



Office for the Aging

Senior Scoop



NY Connects
Your Link to Long Term
Services and Supports

January - March 2024

IN THIS EDITION:

Polypharmacy: Taking Too Many Pills	2
Tax Prep.....	3
Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment	3
Thank you to OFA Medicare Counselors	4
Weather Closures	4
Healthy Eating Habits	5
8 Choices for Healthy Aging	6
What is NY Connects	7
Helios Care Grief Support Groups	7

Office for the Aging would like to thank the many people who took the time to support seniors in our community during the holidays.

We were able to distribute hundreds of shoeboxes to homebound seniors in the community through the **Shoeboxes for Seniors event**, coordinated by **Lisa Nunez**. The **Food vs Fuel Project**, coordinated by **Sheila Serbay**, created 16 large gift bags full of wonderful items which were distributed to isolated seniors in need. **Fly Creek Quilters** sewed beautiful lap quilts that were distributed, and the **Worcester/Milford 4-H Club** handmade several holiday cards that were mailed to seniors in the community. The **Worcester, Maryland & Westford Historical Societies** contributed many gifts to brighten the holiday for area seniors.

We wish to share our sincere gratitude to the many people who selflessly contribute to our older adults in Otsego County and share a little light with them during the holidays.

Thank you!

Nominations Wanted

Do you know
an exceptional
older adult?

Nominate an Outstanding Senior

The Office for the Aging is seeking nominations for outstanding residents age 60 and older in Otsego County. If you know an exceptional senior who volunteers time or gives back to our community, please fill out a nomination form to recognize them. This is an opportunity to celebrate the significant contributions older adults make each and every day in our community.

For information on award qualifications and to receive nomination forms, contact Office for the Aging at (607) 547-4232. The nomination form is also available on the OFA webpage at www.otsegocounty.com; click on Department/ Office, select Office for the Aging, then select Documents.

Award winners will receive special recognition at Older New Yorkers' Day in Albany in May.

FOR INFORMATION: 607-547-4232

NYCONNECTS@OTSEGOCOUNTY.COM



Taking Multiple Medications?

Beware of Side Effects

Adapted from AARP article by Michelle Crouch

For years, experts have warned about the dangers of taking 5 or more medications at the same time, a phenomenon known as polypharmacy. Yet over the past two decades, the percentage of people age 65 and older taking five or more prescriptions has **tripled**, from 14 to 42 percent, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Nearly 20 percent of older adults take 10 drugs or more, according to the Lown Institute.

Older adults accumulate medications for a variety of health related reasons. Part of the reason is that they are more likely to have chronic diseases that require medical management. However, some of the reason is that providers are more likely to treat with new medications rather than **recommend lifestyle changes** or consider whether the symptoms could be caused by a drug the patient is currently taking.

Adults who see multiple providers are more likely to be prescribed medications that can have adverse side effects or interact with other medications already being taken.

Sometimes, side effects from a medication are misdiagnosed as a new problem, triggering more prescriptions, known as a “prescribing cascade.”

For example, let’s say you take a medicine for heartburn and one day you notice that you’re forgetting things. If a doctor doesn’t recognize that your cognition problems might be a side effect from

the heartburn medication, he or she may write you a prescription for a dementia drug. Then the heartburn and dementia drugs combined cause you to develop constipation, and the next thing you know, you’re on another drug for that.

Because kidney function declines as we age, and drugs are filtered by the kidneys, it is not unusual for a medication you have been taking for years to suddenly start causing side effects. Dr. Ardeshir Hashmi, Section Chief of Cleveland Clinic’s Center for Geriatric Medicine states, “if you don’t reduce the dosage as you get older, the medication may actually be hanging around in your system, and then you take another dose and then another, and they keep cumulatively increasing until you’re at risk of drug toxicity or profound side effects that you did not have previously from the medicine.”

The bottom line... no matter how many medications you take, but especially if you take more than five medications, be sure to bring all of your medications, including over the counter drugs and dietary supplements, in to your primary care provider or pharmacist to review them with you at least annually.

Having a medication review is especially important after you are discharged from a hospital or rehab facility since it is not uncommon for patients to go home with several new medications. It is also a good idea to have a medication review if you lose or gain a lot of weight or if you are diagnosed with a new medical condition or new symptom. You not only want to reduce the medications you take but also ensure you are on the best possible medication for your conditions.

