



OFFICE *for the* AGING

Senior Scoop



April 2020

SPECIAL EDITION CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19)

More information can be found at <https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

What do Older Adults and People with Disabilities Need to Know?

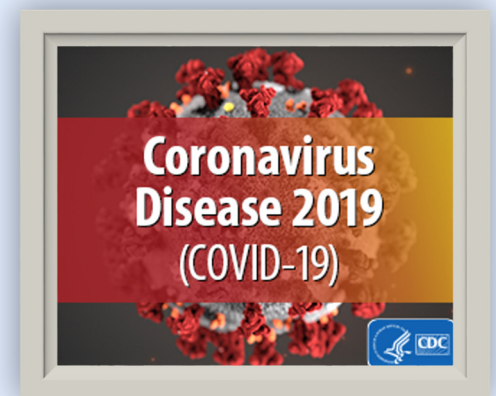
Early data suggest older people are twice as likely to have serious COVID-19 illness. This may be because immune systems change with age, making it harder to fight off diseases and infection. Older adults are more likely to have underlying health conditions that make it harder to cope with and recover from illness.

In addition, people of all ages with or without disabilities, seem to be at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 illness if they have severe chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease.

Reducing exposure is important for people at higher risk of complications!

If you are at higher risk, CDC recommends that you:

- STAY HOME!
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Make sure you have access to several weeks of medications and supplies in case you need to stay home for prolonged periods of time
- Avoid close contact (6 feet or about 2 arm lengths) with people who are sick
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe
- WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN WITH SOAP AND WATER for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- Stay up to date on CDC Travel health Notices
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/ndex.html>
- Plan now for what you will do if you, or people you rely on for support, become ill.



PLANNING & PREVENTION ARE KEY!



Medicare coverage and coronavirus

The Medicare Rights Center Consumer Helpline is open
Call **800-333-4114** to speak with a counselor

As the number of cases of COVID-19 (also known as coronavirus) increases, so does the importance of programs like Medicare in helping you maintain your health. Medicare is taking important steps to keep you informed and help you access appropriate care.

Original Medicare-covered services related to coronavirus include:

- ◆ **Coronavirus testing:** Your doctor can bill Medicare for this test beginning April 1, 2020 for testing provided after February 4, 2020. You will owe nothing for the laboratory test and related provider visits (no deductible, coinsurance, or copayment). This applies to both Original Medicare and Medicare Advantage Plans.
- ◆ **Virtual check-ins:** Virtual check-ins can be used to communicate with your doctor and assess whether you should go to the office for an in-person visit. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, contact your plan to learn about its costs and coverage.
- ◆ **Telehealth benefits:** A telehealth service is a full visit with your doctor using video technology. During the public health emergency, Medicare covers hospital and doctors' office visits, mental health counseling, preventive health screenings, and other visits via telehealth for all people with Medicare. You can access these benefits at home or in health care settings. You may owe standard cost-sharing (like a coinsurance or copayment) for these services, but contact your provider to learn more. If you have a Medicare Advantage Plan, contact your plan to learn about its costs and coverage.
- ◆ **Prescription refills:** If you want to refill your prescriptions early so that you have extra medication on hand, contact your Part D drug plan. Your plan should remove restrictions that stop you from refilling most prescriptions too soon.

Medicare also covers other medically necessary services, such as inpatient and outpatient hospital care or skilled nursing facility care.

Medicare Advantage Plans must cover everything that Original Medicare does, but they can do so with different costs and restrictions.

Information is changing frequently. Have a conversation with your health care provider, go on to [Medicare.gov](https://www.Medicare.gov) or call 1-800-MEDICARE for more details or to see if you qualify. Those with Advantage plans are encouraged to discuss benefits directly with your plan.

Animatronic Pets Provide Companionship to Seniors

In December, Office for the Aging engaged in a pilot project to distribute animatronic pets to local seniors in an effort to increase companionship, reduce anxiety, loneliness and improve quality of life to isolated seniors.

