



The Senior Sentinel



Happy Easter!



Celebrate Earth Day on April 22.

There are many ways for seniors to celebrate Earth Day. Everyone loves a celebration. Earth day is a perfect time for an event or activity.

The first Earth Day was held on April 22, 1970, and people have been participating in activities annually since then to emphasize the importance of protecting our planet. While the official Earth Day celebration is a massive affair, your celebration can be smaller, planned quickly and organized easily.

Consider one of these ideas to celebrate our Earth.

Host a Seed, Seedling and Cuttings Swap

Post a few flyers and get the word out amongst your neighbors that on Earth Day, everyone is welcome to gather together safely to share gardening tips, swap seeds or seedlings or cuttings. If you've been admiring that stunning flowering bush in your neighbor's yard, now is the time to encourage them to share a cutting or two.

If everyone participates, you can share the lush foliage that already exists in your community and make it even lovelier, without anyone having to bear any expense. This can also be a good time to meet new people and to find individuals who share common interests and hobbies. You might discover that there is an interest in forming a gardening club that meets once a month or so.

Plant a Tree

Planting a tree in your yard for everyone to enjoy the beauty of it for your family, neighbors and the future generations to come. Take up a collection amongst friends and neighbors to purchase trees to be planted in a nearby park or in a common area for everyone to enjoy.

Recycling

Choose to recycle newspapers, magazines, and cardboard and any other paper products. Recycle plastic goods that are marked with #1-#7. Glass is recycled according to color: clear, green and brown and keep lightbulbs, sheet glass, mirrors and Pyrex separate from bottles, since they have a different composition and melting points, and may not be accepted at many recycling centers. Aluminum, steel and copper are all recyclable. Contact your local recycling center to find out more information on what items they accept for recycling.

Take a Walk

What a better way to celebrate Earth Day than to be out enjoying the beauty of Earth. Gather with family and friends and take a small hike, bird watch or just take in the scenery. Don't forget to bring a recyclable bag to pick up litter on your journey.



From Our Dietitian:

Reduce Food Waste-Good For You/Good For The Planet

In honor of Earth Day (recognized on April 22nd) it may be a good time to consider our role in helping to reduce food waste. Such consideration, may even help lessen your own food costs. The United Nations estimates that one-third of all food produced is wasted, which means over 1 billion tons of food is wasted each year.

A consumer research study conducted in 2019 showed that the top reason we're concerned about food waste is monetary: we want to save money by wasting less food. The top three types of food wasted were from restaurant leftovers, produce, and home prepared foods. It seems that while our original intention is to eat the produce and leftovers, 83% of those surveyed said they throw out food because it's spoiled or stale. When it comes to our own wallets and grocery bills, we can see how food waste can be an economic problem. Also, many of us often think about wasting food as an ethical problem when millions of people are hungry. Food waste is also an environmental problem. Emissions associated with wasted food add up to about 4.4 gigatons of greenhouse gases every year.

Reducing food waste starts at home with each of us. Not only will we save money by preventing food waste at home, we'll also contribute to a healthier planet. Below are some tips to help reduce food waste:

1. Plan meals for the week and only purchase foods you plan to use.
2. Before going to the grocery store, check your refrigerator and pantry to see what foods you already have on hand to avoid purchasing more of the same items.
3. The larger size package may appear to cost less per unit pricing however, if a good portion of the item is later tossed out, it is no longer less expensive and adds to global food waste. Consider buddying up with a friend or relative to "split" larger packages into sizes that you can both use. By sharing the cost of these items, you can then take advantage of the lower unit price, making it a win-win situation.
4. Purchase vegetables and fruit that look imperfect but are fine to eat so that they are not tossed out by the grocery store. Use imperfect fruit to top pancakes, stir into yogurt and vegetables to make stir-fries and soups.
5. When you get home from the store, or within the next day, take the time to wash, dry, chop, dice, slice, and place your fresh food items in clear storage containers for snacks and easy cooking.
6. Plan to use leftovers in lunches the next day, for dinner within two days, or freeze leftovers for your own 'frozen meals' later in the month.
7. Keep foods that you want to eat first in the front of the refrigerator so that you see them as soon as you open the refrigerator door.
8. Use clear storage containers or label foods in the refrigerator so that you know what is in each container.
9. Freeze food such as bread, cut-up raw vegetables, sliced fruit or meat that you know you won't be able to eat before they spoil.
10. Many fruits give off natural gases as they ripen, making other nearby produce spoil faster. Store apples, bananas and tomatoes by themselves, and store vegetables in different bins.
11. If you feel you have purchased a few to many nonperishable food items, consider donating extra to food pantries or other food drive organizations to help feed the hungry and reduce food waste. Some local grocery stores have designated areas to do just this as you walk out of the grocery store.