Most importantly, look to nondrug alternatives first. Before taking any new drug, consider whether there’s a way to try to treat the problem first without medication. Can you change your diet to control your diabetes or high blood pressure? Eliminate caffeine to help your insomnia? Be proactive about your health be aware of prescription overload.



Tax Volunteers Available

Local AARP tax volunteers are busy completing their annual tax training and testing in preparation for this year's tax season.

Volunteers will be available at Elm Park Church, 401 Chestnut Street, Oneonta beginning in February, by appointment only, to assist eligible residents with tax returns.

If you are interested in scheduling an appointment, please call 607-376-5542 AFTER January 17th. No appointments or calls will be accepted prior to that date.

Appointments must be scheduled in advance. No walk-ins accepted.



Hartwick College VITA Site

Hartwick College will also be providing free tax preparation for area residents at the following locations from February 5th to April 15th:

Hartwick College Golisano, 2nd Floor, Oneonta
Mondays & Tuesdays, 6:00-8:00pm

Huntington Memorial Library, Oneonta
Saturdays, 10:00am - 3:00pm

For more information, please call (607) 431-4338 or email vita@hartwick.edu.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE OPEN ENROLLMENT THROUGH MARCH 31



January 1st through March 31st is the time to change your Advantage Plan if you are not happy with your current plan or the plan is not meeting your needs as you thought it would.

During this time, you are able to:

- Switch to a different Medicare Advantage Plan with or without drug coverage
- Return to original Medicare and, if needed, also join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan

If you switch Medicare Advantage Plans or return to original Medicare with or without a Medicare drug plan, your new coverage will start the first day of the month after your new plan gets your request for coverage. The Medicare Plan Finder (www.medicare.gov) can help you find, compare and enroll in a new Medicare Advantage Plan or Medicare Drug Plan in your area. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) for help or reach out to our office at (607) 547-4232 with any questions you may have regarding the open enrollment period.



The *Senior Scoop* Newsletter is created through the Office for the Aging to increase awareness of services and share information relevant to older adults. The cost to create, print and mail this newsletter is dependent on your contributions. To help ensure the newsletter continues to be available, we ask that you please consider a contribution in any amount.

To make a contribution, please mail check or money order to:
Otsego County Office for the Aging
140 County Highway 33W, Suite 5, Cooperstown, NY 13326



Thank You Medicare Counselors!

Each year, Medicare “Open Enrollment” takes place between October 15th and December 7th. During this time, individuals who are on Medicare have an opportunity to review their plans and make changes for the upcoming year. As we all know, this can be very daunting when you are presented with dozens of options, and are not able to navigate through the plans to determine the best fit for you and your situation.

We would like to acknowledge the knowledgeable and dedicated staff here at Office for the Aging who have spent the past several weeks meeting with over 800 community residents, reviewing their current coverage and helping to understand the different plans and options available. Their hard work and patience over the past several weeks is much appreciated.

Thank you to (left to right) Sue, Mona, Christy, Tonya and Mandy!!



Weather Closures

In the event of inclement weather, the Senior Nutrition Program may have to close. Program cancellations will broadcast on the following radio stations:

WZOZ (103.1 FM), WDOS (730 AM), WSRK (103.9 FM), WKXZ (93.9 FM), WFRG (104.3 FM), WOUR (96.9 FM), WCDO (100.9 FM & 1490 AM), WBKT (95.3 FM), WQSH (103.5 FM) WSKU (105.5 FM), WIBX (950 AM) and on the following television channels: WKTV (Channel 2), WBNG (Channel 12).

Postings will also be made on the Otsego County Office for the Aging Facebook page to notify the public of any program or office closures.

Meal Driver Safety:

For those receiving home delivered meals, please be sure your driveway and walkways are free of snow and ice and are sanded in the winter. Drivers will not be able to deliver meals to homes if they are not able to access the home safely. If you have pets, please also be sure that animals are contained where they are not a threat to drivers as they deliver your meals.

FREE COVID tests are still available through the Office for the Aging.

If you would like to receive a COVID test kit, please call 607-547-4232 or stop by our offices located at 140 County Hwy 33W, Cooperstown or 242 Main Street, Oneonta.



Are you tired of cooking or eating alone?