Given the current situation, social distancing has further heightened the impact of social isolation and loneliness on older adults. This has reemphasized the need to find creative ways to provide comfort, companionship and joy.

We thought now would be a great time to share a couple of stories of how the pets have made a positive impact for two local seniors.

Audrey is an 85 year old widow from Oneonta who lives alone and is not able to go out much. She doesn't drive and depends on family to take her places and periodically check in through phone calls and visits. Although she does have family support, the day to day loneliness is still something she struggles with.

On January 3rd, Audrey was chosen to receive a yellow tabby cat through Office for the Aging. Within an hour of receiving her new pet, Audrey's smile was endless. She was immediately enamored and her giggles and laughs were heart warming. As family sat there in tears, they watched Audrey's immediate change of happiness and love. Audrey's new cat, which she named "Tabby" now sits on her lap every day while she watches TV and brushes and pets him. Audrey especially enjoys when he purrs and cleans his paw, then starts to roll over. She shared with her family members how very thankful she is for the Angel from Office for the Aging that gave Tabby to her. In the evenings when Audrey gets ready for bed, she turns Tabby off for the evening and lays him next to her. When she awakes in the morning, Tabby is the first thing she wakes up to, giving her a smile to start her day.

Audrey's daughter shared that her mom "is acting so much younger, more vibrant, more talkative than the family has seen in a long time." Audrey's life of feeling alone and isolated has changed due to a little cat named Tabby.



Geraldyn is 97 years old and has Alzheimer's disease with very limited speech. When we delivered her pet, her daughter shared that Geraldyn used to have a black and white cat, very similar to her new animatronic cat that lived to be 18 years old. When Geraldyn's daughter asked what she wanted to name the new pet, she responded "Francine". Geraldyn's daughter was amazed at how responsive her mother was and shared that this was the most verbal and engaged her mother has been in a long time.

A few days later, Geraldyn's daughter called us to report that her mom loves the cat and that it has helped her a lot.

For more information about how you can obtain a pet, please contact OFA at (607) 547-4232.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

The COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting lives and routines around the world. During this time of great upheaval and uncertainty, we want to remind you that while you are taking the important measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus – through hand washing and social distancing—you **should not** forget about your mental health.

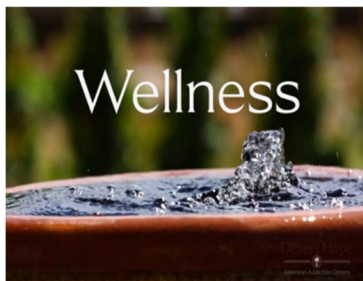
NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Line

1(844) 863-9314

8am-10pm, 7 days a week

Self-Care Tips

- Take a walk
- Start journaling
- Have a home day spa
- Stimulate your brain
- Listen to an inspiring podcast
- Create a sense of normalcy and routine in your day
- Recreate a hobby / try a new recipe



Managing Stress

- Practice mindfulness
- Deep breathing
- Exercise
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Wake up the same time every morning
- Stick to a routine
- Talk to a friend or family member

Need someone to talk to?

Mobile Crisis Assessment Team (MCAT)
1 (844) 732-6228

Available 24 hours 7 days a week

Provides:

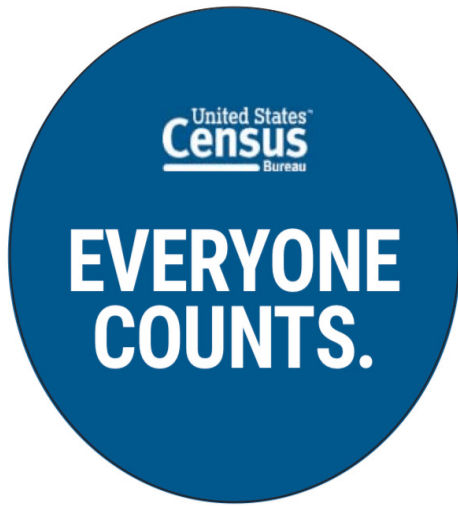
- Wellness calls
- Crisis support
- Information & linkages to services available
- All assessments are being done via phone, FaceTime, or Google

Regional Warm Line
NOT A CRISIS HOTLINE

(607) 433-0661 or 1 (800) 377-3281
12:00pm - 10:30pm

What is the warm line about?