Caregiving:

Alzheimer's Wandering is Dangerous

Getting lost or accidentally wandering away is a serious issue for people with Alzheimer's or dementia and a major worry for families. According to the Alzheimer's Association, 6 out of 10 people with dementia will wander. It can happen at any point in the disease, even if they've never done it before. It might seem unbelievable that seniors who are frail, slow-moving, or use a walker could get very far without anyone noticing. But it really does happen!

The scary thing is that some older adults who wander away are never found and some pass away due to accidents or exposure. That's why it's so important to keep your older adult safe and try to prevent them from wandering. We explain what causes someone with dementia to accidentally walk away from familiar surroundings and share 8 ways to reduce wandering behavior and keep seniors safe even if they do wander.

There are many reasons why someone with Alzheimer's might wander, including:

- ◆ **Fear of Stress**— they might not recognize where they are, the environment is overstimulating, or a loud noise or confusing situation could upset them
- ◆ **Basic Needs**—they might be looking for food, a bathroom, or just want to get some fresh air
- ◆ **Searching**—they might get lost while looking for someone or something
- ◆ **Boredom**—they could be looking for something to do
- ◆ **Old Routines**—they might be trying to go to work, do chores, or run errands like they used to

8 ways to prevent Alzheimer's wandering

1. Install door and window alarms and locks

Making it difficult for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia to get outside the house is essential to preventing wandering.

- Simple home safety modifications can make it tough for them to open doors to the outside, including:
Adding childproof door knob covers make more difficult to open doors.
- Installing an additional lock higher up on the door so they're out of your older adult's line of sight because people with dementia often don't look above eye level.
- Installing door and window alarms to alert you if they're opened.
- Using pressure-sensitive alarm mats next to their bed to alert you if they get up at night.
- Using an alarm like SafeWander that can be triggered when a specific threshold is crossed.

Important: Be aware of fire safety needs for everyone in the house. Make sure all locks are easily accessible to people without cognitive impairment. Doors should still be able to be opened quickly in case of emergency.

2. Camouflage doors that lead outside

Another way to discourage your older adult from opening doors that lead outside is to camouflage them.

Often, people with dementia won't be able to find the door if you cover it up or won't open it if you place large signs on it. For example you could install a curtain rod above the door to hang a dark curtain or wall hanging over the door. Slide the curtain open and close as needed, taking care to not let your older adult see you do it. You could also place large signs saying "DO NOT ENTER" or "STOP" on the door. Many people with dementia won't open a door with those types of signs. Another effective technique is to put a large black doormat in front of the door.

3. Clearly Mark Interior Doors

When they're trying the doors leading outside, your older adult could actually be looking for an interior room, like the bathroom, kitchen, or their bedroom. Make these key rooms easier for them to find by adding large signs or pictures on these doors or leaving the bathroom light on at night.

4. Find and Solve Triggers for Wandering Behavior

Another thing to do is to identify the causes for your older adult's wandering behavior. Make notes of when it's happening and what they were doing or saying just before. Over time, you may discover a pattern, like they wander around the same time every day, when they're bored, looking for the bathroom, or hungry. If wandering is caused by boredom or a physical need, find meaningful activities to keep them engaged and make sure to encourage a toilet visit or get them a snack or beverage before that time of day. Some people may be trying to return to an old routine, like going to the office in the morning or picking up a child from school in the afternoon. To reduce this need, tell reassuring fibs that fit with their intention. For example, you could say that it's a federal holiday and the office isn't open today. Or mention that their child has a playdate at a friend's house and the friend's mom promised to drop them off later. Then, distract your older adult with a favorite activity or snack to take their mind off of their old routine. Other seniors are looking for a person or object and wander because they're searching. Think creatively to reassure them that everything is ok. You could say that the lost item is being repaired or in a safe place with a trusted friend. Or you might say that the person they're looking for called to say they were delayed, but would be there in the afternoon or the next day. Encouraging them to tell you about the person or object often calms them down, distracts, and reduces the urge to search.

