



The Senior Sentinel



For the month of November the Office for the Aging will be closed in observance of the following holidays. **Veterans Day** Thursday, November 11, **Thanksgiving** Thursday, November 25 and Friday, November 26.



Home Energy Assistance Program

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a federally funded program that *assists* low income households with the cost of heating their homes during the winter months. **The 2021- 2022 Regular HEAP program opened on October 01, 2021. Emergency HEAP will open on January 3, 2022.** The Saratoga County Office for the Aging will be accepting applications for persons 60 years of age and older as well as those under 60 and disabled by appointment for in person drop-offs or by mail. Households that received a HEAP benefit last year will automatically be mailed an application for this year’s program. If you would like to receive an application or make an appointment, you may call the HEAP desk at (518) 884-4111. If **any member** of your household is on SNAP (formally known as food stamps), please contact your SNAP case worker at (518) 884-4155. The HEAP program provides a **once a year benefit** which is credited directly to your heating account. Regular benefit amounts are based upon the households gross monthly income and commodity used to heat your home. This year’s guidelines are as follows

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income
1	\$2729
2	\$3569
3	\$4409
4	\$5249

IT’S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

**MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT
OCTOBER 15TH THOROUGH DECEMBER 7TH**

BEWARE OF SCAMS

DURING THIS TIME PERIOD, YOU WILL PROBABLY RECEIVE MANY LETTERS, SEE NON-STOP TELEVISION ADS, AND POSSIBLY HAVE PEOPLE CALL YOU OR STOP BY YOUR HOME.

HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY AGENTS AND BROKERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO:

- 1.) STOP BY YOUR HOME UNINVITED
- 2.) APPROACH YOU IN THE COMMUNITY UNSOLICITED
- 3.) MAKE UNSOLICITED CALLS TO YOU

***IF YOU RECEIVE ANY TYPE OF CONTACT FROM A HEALTH INSURANCE INDIVIDUAL AND YOU ARE UNSURE OF THE VALIDITY OF THE MAILING, PHONE CALL OR VISIT-

*****YOU CAN DO THE FOLLOWING*****

- 1.) CALL YOUR HEALTH INSURANCE COMPANY DIRECTLY (USE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE PHONE NUMBER ON THE BACK OF YOUR CARD) OR MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE CONTACT.
- 2.) CALL THE SENIOR MEDICARE PATROL AT 1-800-333-4374 AT THE STATEWIDE SENIOR ACTION COUNCIL.
CALL THE OFFICE FOR THE AGING AT 518-884-4100.

From Our Dietitian:

Pumpkin: Not just for Halloween

Pumpkins are such fun to have around during Halloween but their delicious flavor, nutrition and uses go well beyond Halloween. Pumpkins are rich in nutrients and low in calories. Just one-half cup of canned pumpkin provides 4 grams of fiber, no fat or cholesterol, and only 50 calories. Pumpkin also has more beta-carotene (a source of vitamin A) per serving than any other commonly eaten food. Your body converts beta-carotene to vitamin A, a nutrient that may help protect you against heart disease and some cancers. Try these tips to incorporate more pumpkin in your diet:

Fresh Pumpkins:

Fresh pumpkins are available from late summer to well into fall. Small sugar or pie pumpkins are the best when it comes to actually cooking, but you can eat the large ones, too. When you buy fresh pumpkins, be sure that they are clean and dry, then store them in a cool, dry, dark place. Depending on storage conditions, your pumpkins may last for several months.

Many of the uses for pumpkin call for using pumpkin puree. Making your own pumpkin puree can take some time and effort in that most directions call for using pumpkins that need to be peeled and steamed. An easier option here is to use unpeeled, seeded pumpkin halves to make your pumpkin puree instead. To accomplish this, bake the unpeeled, seeded pumpkin halves in an oven heated to 325°F until tender, about 1 hour. Scoop the flesh out of the shell and then puree using a potato masher or food processor. This method will not only be easier but this puree will be drier, so you won't need to drain it like you do with the steamed puree. Your pumpkin puree may be stored in the freezer for up to six months.

Canned Pumpkin:

Canned pumpkin puree is easy to use and works very well in recipes. Be sure to purchase plain pumpkin and not the pie filling, which contains sugar and other ingredients. Read the label carefully to see which one you are buying.