Cooking meals and eating alone is one of the reasons older adults don't eat healthy. It is easier to grab a processed, pre-packaged meal or make a can of soup than to prepare a nutritious meal for yourself. Have you considered trying the Restaurant Dining Program or attending one of the congregate dining centers? Invite a friend to go with you. For more information on these, call 607-547-4232.

Another option would be to share the meal preparation. Invite some friends over and each of you prepare a portion of the meal. When you are done, you can divide the leftovers for another day.

Is your budget tight making it hard to buy healthy foods?

Eating on a limited budget can also be a reason older adults tend not to eat healthy. Try planning your meals out based on the items you find in the sales flyers. Consider purchasing extra nonperishables when they are on sale. Whenever possible, use coupons and go shopping on the "Senior days" where you get a few extra cents off per dollar spent. Focus on buying healthy products such as fruits and vegetables and avoid processed foods high in sodium, sugar and saturated fats. Access helpful resources such as SNAP or local food pantries to stretch your food budget. Office for the Aging can help you access these resources.

Would you like to talk to a Nutritionist?

Do you need help knowing what foods are good for you based on your medical conditions? Would you like to have someone help create a eating plan or provide tools for better nutrition? **WE CAN HELP!**

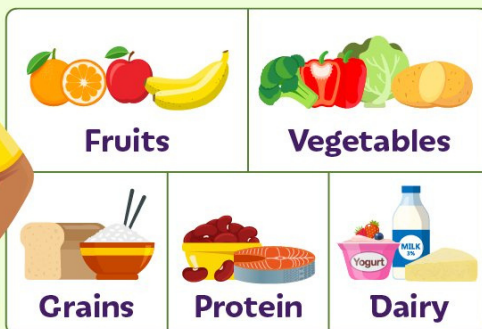
Contact Office for the Aging and ask us for a nutrition consult with our registered dietitian, Shannon Davis.

5 Tips for Choosing Healthier Foods as You Age

Follow these tips to help you maintain a healthy weight, get needed nutrients, and lower your risk of developing certain diseases.



Eat a variety of foods each day.



Read food labels to learn what's in your food.



Choose foods that don't have a lot of sugar, saturated fats, and sodium.



Be aware of how many calories you need per day.

Women 60+		Men 60+	
Physical activity	Calories	Physical activity	Calories
Not active	1,600	Not active	2,000-2,200
Moderately active	1,800	Moderately active	2,200-2,400
Very active	2,000-2,200	Very active	2,400-2,600

Keep a food diary to track what you eat.



Learn more about healthy eating as you age at www.nia.nih.gov/healthy-eating.

8 Choices to Promote Healthy Aging

Adapted from Jefferson Center www.jcmh.org

Research is beginning to uncover some key factors that contribute to long and healthy lifestyles. We can make choices that influence our own health and wellness. Here are some key factors that affect the quality of our life. Are you promoting a healthy lifestyle for yourself?



Attitude is a state of mind. Take charge of your attitude. Having a sense of hope, humor and confidence will determine the quality of your life. Eliminate negative self-talk. Optimists live much healthier and happier lives.



Relationships are very important to your emotional well being. Protecting your emotional well-being is as important as your physical health. Having contact with others feeds our spirit and gives meaning to your life. Being involved also helps us to forget our woes and remind us that we still have a lot to give. Seniors who are active, engaged and confident about their abilities generally feel better and live longer.

Take time for **meaningful activities** that are deeply enjoyable and commit to doing them. Ask yourself what makes you happy and gets you up in the morning. What are some goals or dreams you still want to do? Make a list and start doing them. This can be a time of greatest fulfillment. Set goals and aspirations at all stages of life. Lets make a list and get started checking them off!



Nutrition is key as we age. Eating well will make you feel better, look better, help your body run more smoothly and ward off illness. Stay hydrated by drinking 6-8 large glasses of water each day and eat a diet high in whole grains, fiber, fruits, vegetables, and nuts to decrease weight and reduce the risk of heart related diseases.



Regular exercise is the cornerstone of healthy living as you age. Strive to exercise 3-5 times per week including stretching, weight resistance training, aerobics, and balance routines. Exercise also helps combat anxiety and depression, keeps your joints working better and reduces the possibility of getting cancer. Any movement is better than no movement.

Healthy habits are important to help you live a long healthy life and having energy to do the things you love. Look at your lifestyle and identify harmful habits that you can reduce or eliminate in your life. Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption are the two habits that can effect your health the most. What other harmful habits might you be able to reduce to improve your life?

