

Caregiver Connection

Fall 2020 Newsletter



The Caregiver Connection provides information to help support family caregivers who are caring for someone with a chronic health condition or a disability. If you have questions about articles or information in the newsletter, or if you would like your name removed from this quarterly newsletter mailing list, please connect with the Caregiver Support Coordinator you have worked with:

Kacie Niemuth
Caregiver Support Coordinator
715-261-6068

Meagan Fandrey
Caregiver Support Coordinator
715-261-6062

Scott Seeger
Dementia Care Specialist
715-261-6066

Or reach us toll free at 1-888-486-9545

Winter Preparation by Kacie Niemuth, Caregiver Support Coordinator

As we soak in the last moments of Summer, the days continue to get shorter, and the crisp air is a refreshing reminder that cooler days and months will be here soon. Many prefer not to mention the word *snow*, in hopes that Mother Nature will at least hold off on blanketing the ground until November, but it is never too early to prepare for the inevitable white flakes and colder temperatures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggests taking these steps to prepare yourself, family, and friends to stay safe and healthy during the winter months.

Take These Steps for Your Home

- Winterize your home; install weather stripping, insulation, and storm windows
- Insulate water lines that run along exterior walls
- Clean out gutters and repair roof leaks
- Check/service your heating system and change furnace filters
- Remove hoses and turn off water to outside faucets
- Check dryer vents
- Clean out heating ducts and cold air intake
- Use a humidifier inside your home (suggested humidity control during winter months is between 30%-40%)



<https://passionlivingbycw.com/2013/10/14/changing-seasons-of-passion/>

Take These Steps to Prepare Your Vehicle

- Check/service the radiator and maintain antifreeze level
- Change oil to winter grade level oil
- Check your vehicle battery
- Check tire tread or, if necessary, replace tires with all-weather or snow tires
- Check your windshield wiper blades and washer fluid levels
- Keep your fuel tank full to avoid frozen fuel lines
- Prepare a winter emergency kit to keep in your vehicle in case you become stranded to include; flashlight, jumper cables, blankets, gloves, hat, boots, warm clothes, snacks, water, and first aid kit

Take These Precautions Outdoors

- Wear appropriate outdoor clothing: tightly woven, preferably wind-resistant coat or jacket; inner layers of light, warm clothing; gloves, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots to protect yourself from frostbite
- Carry a cell phone
- Sprinkle cat litter, sand, or ice melt on icy patches to avoid slipping and/or falls and use a cell phone or light at night if walking in dark or poorly lit areas
- Take short steps or shuffle for stability
- Don't be afraid to reach out to a neighbor, family or friend for assistance with snow shoveling and ice removal.

Source: CDC, "Be Prepared to Stay Safe and Healthy in Winter". Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/features/winterweather/index.html>

(Continued on back side)

Celebrate Caregiving by Pledging to Care for Yourself submitted by Jane Mahoney, *Caregiver Support Specialist, Greater WI Agency on Aging Resources*

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation...”

- Audre Lorde

November is National Family Caregiver Month, a time to recognize the many hard working and devoted people who make it their mission to keep a loved one happy and safe. There are thousands of caregivers across Wisconsin who are selflessly putting their own lives on hold to make sure their loved ones are being cared for. But who will care for the caregiver? Ideally relatives, friends, and neighbors are there to help but in order to truly be a healthy caregiver, there must be a promise to care for oneself. The Family Caregiver Alliance laid the groundwork for caregivers to do just that. Please read A Caregiver’s Pledge and take the pledge to not only care for your loved one, but to care for YOU.

A Caregiver’s Pledge

1. I will understand that I can’t care for anyone else if I also don’t care for myself. I will keep an image in my mind of putting the oxygen mask on myself first.
2. I will remember that the only person I can change is myself. I cannot change my loved one who is ill, nor my family members.
3. I will find opportunities to laugh, daily. These might come in movies, jokes, television, or with friends who can see the humor in my situation and remind me to do the same.
4. I will get away from my caregiving duties on a regular basis, even if it is just to walk around the block. But I will also find ways to have lunch with a friend, go to a movie, window shop, breathe in fresh air, watch the sunset, or eat a hot fudge sundae.
5. I will visit a support group, either online (wisconsincaregiver.org) or in person in my community, so that I know that I am not alone. If a support group isn’t right for me, I will find a friend to talk to, call my family consultant, or attend a workshop.
6. I will learn as much as I can about my loved one’s illness so I can better care for him or her with understanding. I will learn techniques that will make caregiving easier for both of us.
7. I will say “yes” when people offer to help. I will make a list of things they can do and post it on the refrigerator, so that when those offers come, I’ll be ready. When there are not offers, I will ask for help, even though it might be hard to do so.
8. I will use community resources—such as Meals on Wheels, paratransit, day care programs, and volunteer respite programs—to help make my caregiving duties easier.
9. I will find something I really like to do and make sure I find time to do it on a regular basis. Just because I am a caregiver, doesn’t mean I have to give up everything that is meaningful to me. I will read, knit, garden, scrapbook, do genealogy or woodworking for a designated period of time every week.
10. I will remember that I am loved and appreciated, even when my loved one can’t tell me that. I will honor the nurturing, responsibility, caring and support that I provide to my loved one as a gift I give.