Pumpkin Cooking Tips and Recipe Ideas:

- You can substitute pumpkin for winter squash in most recipes.
- Stir pumpkin puree into soups, chilis, and stews.
- Make a tasty pumpkin side dish! Cut a fresh pumpkin into cubes and toss with 1 tablespoon oil, 2 tablespoons thawed apple juice concentrate, and a dash of nutmeg. Put it all into a baking pan coated with cooking spray and roast in a 400° F oven for 30 minutes or until tender, stirring once.
- Make a delicious, quick pumpkin soup by heating 1 can (15 oz) pumpkin, 1 can (14.5 oz) low-sodium broth, 1/2 cup water or skim milk, and 1 teaspoon mild curry powder together in a medium saucepan.
- Soften 1 pint of nonfat vanilla ice cream, then fold in 1/2 cup canned pumpkin, 2 tablespoons sugar (or sugar substitute), and 1/2 teaspoon of pumpkin pie spice. Refreeze, then scoop into 4 dishes to serve.

Pumpkin Pie Oatmeal:

- **Ingredients:** 1 small apple, finely diced, 2/3 cup apple juice, 2/3 cup low fat milk, 1/2 cup pumpkin puree, 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice, 2/3 cup instant oatmeal, uncooked.
- **Directions:** Combine all ingredients except oatmeal in a 1- and 1/2-quart microwave-safe dish. Heat on full power for 4-5 minutes in the microwave until boiling. Stir in oatmeal and heat at full power for 1 minute longer. Divide among 2-3 bowls and serve hot.

Have questions about Medicare?

Call:

Medicare -1-800-MEDICARE

Medicare Rights -1-800-333-4114

Saratoga County Office for the Aging (518)884-4100

Please see links below for a informative Medicare overview video.
<https://www.saratogacountyny.gov/departments/office-for-the-aging/>

Or on Facebook at:

Saratoga County Office for the Aging

Taking the Pedal Off the Metal

When should Older Adults Stop Driving?

You may have gotten your driver's license the day you turned 16. By the time you retire, you could have driven daily for more than half a century. But for some people, there comes a time in the aging process when driving becomes dangerous. "On the whole, older drivers are safe," says Dr. Marian Betz, an expert in healthy aging at the University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus. "They tend to drive slower than younger drivers and have a lot of experience."

But some health conditions common with aging may make it riskier to get behind the wheel. Stiffer joints and weaker muscles can make it harder to steer or brake safely. Eye diseases and some medications can cause vision problems. Hearing loss can blunt the sounds of horns or sirens. And cognitive changes, even mild ones, may impair quick decisions behind the wheel.

Deciding to stop driving can be emotionally challenging for older adults, says Betz. "Many people their use car as a marker of independence. Giving up the privilege of driving can feel like a real loss.

People often depend on cars to get them to and from the activities they enjoy. Or to see the people they care about. So stopping driving can lead to isolation. That's why it's important to have a plan for alternative transportation.

"We don't want older adults isolated and shut in," Betz says. "We want people to be emotionally and socially connected, as well as be able to get out and exercise."

Feeling disconnected can lead to poorer health. Studies have shown that loneliness and social isolation are linked to higher risks for some health problems. These include heart disease, depression, and cognitive decline.

There are many alternatives to driving. Some areas provide free or low-cost bus or taxi services for older adults. Some communities offer a carpool service, or scheduled trips to stores or the doctor. Rideshare service may also be an option. Your local Area Agency of Aging can help you find services. Call 1-800-677-1116 or go to eldercare.acl.gov to learn more.

Betz and her colleagues are currently testing an online tool to help older adults and their families make decisions about driving. "We're not telling people 'you need to stop,'" explains Betz. But they hope to make people feel comfortable and empowered when they do decide to stop driving.

"That makes such a decision more likely to stick," Betz says. Options for getting things done without leaving the house have also boomed recently. Grocery delivery, telehealth visits, and online social hours can reduce the need to drive every day.

Online options can't—and shouldn't—replace everything, says Betz. "But some of these things are good solutions for people to reduce their need to drive."

If you're wondering whether it may be time for you or some one else to stop driving, see the Wise Choices for the questions to ask.

Wise Choices... Is It Time to Stop Driving?

If you answer "yes" to any of the below questions, it may be time to consider stopping driving:

- Do other drivers often honk at you?
- Have you had some accidents, even if they were only "fender benders?"
- Do you get lost, even on roads you know?
- Do cars or people walking seem to appear out of nowhere?
- Do you get distracted while driving?
- Do you have trouble staying in your lane?
- Do you have trouble moving your foot between the gas and the brake pedals, or sometimes confuse the two?

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