

Living & Thriving

in Montgomery County



A GUIDE FOR RESIDENTS 60 AND OVER

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Aging and Disability Services, 240-777-3000
ADS@montgomerycountymd.gov
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/seniors



Dear Friends:

Do you care about the needs and interests of aging parents, neighbors or friends? Are you a senior yourself? If so, you're in good company. There are over 150,000 adults age 60 and older in Montgomery County. And almost 50,000 individuals serve as caregivers to frail or disabled seniors.

Older adults in Montgomery County are a large and immensely diverse group. They may be active or frail; high or low income; still working or long-retired. Some seniors are native to the County and others come from far away. What County seniors want reflects this diversity; their needs and desires are as unique as each individual.

Meeting the social, recreational, housing and health needs of such a large and diverse group is a challenge. Fortunately, there are many supports available in our community. In some cases, private industry and non-profit organizations help address these needs. In others, Montgomery County government can step in to assist. Many County agencies provide direct services to seniors, including our Departments of Health and Human Services, Public Libraries, Recreation, Transportation and more.

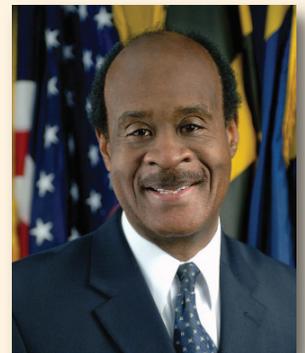
Living & Thriving in Montgomery County was designed to inspire you to plan ahead and point you in the right direction, regardless of your circumstances or those of your loved ones. We believe that helping people discover what is available is one of the most important and cost-effective services we can provide.

This guide will tell you about services and resources available in the County and provide tips on where to learn more. You'll find basic information about a range of core topics for seniors and caregivers, with information about local resources that address them.

I hope you and your loved ones will find Montgomery County to be the ideal place to spend the rest of your life. My administration is committed to delivering the highest possible quality of life for all County residents, and my staff is available to help you achieve it.

Sincerely,


Isiah Leggett, County Executive



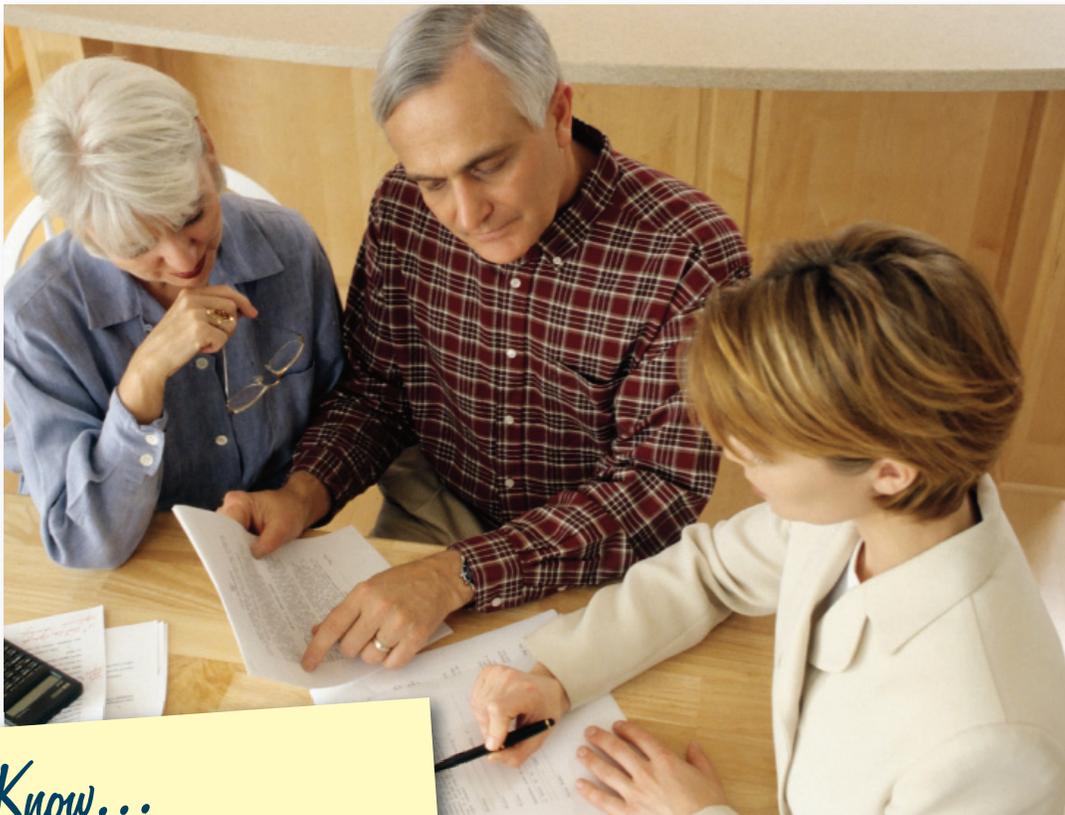
Control Your Future

Making important decisions during a crisis situation is not ideal. Yet people often find themselves in situations for which they are not prepared. Planning for the future—whether for retirement or sudden illness—can give you a sense of control. Some of the topics that experts recommend you think about and discuss in advance with your family include:

Finances

Decisions about the future are often influenced by one's financial situation. In addition to pensions and savings, it is important to be aware of other available resources and tools. A reverse mortgage is a finance option increasingly used by seniors with equity in their homes. (See page 6.) Seniors should also be aware of the full range of government benefits for which they may be eligible. (See page 4.)

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Did You Know...

Research indicates that people who engage in detailed planning about care needs in the event of a severe disability are much less likely to have to rely on a nursing home than those who do not plan ahead.

PLANNING AHEAD

Housing

Consider how to make your current home safer, as well as where else you might choose to live if you become too disabled or frail to remain comfortably in your current home. See pages 5-7 for more information on housing.

