org for free games.
- Get out of the house once a day. Walk to the mailbox, set up a

walking routine with a friend (even if you have to go to the local rec center) or pick a different place to visit every day.

- Eat something that's good for you at least

a few times per week, even if you don't especially care for it. If you don't like green vegetables, for example, scan the Internet for recipes that will make them more palatable. Do you have a smoothie blender? Many ingredients can be combined to taste better together.

- Consider upgrading your technology knowledge. If your grandchildren have smartphones, think about whether you might benefit from having that instant contact with them, rather than waiting until you open email to see the latest photos from them.
- Look up old friends. If you're not familiar with social media, take a class, and especially learn about the safety aspects.

Stay Happy, Stay Healthy

Negative stereotypes about aging can produce negative outcomes in seniors, including physical function.

That's quite a statement, and apparently it's true. The phrase "Don't worry, be happy" might well include the addition of "and stay healthier." Researchers interacted with 100 seniors ages 61-99 to learn whether positive stereotyping could have positive outcomes. They used implicit (implied) and explicit (clearly expressed)

messages, in varying combinations, at one-week intervals. The results showed that implicit interventions caused improved self-perception, which included better physical function. The opposite also was true: Negative messages resulted in negative self-perception. The impact lasted for three weeks. And implicit messages had a greater effect than explicit ones.

Becca Levy, associate professor at Yale, has been studying us for a long time. In some of her research, participants played computer games with words flashed on the screen. These subliminal messages had an impact, either positive or negative, about aging stereotypes, and affected memory tasks, walking speed and even handwriting. If flash messages could have such a great impact, think about what more overt messages could do.

Researchers have come up with a numbers of ways we can stay healthier as we age, and it's all about our frame of mind.

- Stay happy and positive, on an even keel, without going to extremes emotionally.
- Look at the glass as half full, and be hopeful about the future.
- Remain social. Get out, be with people -- the happier the better. If there are negative people in your life, try to avoid them. Avoid hostility. Search for group activities that have a positive purpose.
- Be resilient in the face of difficulties and search for the good in any situation -- because there is always a silver lining. Your health will thank you.

Kathryn's Care



**Local & Reliable In Home
Private Elder Care Giving.
Simply the best, most
trusted and affordable
In-Home Care in the
area since 1998**

**Call: 541-556-4470
for free consultation**

**We beat other Elder Care
companies prices!
House Cleaning Services also available &
more affordable than most**

**Kathryn Rogers, CNA, Owner/Lead Caregiver
KathrynsCare@gmail.com**

Visit KathrynsCare.com to see testimonials!



Keep Your Feet Healthy

Sometimes, pampering is not enough to keep your feet healthy. If you are a senior or have feet that require special care, you're not alone. Our services are specially designed for those who have these and other medical conditions:

arthritis ■ mobility limitations ■ diabetes ■ limited vision

Our certified Registered Nurse assesses and cares for your feet:

- Nail trimming
- Debridement or buffing of corns and calluses
- Education regarding diabetic foot care
- Education for preventative care
- Home treatment for athlete's foot and tinea pedis

To schedule an appointment, call 541-767-5400.

1515 Village Drive, Cottage Grove, OR 97424



PeaceHealth
Cottage Grove Community Medical Center

www.peacehealth.org/cgch