If you need information about local resources or have specific questions about your caregiving journey, please call the Caregiver Support Coordinator you have worked with.

New Caregiver Support Coordinator Joins the ADRC-CW

The ADRC-CW is pleased to welcome Kacie Niemuth as a new Caregiver Support Coordinator! Kacie began her role at the end of August. She comes to the ADRC with over 10 years of experience in working with older adults, adults with disabilities, and their families in long term care management.

Kacie is excited to join the ADRC-CW and to be a part of the services offered to family caregivers - information and education, resources for respite and other caregiving needs, on-going care management, and facilitating Powerful Tools for Caregivers classes.

Reminder to Stay Up-to-date on recommended Vaccines!*

Vaccines are the best way we have to prevent some infectious diseases. While many serious diseases are no longer common in the United States because of vaccines, these diseases still exist and can spread when people aren't vaccinated. Not only does getting vaccinated protect you, but it also protects those around you. Because some people have medical conditions that prevent them from getting vaccinated or developing immunity after being vaccinated, it is important for others to get vaccinated so that these diseases are less common.

Every year, thousands of adults in the United States become seriously ill and are hospitalized because of vaccine-preventable diseases, and unfortunately many of these people die. One such disease is influenza, or the flu. The flu and pneumonia represent the eighth-leading cause of death in the United States. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) estimated that there were tens of millions of cases during the 2019-2020 flu season, which caused tens of thousands of death.

This fall, it will be especially important for people to be vaccinated against the flu. In many part of the country, the COVID-19 pandemic has strained and even overwhelmed healthcare systems. The 2020-2021 flu season is expected to burden healthcare systems even further. The CDC recommends that you receive the vaccine by the end of October.

If you are on Medicare, most vaccines that your doctor recommends will be covered by your Medicare prescription drug plan. Medicare prescription drug plans are required to cover most commercially available vaccines, including the vaccine for shingles. The only exceptions are the vaccines for flu, pneumonia, and hepatitis B which are covered by Part B Medicare. SeniorCare does not cover vaccines.

**Excerpts from September 2020 Senior Medicare Patrol Scoop/GWAAR Legal Services Team.*

| Vaccine Type | Medicare Coverage | Coverage Rules |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Influenza (flu) | Part B | Medicare pays for (and recommends) one shot every flu season. Additional flu vaccines may be covered if considered medically necessary. |
| Pneumonia | Part B | Medicare pays for one shot, recommended for all adults aged 65+ and younger adults with chronic health conditions. |
| Hepatitis B | Part B | Series of three shots, paid for by Medicare for high- or medium-risk individuals, including those with hemophilia, end stage renal disease, diabetes, and other chronic conditions that lower resistance to infection. |
| Shingles | All Medicare prescription drug plans must cover | One shot paid for (and recommended) after age 60. Patient must check with plan to find out specific rules for administration and payment. |

What *ISN'T* said might be the most effective communication! By Scott Seeger, Dementia Care Specialist

Dementia affects the brain in ways that a person may hear, process, and respond to words differently. Unfortunately, with the progression of dementia, a person's ability to understand words may dramatically decrease. However, a person living with dementia may still retain a natural ability to understand the **actions** of the person speaking and **how** something is said. If you are the person trying to communicate with someone living with dementia please remember: **DON'T** take things personally because the person living with dementia is not in control of the changes in their brain and didn't have a choice in this disease. **AND** despite this disease they still **need to be loved** and can sense your care and concern even though they may not be able to show that they understand.

What if words don't seem to matter anymore? Communication continues, just in a different way.

Stay Calm and Be Patient. People living with dementia are dealing with changes in their brain and typically cannot control their emotions. They often misunderstand what is happening around them. Caregivers can and should understand the situation, so remaining calm and showing patience is extremely necessary and important.

Eye Contact: The person living with dementia deserves full attention and to feel that they matter. Vision remains a dominant sense for them. Approaching a person from the front and staying in their line of vision is significantly important. Furthermore, if the caregiver maintains eye contact, it allows the caregiver to better monitor actions and reactions from their loved one.

(Continued on back side)