Everyday Activities

If you suddenly couldn't do certain things for yourself—like bathing, dressing, paying bills, shopping or driving—who would assist you? Adult children are often willing to assist with chores and managing household activities, but are less comfortable with bathing, dressing or more intimate types of assistance. Talking to your family members about what they can do, and under what conditions, can help you create a realistic safety net for the future.

Healthcare Decisions

As medical science advances, individuals must often answer the questions: If I become unable to make decisions for myself, who would decide for me? And, what life-prolonging medical interventions would I want and not want? It is important to have legal documents, called advance directives, which state your wishes. Advance directives do two things. First, they name the person you want to make decisions on your behalf if you cannot do so yourself. Second, they allow you to document health care instructions that will guide the people making decisions for you. Make sure your loved ones know your wishes, and where to find key documents and information if needed.

The **Montgomery County Coalition on End-of-Life Care** helps educate residents about advance directives. For information, go to www.mccelc.org or call 240-777-1350.

These resources can provide helpful information:

Benefits Checkup

Many people are unaware that they are eligible for government benefits. Developed by the National Council on Aging, www.BenefitsCheckUp.org is the nation's most comprehensive Web-based service to screen for benefits programs for seniors with limited income and resources. It includes more than 2,000 public and private benefits programs from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. If you do not have internet access, call Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services at 240-777-3000.

Medicare Long-Term Care Planning

Visit www.medicare.gov/LTCplanning for a customized tool to help you understand what long-term care services you can expect to need, how much you can expect to pay for them, and what financing options are available. ■



Develop and nurture friendships

People who work to stay connected to people in their community often find that when problems develop, they have friends available to help.





Home Sweet Home How to Stay; When and Where to Move

Home is more than where you live. Home is part of who you are. Some seniors are able to remain safe, happy and secure in their home of many

years. Others choose to move to a setting that better meets their changing needs.

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What to Consider When Deciding to Stay or Move

At least five factors should be considered when deciding whether to stay or move: proximity, expense, accessibility, comfort, and ease (**PEACE**).

Proximity refers to how close the home is to stores, doctors, family and friends, and whether you have transportation available. Living close to your support network makes it easier to get what you need and want.

Expense refers to the costs involved in staying or leaving. Property taxes and the cost of heating, cooling and maintaining a single family home can be weighed against the costs of moving to a new home.

Accessibility refers to how well you can get in and out of your home, and move around inside. Will climbing stairs be a problem? If you need a wheelchair, can it get through all the hallways and doorways?

Comfort is the extent to which a place gives you a sense of security, peace of mind and identity.

Ease: How easy is it for you to accomplish daily activities in your home?

LIVING IN THE SETTING OF YOUR CHOICE

Making it Easier to Stay

If you have reviewed these five considerations and you think you may be able to remain in your current home, here are some steps you can take to make it easier to stay:

✓ Become as physically strong and fit as possible—and stay that way!

You'll want to maintain the strength to climb stairs, and get around your home independently.

✓ Improve your home environment.

Many homes can be modified to fit an individual's specific needs. This can include adding a bathroom on the ground level, installing grab bars in the bathroom, or adding a wheelchair ramp. If finances are tight, try calling the Maryland Technology Assistance Program at 1-800-832-4827, or Rebuilding Together at 301-933-2700.

✓ Get help.

Over 80% of all assistance received by seniors comes from unpaid family or friends. Also, for-profit companies and non-profit organizations provide assistance with chores, personal care, meals, and transportation. Some assistance is available for free from public or private programs.

✓ Be creative with financing your preferred lifestyle.

If your home needs modifications or you need to pay for assistance, where will you get the money? Increasingly seniors are using reverse mortgages to supplement their income. A reverse mortgage is a loan taken against the equity in your home. You do not have to pay the loan back as long as you live in your home.

✓ Reverse Mortgages

AARP offers a free Reverse Mortgage Education Program. Call 1-800-209-8085. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development website, www.hud.gov/buying/rvrsmort.cfm, can help you determine if a reverse mortgage is appropriate for you.

If You Decide to Move

If you decide that it is time to consider moving from your current home, what options exist? Some of the more common options include:

Downsizing: moving into a smaller house or apartment, and/or one with no stairs.

Active Adult Community: housing communities with an age requirement (typically 55) that provide amenities for seniors who are retired or still working. Often adjacent to golf courses and other recreational facilities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC): retirement communities that provide a guaranteed range of services, from detached homes to full service nursing care. CCRCs provide security by ensuring that regardless of the type of assistance residents need, they will never have to move away from the community.

Independent Living: apartment type communities that provide a minimum of support for people who are largely independent. Sites offer socialization, outings to stores and cultural events, and communal meals for those who want to participate.

Assisted Living/Group Home: Assisted living and group homes provide single or shared rooms or small apartments set up to encourage independent living. They offer services such as meals, medication management and assistance with daily living tasks. They can be small or large, and provide care based on the need of each resident.

Nursing Home: Facilities that provide skilled nursing care, under direction of a physician. ■



More Information

Aging and Disability Services

240-777-3000

ADS@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/seniors

Information about local housing resources and help completing applications.

Guide to Retirement Living

1-800-394-9990

www.retirement-living.com

Information about senior housing choices of all kinds. Available on-line and in print.

Housing Opportunities Commission

240-773-9000

www.hocmc.org

Montgomery County housing authority. Provides subsidized rental housing for low income people.

Long-term Care Ombudsman Program

240-777-3369

Can offer advice about assisted living and nursing home options in the County.

Beacon Newspaper & Senior Resource Guide

301-949-9766

www.TheBeaconNewspapers.com

On-line and print guide to senior services including housing information.

Did You Know...