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Con't Alzheimer's Wandering is Dangerous

5. Enroll Them in a Safer Return Program

In case they do get out of the house, make it easier to find your last older adult by enrolling them in a program like the *Alzheimer's Association's MedicAlert Safe Return*. Once enrolled, your older adult will get a wearable IF that allows people and law enforcement to identify a found senior and contact you. You can also call a 24/7 toll-free support line if you need to report your older adult missing. You may also want to contact local law enforcement agencies to ask if they offer Silver Alert or similar programs that help families locate missing older adults.

6.. Have Them Wear a GPS Device at all Times

You might feel safer if your older adult wears a GPS tracking device at all times. A wearable GPS device like a wristband sends out tracking signals that can be followed by rescue personnel. Some local law enforcement agencies offer locator services like *SafetyNet* or *Project Lifesaver*. If your older adult won't tolerate a wearable tracker, consider the *SmartSole*. It's a GPS tracker that's hidden in shoe insoles.

7. Hide Keys, Purses, Wallets

If car keys are accessible, seniors could drive off before you return from a quick bathroom break. To prevent this from happening, make sure all car keys are well-hidden and consider adding a steering wheel lock to the car. Another precaution is to hide their purse or wallet. Some people won't leave the house without those essentials.

8. Be Prepared

Other ways to prepare just in case your older adult wanders and gets lost are to:

- Snap a quick photo of them each morning. You'll always have an up-to-day photo with the clothes they're wearing that day in case you need to show to law enforcement and rescue personnel.
- Alert neighbors to their wandering behavior and share tips on how to distract or slow them down. Make sure all neighbors have your contact information.
- Sew or iron-on ID labels with contact information into all their clothes.

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Home Health Services Medicare Covers

Home health care includes a wide range of health and social services delivered in your home to treat illness or injury. If you qualify for the home health benefit, Medicare covers the following:

- **Skilled nursing services**, such as injections, tube feedings, catheter changes, observation and assessment of your condition, and wound care.
 - ⇒ Provided up to seven days per week for generally no more than eight hours per day and 28 hours per week. In some circumstances, Medicare can cover up to 35 hours per week.
- **Skilled therapy services**, such as physical therapy, speech language pathology, and occupational therapy.
 - ⇒ Note: You cannot qualify for Medicare home health coverage if you only need occupational therapy. However, if you qualify for home health care on another basis, you can also get occupational therapy. When your other home health needs end, you can continue receiving Medicare-covered occupational therapy under the home health benefit if you need it.
- **Home health aide**, who provides personal care services like bathing, toileting, and dressing.
 - ⇒ Note: Medicare pays in full for an aide if you required skilled care. Medicare will not pay for an aide if you only require personal care and do not need skilled care.
- **Medical Social service**, such as counseling or help finding resources in your community.
 - ⇒ Medical social services are ordered by your doctor to help with social and emotional concerns you have related to your illness.
- **Medical supplies**, such as wound dressing and catheters.
- **Durable medical equipment (DME)**, such as wheelchairs and walkers.

There are certain requirements one must meet to be eligible for the home health benefit. For example, an individual must be considered homebound and have a plan of care approved by their doctor. Do note, however, that during the current coronavirus public health emergency, some of these requirements have been changed to allow for greater access to home health care. It is also important to know that your home health carries covered by Medicare even if your condition is chronic or if your are not showing signs of improvement.

Speak with your doctor to begin home health care . If you have **Original Medicare**, call 1-800-MEDICARE or visit www.medicare.gov/carecompare to find a list of Medicare-certified home health agencies (HHAs). If you have **Medicare Advantage Plan**, you should contact the plan directly for a list of HHAs in your plan's network.

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