We underestimate how important regular, consistent **sleep** is to our overall health. We should strive for 7-8 hours each night, even as we age. To improve sleep, maintain a consistent sleep schedule and avoid napping during the day. It's also a good idea to avoid heavy meals, caffeine, nicotine and alcohol too close to bedtime. Create a quiet, calming bedtime routine to help your mind and body relax. Avoid screens such as tv, smartphones or tablets about 1 hour before bed and instead, try reading or listening to your favorite soft music.

Keeping **mentally active** helps you to improve memory and combat boredom. Challenge your mind by trying something new or do something you always do in a different way. For instance, practice writing or drawing with your non-dominant hand a few minutes each day. You can also take a class to learn a new skill, play games such as Sodoku, or enjoy word puzzles and reading. etc.

Challenge yourself this month to make two changes to your daily routine to help you live a happier, healthier lifestyle.

Remember to laugh often!



What is NY Connects?

The Otsego County NY Connects is a FREE information and assistance service that is available to older adults, individuals with disabilities, their families and caregivers to help make informed decisions about long term services and support options.

NY Connects is a trusted place that gives you information about available options, whether you are paying for a services yourself, through your insurance or are eligible for a government program.

What are Long Term Services and Supports?

Long term services and supports (also known as long term care) includes a range of services and supports that can help people of all ages remain independent in their daily living.

Long term services and supports are both medical and non-medical services that help to maintain or improve daily functioning and health. Services can be provided at home, in a community based setting such as a senior center, community day program or residential setting such as assisted living or nursing homes.

NY Connects can serve anyone who needs information on long term services and supports such as:

- A child or adult with a disability
- An older adult
- Family members and caregivers
- Friends or neighbors
- Helping professionals



Glenn, Sarah, John
Alicia & Abby

For more information, or to learn about long term services and supports (including discussing and looking for referrals) please contact NY Connects at Office for the Aging,

607-547-4232



Helios Care
COMPASSION, CHOICES & DIGNITY

2024 Adult Grief Support Group Schedule

Groups are free. All adults are welcome to attend

Second Thursday of the month: 1:00-2:30 PM Clark Sports Center 124 Co Road 52 Cooperstown NY 13326	Third Tuesday of the month: 10:00-11:30 AM St James Church, 305 Main Street Oneonta, NY 13820	Third Thursday of the month: 2:00-3:30 PM New Hope Community Church 45 Stockton Avenue Walton, NY 13856	Fourth Wednesday of the month: 10:00-11:30 AM Cobleskill United Methodist Church 107 Chapel Street Cobleskill, NY 12043
1/11 7/11	1/16 7/16	1/18 7/18	1/24 7/24
2/8 8/8	2/20 8/20	2/15 8/15	2/28 8/28
3/14 9/12	3/19 9/17	3/21 9/19	3/27 9/25
4/11 10/10	4/16 10/15	4/18 10/17	4/24 10/23
5/9 11/14	5/21 11/19	5/16 11/21	5/22 11/27
6/13 12/12	6/18 12/17	6/20 12/19	6/26 12/18

Meet our Staff

Sue Barnhart..... Aging Service Specialist
Alicia Chase..... Long Term Care Coord.
Monalissa Edson..... Caseworker
Joy Gray..... HEAP Examiner
Christy Harasimowicz... Caseworker
Paul Kehoe..... Transportation Driver
Glenn Linsenbardt Account Clerk Typist
Sarah Loveland Senior Clerk
John Moylan Transportation Driver

John Nicotera Caseworker
Cody Pope HEAP Examiner
Tamie Reed Director
Mandy Rogers Coord. of Aging Services
Tonya Rowe..... Aging Service Specialist
Mieko Rowley Business Manager
Sue Smith Registered Nurse
Abigail Waters Caseworker

How to contact us:

Phone: 607-547-4232

Fax: 607-547-6492

Email: nyconnects@otsegocounty.com

Our Office Locations:

Main Office: 140 County Highway 33W
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Mon. - Fri. 8:30am to 4:30pm

Satellite Office: 242 Main Street
Oneonta, NY 13820
By appointment only

Otsego County Office for the Aging

140 County Highway 33W, Suite 5

Cooperstown, NY 13326