Studies show that the number and closeness of a person's friendships are the most influential factors in determining a person's perceived quality of life. Therefore, seniors should consider their proximity to their friends and family when deciding where to live.

Milton Smith's Story: Change and Acceptance



After serving in the Army in WWII, Milton Smith moved from Minneapolis to Washington, D.C. He married, had two children, got a job with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and settled into a single family home in the Woodside Garden area of Silver Spring. Over time, the Beltway was constructed almost through his yard. Then the Metro stop at Forest Glen was built. He retired and his wife passed away in 1985. But he stayed in the house he purchased in 1954. When he could no longer drive due to vision problems, he walked to the local grocery store. When he could no longer walk up the stairs, he moved his bed into the living room. Eventually his son, Charles, decided he wasn't safe to continue living there by himself.

"I told him he had to move," remembers his son. "He said he'd rather die. It was incredibly painful. Against his wishes, I moved him into an assisted living facility about a mile away. I stayed with him the first night there, and he literally cried himself to sleep.

"However, within 6 months his health had improved so much that I asked him if he wanted to move home."

"Never!"

"I think he never realized how lonely he was after my mother died. Ultimately what he thought he wanted—staying in his house—was causing him to be isolated, lonely and unhealthy. When he got around other people again it was like his life started all over. He lived there for 8 years, until he died in July 2004. These might have been the happiest years of his life." ■



STAYING HEALTHY

Good Nutrition: Local Resources Help Make it a Way of Life



More and more evidence points to the role of good nutrition in helping people live longer and stay fit mentally and physically. And yet we often struggle to make healthy food a part of every day.

Most health professionals suggest eating at least five fruits and vegetables per day. They remind people to include lots of fiber and healthy sources of calcium. And they caution against foods that are high in calories and/or salt and offer little nutritional value.

Knowing what to eat points us in the right direction. Social support can keep us on track. Here in Montgomery County, help is available in many forms.

Did You Know...

In addition to increasing the number of healthy calories that participants consume, the senior group meal program also increases the amount of time participants spend with others. This is important because increases in social contact often improves how people feel about their quality of life. As a result, the senior group meal program produces benefits for both physical and emotional health.

The County has more than 30 locations where older adults can enjoy lunches for a voluntary donation. These sites are at community centers, senior centers, churches, and other locations. The meals offer nutritious food and a chance to see old friends and make new ones. Seniors can call 240-777-3810 to find the senior group meal site nearest to them.

For individuals over 60 who have difficulty shopping or preparing meals County-supported Meals on Wheels programs may be able to help. Volunteers deliver balanced meals to individuals who are unable to shop and prepare meals and have no one at home to help. If you are interested in receiving meals, call 240-777-3810. If you are interested in serving as a volunteer for this important program, call 240-777-1064.

In addition, non-profit groups supported by the County provide escorted shopping trips, grocery delivery, or home delivered meals. They include:

Senior Connection (301-962-0820)

Food and Friends (202-269-2277)

Top Banana (301-372-3663)

For people with diabetes, the County's African American Health Program runs a Diabetes Dining Club. Each monthly session includes education, physical activity and a healthy meal. The cost for dinner is only \$5.00. To register, call 301-421-5767.

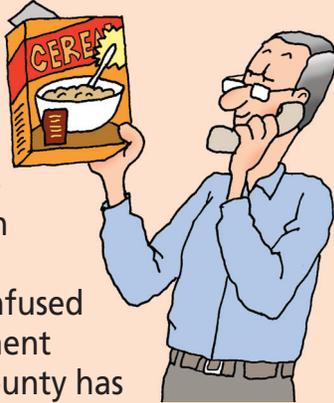
Food stamps may be an option for people having difficulty paying for healthy foods. If you think you may be eligible, check with the food stamps office closest to you: Germantown: 240-777-3420; Rockville: 240-777-4600; or Silver Spring: 240-777-3100.

Eating healthy can add energy and years to your life. Get the support you need and start doing it today! ■



Senior Nutrition Hotline

Struggling to separate myths from facts when reading about good nutrition? Are you confused in the dietary supplement aisle? Montgomery County has the only program of its kind in the U.S. to help seniors obtain reliable information on diet, food, and nutrition. The Senior Nutrition Hotline is a free service that lets you speak directly with a registered dietitian on Wednesdays between 9 and 11 a.m. Learn to eat for a healthy weight, decrease the risk of many chronic diseases, and better navigate the supermarket, health food store or farmers market. **Call 240-777-1100.**



Bus Service for Senior Recreation & Nutrition Programs

The Montgomery County Recreation Department operates senior centers and neighborhood senior programs. Many of these programs have nutritious meals available through the Department of Health and Human Service's Senior Nutrition Program. Limited bus transportation is available to and from many of these sites. **For information, call the Recreation Department at 240-777-4980.**



Staying Upright and Avoiding Falls



A simple fall can change your life. Just ask any of the thousands of older men and women who fall each year and break a bone.

Getting older may bring changes in sight, hearing, muscle strength, coordination and reflexes. Diabetes, heart disease, and other medical problems can affect balance. Some medicines can cause dizziness. Any of these things can make a fall more likely. In fact, nearly 40% of people age 65 and older will experience a fall each year. About 2% of these seniors will require hospitalization.

One of the reasons falls become dangerous is that many seniors have low bone density or "osteoporosis." When your bones are fragile, even a minor fall can cause them to break. A broken bone may not sound so terrible, but it can lead to more serious problems. Ask your doctor for a bone mineral density test that will tell you how strong your bones are. Medicare will pay for this test once every two years.

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STAYING HEALTHY

Are you at risk?