- Confidential peer self-help
- Reduce isolation
- Non-judgement listener
- Time to talk to someone who has been there



The 2020 Census is happening NOW.

If you need help filling out the form you received on behalf of the census or calling into the hotline

Office for the Aging staff can help you.

Call our offices:

Cooperstown (607) 547-4232

Oneonta (607) 432-9041

Office for the Aging Staff can help you if you are unable to get out

EVERYONE COUNTS!! EVEN YOU!!

What's Open? What's Closed?

- Grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, post office, police/fire & medical practices will remain open. Some stores will have special hours for older shoppers only to minimize risk of transmission.
- Restaurants & bars are closed but may have take out and delivery services running.
- Social Security offices are closed to the public but staff are still working. You may contact the Oneonta SSA office at 1-877-628-6581 or visit them online at www.socialsecurity.gov.
- Libraries and schools are closed.
- Evictions and utility shut offs have been suspended during the pandemic.
- No visitors are allowed at nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Screening and limited visitation to hospital patients.
- Congregate meals for seniors are closed. Home delivered meals are available to homebound or isolated seniors.



Newsletter

Would you like to receive our newsletter?

Please provide your email address by sending an email to:

nyconnects@otsegocounty.com

If you do not have an email address, please contact our office at (607) 547-4232 and ask to be added to our postal mailing list.

Newsletters will be sent on a quarterly basis.



You can also like us on Facebook @otsegocountyOFA.



Check out our website at: www.otsegocounty.com

Click: Departments
Select: Office for the Aging

Seven Ways to Cope With Anxiety During the Coronavirus Outbreak

by Christina Ianzito, [AARP](#)

You head to your local grocery store and the shelves are empty of canned and frozen foods. Your usual social activities have been canceled, and the news is a constant stream of alarming stories about how the spreading coronavirus is upending life as we know it. Add to that the fact that older adults are particularly vulnerable to complications from COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, and you have a perfect storm for anxiety.

"This has been a big anxiety trigger for a lot of people," says Stewart Shankman, chief psychologist in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Northwestern University, of the coronavirus outbreak. He and other mental health experts note that it's important to learn how to handle anxious thoughts and get help if necessary in part because anxiety can impede the body's ability to fight infection.

These ideas from the experts may help keep your anxiety under control.

Limit News Consumption

It's important to know the facts and what you can do to protect yourself and to take all precautions, but it's not going to help stress levels to obsessively watch the news, says Shankman.

"The biggest source of anxiety is uncertainty," he says, "not knowing what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, how long this is going to last. And we don't know. So, trying to know, trying to resolve that uncertainty, is counterproductive. It's going to make you more anxious."

Shankman says that he's not suggesting denial. Rather, it's "sort of accepting this is the current situation and not letting it interfere with your life."

Practice Calming Techniques

Different people relax in different ways, but if you feel particularly anxious you might try deep breathing, taking a warm bath, or sitting with your pet, says Neda Gould, assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Johns Hopkins Medical School. "Alternatively, try mindfulness: bringing attention to the experience and kind of allowing it to be there, and not judging it and knowing that it will pass."

Move Your Body

"If people are able to just do a little bit of exercise, just walk around or stretch — just to sort of calm the tension in your body," it will help, says Shankman. "If you calm the tension in your body, you calm the tension in your mind."

Connect with Loved Ones

Call, write, email or videochat with family members, especially if you are feeling isolated or you know that they are. You may find that they have more time to talk than they usually do because so many people are home from school and work, Timmons-Mitchell points out. "There might be some grandchildren that you don't get to communicate with a lot, but now maybe they could because those people aren't as busy."

