

# Home Times



The newsletter for "Those Who Care" from America's Choice in Homecare.

## Assisting with Older Adult Transitions

As people begin to experience their first phase in transitioning to being an "older adult," they often have the initial sense of relief and optimism toward their future. For example, many working adults actually look forward to retirement, where they will have fewer responsibilities and less stress. The idea of the "golden years" still blooms bright for those folks. Yet, as so often will happen, older adults may not be fully prepared for the actual transitions that lie ahead for them.

Issues with physical abilities, social situations, and financial concerns can quickly creep into their daily dialogues, and they can be woefully under-educated regarding these soon-to-happen changes. For these "older adults" and their families, the goal (according to Averne L. Brandt, Ph.D., in her article *Transition Issues for the Elderly and Their Families*), "is to maximize the positive and develop strategies for coping with the stresses."

Ms. Brandt has divided the transition period into two main focal points:

1. Look at change realistically
2. Empower your senior parent



With regard to being realistic about the changes in your senior's life, there are both physical and emotional issues to contend with. The fact is that as we age our processes slow down. Physical abilities become more restricted (i.e., walking up and down steps becomes more difficult), visual acuity is lessened, and hearing and memory also become less accurate than when the senior was a younger person. Couple these physical changes with the emotional transitions that are occurring, such as a change in role identity (i.e., moving from an important role at work to one of subservient player at home), handling losses (i.e., their job, their friends at work, etc.), and their soon to occur changes in relationships with their children (i.e., from fully responsible parent to having their children begin to be part of their decision making process): all lead to a very difficult

To begin the process of assisting your older adult's transition phase, it is important to include the older adult in the process. This is not an *"I know what's best for Mom."* situation, but rather a *"Mom, I'd like to talk with you about my concerns regarding your living situation."*

As a result of all the losses the older adult has been experiencing over the last several years (and will continue to experience until they pass away), the senior is a walking encyclopedia of learned knowledge about life. The idea is to tap into that knowledge and use it to the older adult's best advantage. Empowering the senior with decision making abilities and ensuring that she is always included in conversations about her future will give her a sense of control over her own life (even as it transitions away from the life she once knew).

Transitions are difficult for everyone. Be supportive and you and your loved one will work out the big stuff.

*Courtesy of Jeffrey Johnson*

## Home Safety Tips

When visiting the home of an elder, it may be useful to be mindful of potential hazards that could cause an accident.

They include:

- Keep all areas of the home, including hallways and stairs, well-lit, but free from glare
- Remove scatter rugs, or attach a nonskid backing to them
- Reduce the risk of falling on uncarpeted floors by ensuring that they are not slippery – do not use high gloss polish
- Use night lights; particularly in the bedroom, hallways, and bathrooms
- Keep the stove area in the kitchen free of towels, curtains, and other things that might catch fire
- Inspect electrical cords for fraying or cracking; be sure they are placed away from walking paths, but not under carpet or furniture, where they could present a fire hazard
- Set the hot water temperature at 115 degrees or below on the water heater

- Use slip-resistant decals or non-skid mats in the tub or shower
- Install grab bars in the bathtub and by the toilet; be sure the screws go directly into the wall studs, so they stay securely in place
- Check to be sure that extension cords are not overloaded
- Install smoke detectors on every floor of the home and test them monthly
- Destroy out-of-date medications and those which are no longer being used
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, and teach everyone of age to use it
- Place a telephone in the bedroom and post emergency numbers by all telephones
- Keep space heaters away from flammable materials, and be sure the room is well ventilated
- A three-pronged plug should be used in a three hole outlet, or an adapter should be used
- Always turn off heating pads before an older person goes to sleep
- Have an emergency exit plan and an alternative plan in case of fire
- If the older person has a disability, call the local fire department and have them give you some stickers for the windows

We all can be sensitive to suggested changes within our homes, so be sensitive to how you approach these topics. Consider framing the conversation with the love and care that enabled you to recognize these potential hazards – the elder will not only recognize your empathy, but he or she will also be much more likely to accept your advice.

*These tips were provided by the Eldercare Locator (800-677-1116)*



# Good Nutrition for Seniors

We all know that our bodies change over time: we tend to lose muscle mass as we age and we generally put on more fat over the years (due to hormonal imbalances). The aging process requires all of us (both personally and for those in our charge) to review our nutrition regularly if we are to maintain a healthy body. The two mainstays, exercise and good nutrition, still hold true for the basics of good health.

Below are some additional ideas that may guide you and your staff when considering a nutritional regiment for the elderly:

1. Limit fat intake. Consume lean meats, low fat dietary products, and no fried food.
2. Include eggs, poultry, and fish in the diet. Eat products (or vitamins) with iron, as elderly tend to show low iron amounts in their chemical make-up.
3. Choose a variety of foods.
4. Keep saturated fatty foods and cholesterol in check.
5. An increase in fiber is generally called for – cereals high in fiber work well.
6. By eating lean meat, poultry, and fish, an elderly person will ensure a useful absorption of zinc.
7. Vitamin B12 is another micronutrient that is often found to be deficient in elderly people.
8. Dehydration is also a problem with the elderly. An elderly person requires 1 ounce of water for every 2.2 pounds of body weight. We all need to maintain good hydration levels. For example, 8 cups of water/day is a good rule of thumb.
9. Calcium should be ingested at a rate of 1200-1400mg/d and vitamin D at 600 IU (*as suggested by the USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, Tufts University, Boston, MA*).
10. Keep sugar, salt, and alcohol to minimum levels.
11. Eat brown rice instead white rice.
12. Use deep colored fruits and vegetables (i.e., dark green, orange, red and yellow).
13. Eat fish at least once per week.
14. Use extra virgin olive oil rather than saturated or hydrogenated fats.
15. Attempt to rotate diets every four days. This aids in the absorption of the useful nutrients from each of the groups mentioned above.

Nutrition and health are our own responsibilities. You can choose to ignore what is known about healthy eating and exercise and take your chances in life. Or, you can listen to the many, many experts who have decades of useful studies that stress healthy eating and good exercise as a means to a longer and healthier life. You owe it to yourself and your loved-ones to choose the latter.

Eat right. Exercise. Live longer.

*Courtesy of Jeffrey Johnson*

## October Recipe: Guten Goulash



### INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds beef, shoulder or breast  
2 large onions, diced  
4 tablespoons olive oil  
1 tablespoon mixed dried herbs like thyme, rosemary and marjoram  
2 teaspoons paprika  
2 large carrots, diced  
4 potatoes diced  
1 can peeled tomatoes  
1 teaspoon garlic powder  
1/2 bottle dry red wine  
salt and pepper

### PREPARATION:

Heat olive oil in a casserole, add meat and roast until brown. Add onion and heat until transparent. Then add carrots, potatoes and herbs and stir for a few minutes. Then add red wine, tomatoes and the spices and simmer for about 2-3 hours. Add some water if necessary. To be served with dumplings or noodles. *This recipe from CDKitchen for Easy German Goulash serves/makes 8*