The number one recommendation to reduce the likelihood of falling is to have a risk assessment for falls done once a year. In particular, people with any of the following risk factors should request an assessment by their physician or physical therapist:

- Muscle weakness (particularly in the legs)
- Poor vision
- Balance problems
- Depression
- Taking four or more medications

Take the Right Steps to Prevent Falls

The more you take care of your overall health and well-being, the more you can lower your chances of falling. Here are a few hints:

Regular exercise helps keep you strong. It also helps keep your joints, tendons, and ligaments flexible. Mild weight-bearing exercise such as walking and climbing stairs may slow bone loss from osteoporosis. Weight training actually helps build bone mass.

Find out about the possible side effects of medicines you take. If your medicines affect

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In stairways, hallways, and pathways:

- ✓ Make sure there is good lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- ✓ Keep areas where you walk clear.
- ✓ Check that all carpets are fixed firmly to the floor so they won't slip. Put no-slip strips on tile and wooden floors.
- ✓ Install and use handrails on both sides of all stairs—from top to bottom—and be sure they're tightly fastened.

**Prevent falls
by making
changes to
unsafe areas
in your home.**

In bathrooms and powder rooms:

- ✓ Mount grab bars near toilets and on both the inside and outside of your tub and shower.
- ✓ Place non-skid mats, strips, or carpet on all surfaces that may get wet.
- ✓ Keep night lights on.

In your bedroom and other living areas:

- ✓ Put night lights and light switches close to your bed.
- ✓ Keep electric cords and telephone wires near walls and away from walking paths.
- ✓ Tack down all carpets and area rugs firmly to the floor.
- ✓ Arrange your furniture (especially low coffee tables) and other objects so they are not in your way when you walk.



your balance, ask your doctor or pharmacist if adjustments can be made. Have your vision and hearing tested often. If your doctor orders new eyeglasses, take time to get used to them. If you need a hearing aid, be sure it fits and works well. Limit the amount of alcohol you drink since even a small amount can affect your balance and reflexes.

Prevent falls by making changes to unsafe areas in your home.

Resources That Can Help

Holy Cross Hospital Senior Source offers a free falls prevention, screening and education series. The series addresses many of the issues presented here and includes an exercise class focusing on improving balance. Call 301-754-8510 for information. For more complete information on simple, inexpensive repairs and changes that would make your home safer, contact the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Ask for a free copy of the booklet, *Older Consumers Safety Checklist*. Call 1-800-638-2772 (toll-free) or go to www.cpsc.gov.

This article includes some content from Falls and Falling, produced by the National Institute on Aging.

Did You Know...

Researchers reported in the April '08 issue of the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society that older adults who limit activities because of a fear of falling may experience a decline in physical functioning. People who avoid activities such as walking outdoors, shopping, and visiting friends can suffer from a resulting decline in ability to do what they could previously. Limiting social interaction and enjoyable physical activity can lead to depression as well.

Using Medications Safely



A brown paper bag may hold the key to medication safety, according to health experts. "A 'brown bag checkup' is the best thing patients can do to avoid medication mistakes and cut down on unnecessary medications," says Douglas Paauw, M.D., Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington.

The checkup involves putting all of your medications in a brown paper bag and bringing them to your doctor or pharmacist. The bag should include over-the-counter and prescription drugs, herbs, vitamins, dietary supplements, and topical treatments such as ointments and creams. "This kind of checkup is good for anyone who takes medication, but particularly for older people, who are more likely to be taking several medications," Paauw says.

Edie Hurley, nurse manager with Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services, supports the idea of the brown bag checkup. "At least make a list and bring that to your doctor," she says.

Your doctor or pharmacist should check for appropriate dosing, problems caused by interactions between drugs and whether each drug is being given for the right reason. They should also check for duplication. It is common for more than one

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STAYING HEALTHY

drug to contain the same ingredient. For instance, taking two products that contain acetaminophen raises the risk of liver damage. Other common problems include expired medications and medications that are no longer needed.

After you and your doctor settle on what you should be taking, the next thing is to know the names of all of your medications and what they are for. Your list of medications should be updated and reviewed with your doctor each time you change a medication or add a new one.

Keep a list of medications in your wallet and let a family member know that you have it, experts suggest. Patients should be ready to take that list out at the dentist's office, at appointments with specialists, or in an emergency.

Modern medicine has made our lives better in many ways. But people taking many different drugs need to be aware of potential dangers and take steps to avoid them.

This article contains excerpts from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's article "Medication Use and Older Adults" and the National Institute on Aging's Age Page "Medicines: Use Them Safely."

Get a Free File of Life

Another good place to record your medications is on a File of Life. The File of Life consolidates basic health information such as medical history, allergies, medications, etc. in one place. It is designed to hang by a red magnet on your refrigerator door in case emergency personnel need to treat you. You can get a free File of Life by calling Aging and Disability Services at 240-777-3000.

Did You Know...

The average 75-year-old has three chronic conditions and uses five prescription drugs. Researchers found that when adults ages 65 to 91 were asked to bring in a brown paper bag containing their medicines, the list of medications in the bag differed from their official pharmacy records.

Staying Physically Active: Make it Fun!



George Burns said, "You can't help getting older, but you don't have to get old." While we don't have complete control over our health or genetic background, we can do things to help ourselves age better. Most experts agree that staying physically active is the key to successful aging. Physical activity helps seniors maintain heart health and cognitive function, prevent falls, and improve mood.

Even as bodies and abilities change, there are plenty of ways to get and keep moving in Montgomery County. For many people, the surest way to stay physically active is to find something fun to do. Older adults in Montgomery County play golf, tennis, basketball and volleyball; they swim or exercise in water. (Water exercise is especially helpful for people with balance problems and joint pain). Others stay on the cutting edge of fitness by taking

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STAYING HEALTHY

classes in Pilates, weight training or even belly-dancing.