Listen to Music, Find Activities that Bring Joy

Put your favorite music on and be in the moment. Play games on the computer or sit down to a game of solitaire. Put a puzzle together, take photos, watch a favorite old movie, spend time with your pets. Think of the activities that bring you joy and incorporate them in to your week.

Get Stuff Done

Tackle a hobby you've wanted to explore or a project you never seem to have time for. Accomplishing tasks such as cleaning clothes closets or garages can be rewarding, while diverting your attention from anxious thoughts.

Find Ways to Laugh

Humor is a wonderful coping mechanism in times of crisis. Turn to sources you find funny, whether they're movies or TV shows, or certain friends whom you know will brighten your mood.

Home Delivered Meals Temporarily Expanded

Although OFA has had to close dining centers throughout the county for necessary precautionary measures, home delivered meals are still fully operational and eligibility has been temporarily expanded to serve more seniors. Eligibility has been expanded in two ways:

- Those participants who regularly attended a dining center are now eligible to receive home delivered meals until the dining centers re-open.
- Those residents age 60 and older who are choosing to stay home to limit exposure and risk and do not have adequate food or another means to obtain food.

OFA is encouraging any person who meets either of these to contact the office at 547-4232 or 432-9041.

Supermarkets Offer Special Hours for Older Shoppers

by Aaron Kassraie, **AARP**, Updated March 26, 2020

Some grocery store chains across the U.S. are beginning to offer special shopping hours dedicated to older adults who are among the most vulnerable to severe complications from COVID-19. As the practice of social distancing becomes the norm, the special hours at supermarkets can further limit coronavirus exposure for older shoppers who choose to venture out, as well as for shoppers with underlying health conditions that put them more at risk of infection.

Current coronavirus guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the White House urges older adults to stay home, stay away from other people and avoid discretionary trips. Explore alternatives to shopping in stores, such as ordering groceries online for delivery or asking a friend or family member to do your shopping for you.

These retailers have announced special shopping hours. Confirm with your local grocery store that the senior hours are being enforced during the times listed. If you are aware of other retailers offering special hours, please alert us in the comments section below.

Aldi's: On Tuesdays and Thursdays, ALDI stores will open at 8:30 a.m. and reserve the first hour of business for vulnerable shoppers. This includes senior citizens, expectant mothers and those with underlying health concerns.

BJ's Wholesale Club: Starting March 22, all locations will open one hour early every day for members who are age 60 or older. This opening hour will be from 8 to 9am daily and there will be a designated entrance.

Dollar General: The first hour of operations is dedicated to "senior" customers. Although a specific age was not specified, the company said the period is for shoppers most vulnerable to COVID-19. Stores will also close an hour early to allow employees to clean and restock shelves. Store hours vary by location.

Walgreens: Starting March 24, every Tuesday is senior's day, with all-day discounts and senior-only shopping from 8 to 9 a.m. The hour is also designated for caregivers and immediate families. Discounts include 30 percent off Walgreen brands and 20 percent off national brands for those 55 and older.

Walmart: Beginning March 24 through April 28, on Tuesdays, shoppers 60 and older can shop one hour before the store opens. Pharmacies and vision centers will also be open. Store hours are 7am to 8:30pm.

Price Chopper: Beginning March 19 all stores will pre-open daily from 6:00-7:00am exclusively for seniors to shop.



Scams related to the coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, are rapidly increasing as the public health emergency develops. Scammers are targeting older adults and those with serious long-term health conditions who appear to have a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19.

Fraudsters are attempting to bill Medicare for sham tests or treatments related to the coronavirus and are targeting individuals to illegally obtain money or Medicare numbers.

What Can You Do to Stop COVID-19 Fraud?