Getting and staying fit doesn't have to be expensive. Some people join friends to walk their neighborhoods and play yard games like horseshoes and croquet. Or they take advantage of the Recreation Department's Senior Sneaker program, which allows residents over 55 to use Community center exercise and weight rooms for a small annual fee from 9am-2pm Monday-Friday.

"Heart Smart" Hiking

Montgomery County Parks' Heart Smart Trails are designed to encourage people to take the first step toward a healthier lifestyle. Walking can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, improve blood pressure, decrease the risk for type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancer and help control weight. Heart Smart Trails are generally 1-mile in length or less and follow a hard, level path. Bronze medallions are embedded in the path every 1/10 of a mile so walkers can keep track of the distance they have traveled. Call 301-495-2595 or go to www.montgomeryparks.org.

Did You Know...

Tai chi, a form of Chinese marital arts emphasizing slow movement has been shown in studies to not only decrease the risk of falling, but also to boost the immune system of older adults. A study found that individuals taking tai chi three times a week boosted their immune systems to a level comparable to having a standard vaccination against shingles.

Here Are Some Helpful Resources:

For fitness classes (land and water), dance classes and sports offered throughout the County, pick up a **Guide to Recreation** at your local library or go to: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec.

Discounts for seniors are available for aquatics programs. Call each Montgomery County Recreation Department aquatic center for details.

Senior centers offer a wide variety of fitness activities five days a week. In addition, **active adult programs** housed in community centers and senior apartment buildings provide weekly exercise classes and guest lectures, among other activities. Call the Recreation Department at 240-777-4980. (In the City of Rockville, call 240-314-8800 and in the City of Gaithersburg, call 301-258-6380.)

Holy Cross Senior Source in Silver Spring provides an array of health and wellness classes and Holy Cross Community Health offers Senior Fit classes at various locations. Call 301-754-8510.

Suburban Hospital sponsors exercise classes, mall walking programs and OASIS, an organization primarily focused on lifelong learning that offers health education and exercise classes, among many others. See page 15 for OASIS contact information.

So if you're not already physically active, choose something now and go for it! ■



STAYING CONNECTED



Discover Recreation and Lifelong Learning Opportunities

"I've found new friends and stimulating programs."

"I enjoy the informative seminars, with subjects from elder law to healthy eating. There is always something new to learn!"

"I have taken day trips to places I didn't even know existed!"

What are these folks talking about? They each describe their experiences with recreation programs located throughout Montgomery County.

Why not get involved?

Montgomery County offers a wide variety of energizing and enjoyable activities for adults 55 years or over. As diverse as the people they serve, these activities challenge each individual to grow physically, intellectually, socially and creatively.

Every day, you'll find senior programs teeming with activity and spirit.

Senior and community centers offer a wide selection of daily events including fitness classes, computer education, art activities, lectures and more. Stop by for an hour or two, or stay the whole day.

Get involved, and discover community at its best.

Exploring the County's senior programs often leads to new friendships. Take advantage of the opportunity to share knowledge and talents, to learn and to grow.

Make the most of every day.

There are countless crafts to master, places to explore, languages to speak. The County's senior programs help you discover parts of yourself you've never had a chance to explore.

How can I take advantage of these programs?

Call the numbers provided on page 15 to learn more about the opportunities waiting for you. Call 240-777-4980 for information about the neighborhood programs offered by the Montgomery County Recreation Department. Find out which of the programs is closest to you, and which offer transportation and lunch.

Or call any of the varied programs listed on page 17. Choose one and try getting involved at least twice. Chances are, you'll end up hooked! ■



STAYING CONNECTED



Senior Centers and Programs

Damascus Senior Center	240-777-6995
Holiday Park Senior Center, Wheaton	240-777-4999
Long Branch Senior Center, Silver Spring	240-777-6965
Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, Silver Spring	240-777-8085
Gaithersburg Upcounty Senior Center	301-258-6380
Rockville Senior Center.....	240-314-8800
Live and Learn Bethesda	301-740-6150
Chinese American Senior Services Association	301-530-4880
Chinese Culture and Community Service Center	240-631-1200
Jewish Community Center	301-881-0100
Jewish Community Center's Adult Center for Education (ACE)	301-348-3864
Korean American Senior Citizen Association	301-438-7304
Montgomery College Lifelong Learning Institute	240-567-1828
OASIS (Lifelong Learning for Mature Adults)	301-469-6800
(Located in Macy's home store)	press 1, then ext. 211
Johns Hopkins University's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (Rockville Campus)	301-294-7058
University of Maryland's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (Shady Grove)	301-405-2469
Senior Source of Holy Cross Hospital	301-754-8510
Sibley Senior Association (in N.W Washington, close to many Montgomery County residents) ..	202-364-7602
Tuesday Senior Program (for Russian speaking adults)	301-348-3875
Vietnamese Senior Association of Maryland	240-487-6729



VOLUNTEERING



Do Good for Others. It's Good for You, Too!

Did you know that good health and living a meaningful life go hand in hand? Research suggests that retirees who remain engaged by volunteering maintain better emotional, cognitive, and physical health. An active schedule and frequent interaction with others actually increase longevity.

Research also shows that people over age 60 are more likely to maintain their intellectual abilities and avoid depression when they feel they are having an impact on someone else's life. Also, in a survey of a large group of older adults, 90 percent reported that they suffered fewer colds and stomach aches when they volunteered at least once a week.

Volunteering enables former workers to continue

using their talents and to nurture new ones. It's not just about stuffing envelopes! Older volunteers can support local non-profit organizations as tutors, special event planners, grant writers, gardeners, hospital caregivers ... or even envelope stuffers! Volunteers can make long term or very short term commitments. The opportunities are endless.

The Montgomery County Volunteer Center can help residents learn about local volunteer opportunities, either online or in person.

See www.montgomeryserves.org to access an extensive database by area of interest or by zip code. Or call 240-777-2600 to make an appointment to come in and meet with a referral specialist. ■



VOLUNTEERING

Sample Volunteer-Supported Programs Primarily Serving Older Adults:

Bone Builders Exercise Program240-777-1350

Volunteer trainers lead older adults in muscle/bone strengthening and balance exercises.

Friendly Visiting Program of Mental Health Association301-424-0656 x507

Volunteers offer friendship and support to home-bound seniors who are isolated and lonely.

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program240-777-3369

Trained advocates help resolve problems for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Representative Payee Program of the Mental Health Association ..301-424-0656 x511

Volunteers provide financial supervision for low income adults receiving a government benefit they are unable to manage because of a physical or mental disability.

Senior Connection301-962-0820

Volunteers drive and escort seniors to medical appointments, grocery stores, banks and pharmacies.

Senior Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)301-590-2819

Volunteers help people with Medicare learn about the program's many benefits through educational programs and individual counseling.



Commission on Aging

As advocates for the interests of the County's elderly, the Commission on Aging advises the County Executive, the County Council and County agencies on the needs of seniors. The County Executive appoints volunteer commissioners. Meetings are open to the public. **For information call 240-777-1120.**

Living Fully Without a Car... It is Possible!

Aging well depends largely on one's ability to remain connected to other people and activities. You can stay active and do the things you like to do, even if you decide to give up driving. Here are some of the major providers of transportation, and transportation referrals, for older adults.

Private Transportation Services

Private companies offer door-to-door service and some will assist a person to exit or enter a home or destination. Costs are higher than for public transportation. With advance notice, transportation can be provided for trips throughout Maryland. See "Information About Transportation Options" below.

Taxis: Don't rule out taking taxis. Owning and running a car is expensive. Money that you would use for car payments, registration maintenance insurance and gas could be used for taxis, buses, or to buy gas for friends and relatives who can drive you.

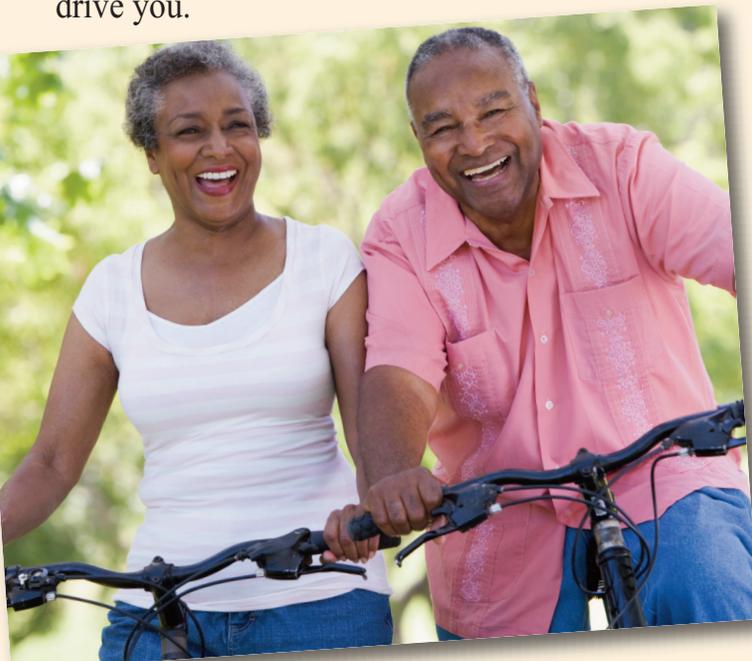


Transit

Between Ride On, Metrobus, Metrorail, MARC, MTA, Call 'N' Ride and MetroAccess, the system carries 2 million seniors and passengers with disabilities annually.

Ride On and Metrobuses in Montgomery County are FREE Monday through Friday, 9:30am-3:00pm for seniors and people with disabilities. Seniors must be 65 years or older and have a valid Metro Senior ID card, Senior SmarTrip Card or Medicare card and photo ID. Persons with disabilities must have a Metro Disabled ID card. If an attendant is required for travel, a Metro Disabled Attendant ID Card is required. An attendant carrying the Metro Disabled Attendant ID card rides for free when accompanying a passenger. All Ride-On buses are wheelchair accessible. For trip planning and other information, call 240-777-RIDE (7433).

Call 'N' Ride provides discounted taxi trips for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities in Montgomery County. To be eligible for the Call 'N' Ride Program, you must have low income, and be at least 67 years of age or disabled. Clients may purchase monthly coupon books at discounts according to income. Discounts are based on income. Some people pay as little as \$5.25/book. Coupons may be used only with the following



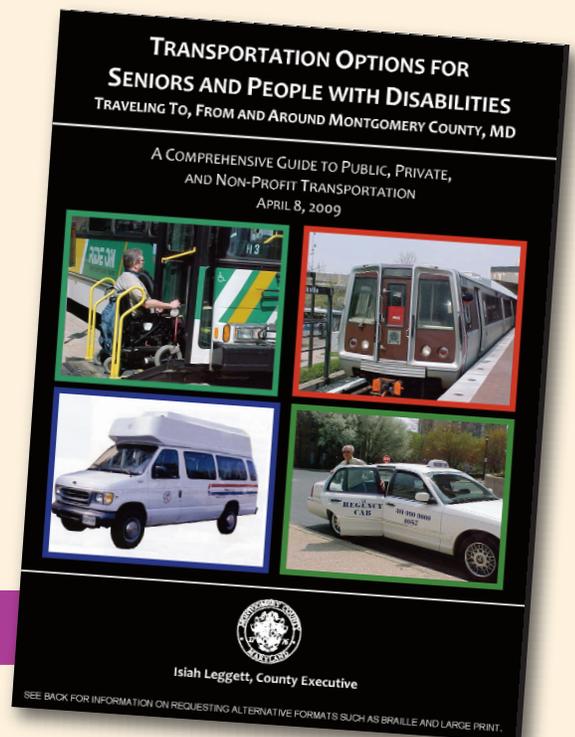
STAYING CONNECTED

cab companies: Action, Barwood, Regency and Sun Cab. Coupons are used to pay for the full cost of the fare and for the tip. They may be combined with cash to pay for your trip. For information and eligibility requirements for the Call 'N' Ride program, call 301-948-5409.