- Do not give out your Medicare number to anyone other than your doctor or other health care provider.
- Protect your Medicare number and treat your Medicare card like a credit card.
- Never provide your Medicare number to anyone who contacts you through unsolicited calls, texts, or emails.
- Be cautious of anyone who comes to your door offering free coronavirus testing, treatment, or supplies.
- Don't click on links from sources you don't know, which could put your computer or device at risk. Make sure the anti-malware and anti-virus software on your computer are up to date.
- Be cautious when purchasing medical supplies from unverified sources, including online advertisements and email/phone solicitations.
- Ignore online offers for vaccinations. If you see ads touting prevention products or cures for COVID-19, they are most likely a scam.
- Do your homework before making a donation to a charity or crowdfunding site due to a public health emergency. Be particularly wary of any charities requesting donations by cash, by gift card, or wire transfer.
- Be alert to "investment opportunities." The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is warning people about online promotions, including on social media, claiming that the products or services of publicly traded companies can prevent, detect, or cure COVID-19 and that the stock of these companies will dramatically increase in value as a result.

Economic impact payments: What you need to know

IR-2020-61, March 30, 2020

WASHINGTON — The Treasury Department and the Internal Revenue Service today announced that distribution of economic impact payments will begin in the next three weeks and will be distributed automatically, with no action required for most people. However, some seniors and others who typically do not file returns will need to submit a simple tax return to receive the stimulus payment.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENT?

Tax filers with adjusted gross income up to \$75,000 for individuals and up to \$150,000 for married couples filing joint returns will receive the full payment. For filers with income above those amounts, the payment amount is reduced by \$5 for each \$100 above the \$75,000/\$150,000 thresholds. Single filers with income exceeding \$99,000 and \$198,000 for joint filers with no children are not eligible.

Eligible taxpayers who filed tax returns for either 2019 or 2018 will automatically receive an economic impact payment of up to \$1,200 for individuals or \$2,400 for married couples. Parents also receive \$500 for each qualifying child.

HOW WILL THE IRS KNOW WHERE TO SEND MY PAYMENT?

The vast majority of people do not need to take any action. The IRS will calculate and automatically send the economic impact payment to those eligible.

For people who have already filed their 2019 tax returns, the IRS will use this information to calculate the payment amount. For those who have not yet filed their return for 2019, the IRS will use information from their 2018 tax filing to calculate the payment. The economic impact payment will be deposited directly into the same banking account reflected on the return filed.

I AM NOT TYPICALLY REQUIRED TO FILE A TAX RETURN. CAN I STILL RECEIVE MY PAYMENT?

Yes. People who typically do not file a tax return will need to file a simple tax return to receive an economic impact payment. Low-income taxpayers, senior citizens, Social Security recipients, some veterans and individuals with disabilities who are otherwise not required to file a tax return will not owe tax.

HOW CAN I FILE THE TAX RETURN NEEDED TO RECEIVE MY ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENT?

[IRS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus) will soon provide information instructing people in these groups on how to file a 2019 tax return with simple, but necessary, information including their filing status, number of dependents and direct deposit bank account information.

I HAVE NOT FILED MY TAX RETURN FOR 2018 OR 2019. CAN I STILL RECEIVE AN ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENT?

Yes. The IRS urges anyone with a tax filing obligation who has not yet filed a tax return for 2018 or 2019 to file as soon as they can to receive an economic impact payment. Taxpayers should include direct deposit banking information on the return.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

The IRS will post all key information on [IRS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus) as soon as it becomes available.

In response to the necessary precautionary measures that older adults must take to protect themselves from the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19), Office for the Aging is available to assist seniors who are now isolated and unable to meet essential needs. Such services include:

Home Delivered Meals

Well-Check Calls

Grocery Shopping

Prescription Pick-Up and Delivery

and More!

If you are in need of assistance, please contact our office at (607) 547-4232 or (607) 432-9041 to access information and services to help support you through this challenging time.

Mailing Label

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140 County Highway 33W, Suite 5
Cooperstown, NY 13326
(607) 547-4232