MetroAccess is a shared transit service for people with disabilities who are unable to use the regular, fixed route transit systems. Shared transit means that multiple passengers may ride together in the same vehicle. MetroAccess can sometimes provide door-to-door service. Drivers may be able to escort customers to and from their doors, but only when conditions allow. (Please contact MetroAccess to learn about these specific conditions.) Otherwise drivers provide curbside service. Rides are provided to and from locations no more than 3/4 of a mile from a fixed route bus stop. MetroAccess customers will be informed of the exact fare that they are expected to pay when

they call to reserve their trip. No one-way trip will cost more than \$7.

If you think you are eligible, complete an application and have it signed by a physician. For an application and more program details, call MetroAccess headquarters at: 301-562-5360 or 301-588-7535 (TTY). ■



Information About Transportation Options

Guide to Transportation Options for Seniors and People With Disabilities

Transportation Options

for Seniors and People with Disabilities is available at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/disability (look at the bottom of the page under Other Resources) or by calling the Commission on People with Disabilities at 240-777-1246. This comprehensive guide contains most of the information in this article and more, including lists of private transit service providers.

Connect-A-Ride refers callers to all private and public transportation options for seniors and people with disabilities. Funded by the County and operated by the Jewish Council for the Aging, it also provides assistance completing applications and travel training to help riders use public transportation. Call Monday-Friday between 7:00am- 6:00pm. 301-738-3252 or 301-881-5263 (TTY)

Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services has information about transportation services in your area. Call 240-777-3000 or email ADS@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov. If you need a companion to drive you to necessary appointments, ask about "escorted transportation." Usually, arrangements for escorted transportation must be made 10 days in advance. If accessing food is your interest, ask about "grocery shopping transportation" or "assisted shopping for groceries."



Caring for a Loved One Doesn't Have to be a Lonely Job



*"There are four kinds of people in this world:
Those who have been caregivers,
Those who currently are caregivers,
Those who will be caregivers, and
Those who will need caregivers."*

-Rosalynn Carter

Common Signs of Caregiver Stress Include:

- ✓ Feeling overwhelmed or confused about how to help
- ✓ Feeling sad, angry or crying more often than you used to
- ✓ Feeling like you don't have any time to yourself
- ✓ Having low energy
- ✓ Sleeping too much, or not enough
- ✓ Having trouble eating, or eating too much

If any of this describes how you feel, you are not alone. The best way to help is to recognize it is not all up to you. Ask for help!

Did you know that one out of four adults provides assistance to a family member who is physically or cognitively disabled, or frail due to old age? Organizations providing supportive services to these people refer to them as "caregivers."

The willingness of caregivers to commit their time and energy enables their loved ones to live at home, in a familiar and comfortable environment. Being there for someone you love is important to most of us, but it can cause stress that can damage a caregiver's health and shorten life expectancy.

**Medicare
Information
for Caregivers
Now Available**

"Medicare Basics for Caregivers," is now available at NIHSeniorHealth.gov, the web site for older adults from the National Institutes of Health. This brief, yet comprehensive, introduction to Medicare gives caregivers the basics and helps them find answers to their questions.

"Knowing how Medicare works can help a person make better financial decisions about care," says Dr. Marie Bernard, deputy director of the National Institute on Aging."

www.NIHSeniorHealth.gov



CAREGIVING

Help Comes in Many Forms

Personal Care/Respite Care

Professionals are available to provide short-term relief to families caring for frail or disabled family members. A qualified person takes care of your loved one, in your home or outside, so that you can get a break.

Support Groups

Sharing information, feelings, and advice with others can help ease the stresses of caregiving. Support groups can meet in-person, by telephone, or over the internet.

Adult Day Centers

Adult day centers provide social, recreational and health services in a safe environment for people who cannot be left alone during the day.

Escorted Transportation

Some local organizations connect volunteers with people who need help getting places. Others provide an escorted ride for a fee.

Legal/Financial Assistance

Learn about financial planning, advance directives, power of attorney and financial benefits your family may qualify for. See pages 3-4 for more ideas on planning.

Home Modifications

Home improvements can increase safety, security and independence. They can make every day activities easier to accomplish.

Hospice

Hospice provides care of terminally ill people and their families that emphasizes symptom management and emotional support.

Did You Know...

For people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, research studies indicate that 2 or more days per week of adult day service leads to reductions in symptoms and the use of medication. It also lessens caregiver stress and burden.

Learning More

To find out more about any of these services, call **Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services** at 240-777-3000. Staff are available to take your call Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00 and until 7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Holy Cross Hospital's Caregiver Resource Center provides general information and support. Call 301-754-7152.

Alzheimer's Association specializes in Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Call their 24 hour HelpLine, 1-800-272-3900.

Two Helpful Websites That Caregivers Have Found Useful

U.S. Gov't's Caregiver Resource Page

<http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Health/caregivers.shtml>

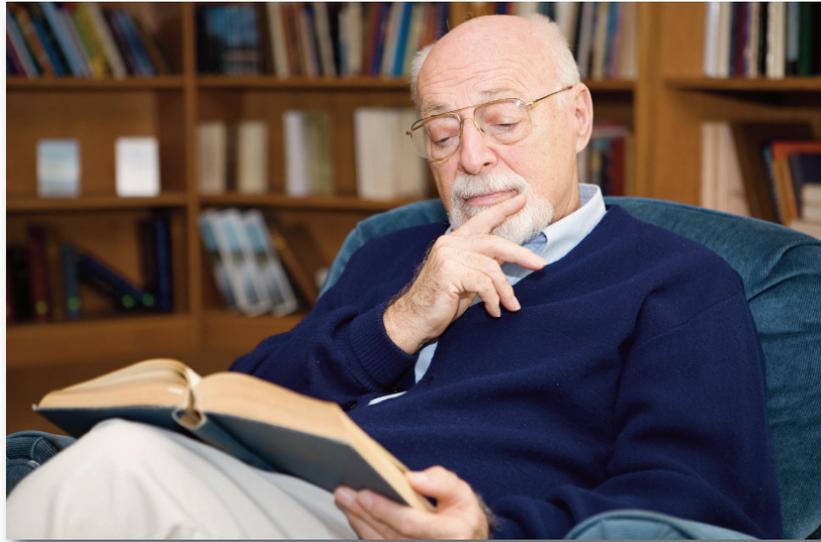
Find a nursing home, assisted living, or hospice; check eligibility for benefits; get resources for long-distance caregiving; review legal issues; and find support for caregivers.

Lotsa Helping Hands

<http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com/>

Free website for coordinating a group of family and friends to help with various tasks. Caregivers set up a members-only community and then post jobs on the website's calendar, such as providing a ride to the doctor or doing laundry. Email is sent to all the community members to alert them of new tasks.





Senior Friendly Libraries

Exciting things are happening for seniors at Montgomery County Public Libraries. Local libraries have expanded their resources to provide better services for senior residents, and the system-wide website brings countless resources to you via your home computer. Library staff can help you find what you need—on the shelves or on-line.

On-site and On the Shelves

County libraries offer a wide range of resources for seniors. There are many new books and media on the shelves of interest to seniors.

The library has added many resources to its collection in recent years on such topics as caregiving and dealing with aging issues; the cultural and social aspects of aging; senior health; retirement; senior travel and seniors and technology.

Information staff in all the libraries have been specially trained on library resources and local services for seniors.

For patrons with unique needs and interests, a Health Information Center is located in the Wheaton Library on Georgia Avenue, and a

Disability Resource Center in the new Rockville Library. Throughout each month, events appropriate for seniors are held in each of the County libraries including book discussions, basic computer classes, film fests, Spanish and English conversation clubs and more.

Online

Be sure to look at the Seniors page while you're on the Library website (www.montgomerycountymd.gov/libraries).

It includes a calendar of events held in County libraries and information on volunteering in County libraries.

Another section provides links to County and private agencies that offer assistance to seniors. To keep your brain sharp, be sure to check out the new Online Games for Seniors page.

The Seniors page also has links to recommended web sites for seniors. These links are divided into topics that include accessibility, adult day care, money and retirement, elder law, health, housing, insurance, long-distance caregiving, prescriptions,

continued on next page



FINDING INFORMATION

transportation and several more.

You can also link to resources in the Library's Health Information Center, and access The Encyclopedia of Aging. The Health Information Center and Encyclopedia of Aging sites connect users with information on many health topics and other issues of interest to seniors.

The library also subscribes to many research databases. Just click on Research a Topic to start reading magazines and newspapers for free.

Users can also research many topics of interest

by following the links on the Research a Topic page. Remember that you can access much of the collection on your computer at home just by visiting the Library website. This includes music, movies, TV shows and theatrical performances. Click on Read, Listen, View on the left hand column of the home page.

With computers and media, libraries may have changed a lot in recent years. But two things haven't changed at all. There are always friendly staff eager to help and lots of materials to enjoy. ■

The Commission on Aging produces *SENIORS TODAY*, a cable television show featuring topics of interest to County seniors. Tune in to County Cable Montgomery, Channel 6 (Verizon channel 30).



Follow these quick steps to sign up for periodic e-mails with information for seniors and caregivers:

1. Go to the County's home page, www.montgomerycountymd.gov.
2. Click on Online Services.
3. Select **e-subscription** and navigate to **Senior News**.



& ASKING QUESTIONS FINDING ANSWERS

If you or a family member needed information, guidance or assistance, where would you turn? In

a recent survey, County residents said they would turn to friends, family members, County libraries and Senior Centers, phone books and the internet. All of these are potentially valuable resources!



240-777-3000

ADS@MontgomeryCountyMD.gov

Aging & Disability Services



Trained staff can help seniors and their caregivers with a wide range of topics and advice. Knowledgeable County professionals are available to provide free guidance to any County resident.

Calls are usually answered directly by a live person. If specialists are busy, your wait on hold should be less than 30 seconds. You can also choose to leave a message for a call back within one business day.

Hours are Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For the convenience of caregivers who may not be able to call during the work day, hours were expanded to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.



OTHER RESOURCES

- **Montgomery County Aging and Disability Services**
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/seniors
- **Jewish Council for the Aging Senior Helpline**
Information, referrals and advice. More in-depth service available for a fee. 301-255-4200
- **Montgomery County Caregiver Resources**
www.HelpingYouHelpThem.com
- **Montgomery County Libraries**
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/libraries
(Click on "Seniors" on the left-hand column)
- **Senior Resource Guide and Beacon Newspaper**
www.TheBeaconNewspapers.com
- **Guide to Retirement Living**
www.retirement-living.com

SENIORS!

Confused about Medicare? Medical bills?
Prescription drug coverage?

We can help.
Call us. It's free.



301-590-2819

SENIOR HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A service of Montgomery County government



www.medicarehelp.org

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Adult Protective Services (APS) investigates reports of abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or exploitation involving frail seniors and adults with disabilities. If you suspect such a situation, call Aging and Disability Services at 240-777-3000.

The goal of this program is to ensure that people are able to live safely in the community.