

HomeTimes

Your Independent Senior Living Resource for Aging in Place

From America's Choice in Homecare.

Help Senior Loved Ones Manage Winter with a Smile

When the snow is blowing, the wind is howling, and Jack Frost is nipping at their noses, it can be challenging for seniors to stay positive. The gray winter skies can bring their spirits down further and make them yearn for warm summer breezes.

Preparing for and having a plan to get your senior loved ones through the winter months is essential if they succumb to the winter blues. Try these tips for helping them get through winter with a smile.



Eat Healthy

Eating healthy can help older adults avoid illness. While it can be more difficult to eat healthy in the winter when fresh fruits and vegetables are harder to come by, eating a variety of foods can ensure their bodies get the nutrients needed to stay healthy.



Stay Active

Exercise and activity are two of the best ways to fight the winter blues. Encourage seniors who are able to walk around the house or do moderate exercises to stay active. Any activity that keeps their bodies moving will help them feel better.



Stay Warm

Keep the thermostat at a temperature that ensures seniors are warm enough. If they need to head outdoors, make sure to cover any exposed skin, and provide them with scarves, gloves, and hats.



Proper Home Heating

Be careful when heating the home to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Have the fireplace chimney and flue checked if you plan to start fires for warmth.

Open a window slightly to provide air circulation if you use a kerosene stove. Use space heaters with caution as they can be a fire hazard. Space heaters should always be placed more than 3 feet from any item that can burn.



Safety First

If you or your senior family members drive during the winter, have the car's battery, tires, oil and windshield wipers checked before the weather gets too bad. If you don't have a vehicle to transport your senior loved ones, an in-home care agency, like Visiting Angels, can provide or arrange transportation for errands and medical appointments as needed.



Stay Engaged

If seniors have trouble getting out during the winter months, consider hiring a home care provider to help. Senior home care providers can help prepare meals, do light housework, or simply provide companionship throughout the day.

Senior Winter Lifeline

"Companion care services are a lifeline for many seniors in the winter months and throughout the year," says Larry Meigs, President and CEO of Visiting Angels. "Companion care services provide the support many seniors need to live active, independent lives."

Having a plan for your senior loved ones to beat cabin fever is sure to make this winter one of the most enjoyable yet.

Holiday Happiness for the Whole Family



Winter brings the most wonderful time of the year – the holidays. The holiday season is steeped in family tradition with cherished customs that span generations. But when family members get older or have declining health, maintaining their involvement in the traditions can seem more like a burden.

Here are suggestions to ensure older relatives are included in the family holiday traditions even if they can't participate the same way as in past years.

Determine what your loved ones can reasonably manage

No one wants to admit they may not be able to make dinner for 25 anymore or host everyone for brunch. If you're not sure what's appropriate, ask your loved ones, speak to their caregiver if you have home help, or even talk to their doctors.

Determine what traditions matter most

Evaluate which traditions or customs of the holiday truly hold meaning for your family and which are just "the way we've always done things." You may learn what matters is different from what you expect, and it may open up new ways to celebrate that are easier and more meaningful.

Make small modifications to make big differences

If hosting the holiday is important to an older relative, perhaps the family can take care of preparing the table or even bring food. Consider catering – most grocery stores will provide full holiday meals at very reasonable prices. You can use the family serving dishes and favorite china. Your loved one could make one favorite dish, but the bulk of the work could be handled by others.

Consider hiring senior home care help during the holidays

Senior home care help can enable older relatives to accomplish

everyday tasks and holiday preparations and can allow you to spend more time being part of the family and not primarily a caregiver. It can also provide a respite that can be critical during the busy season. Just be sure to screen caregivers carefully or use a reputable agency like Visiting Angels for peace of mind.

Be flexible

Marathon family events could be too much to manage for older adults. Schedule in downtime like a walk or rest as part of the event to allow everyone a chance to relax and recharge.

Make plans early

If you need to modify the holidays, don't just spring it on the family. Discuss options early, and try to involve everyone, including your older relatives. Brainstorming is a great idea – you may find a whole new approach is what everyone really wants.

If your relatives have dementia or Alzheimer's, the holidays can pose some special challenges. Here are some things to consider:

- Stick to routines as much as possible
- Make sure extended family members understand the health and medical situation
- Schedule more visits with fewer people instead of bringing all family members over at once
- Prepare your senior loved one with photos and conversations about visiting relatives to provide context for visits
- Share memories often

What truly matters is that everyone gets to enjoy the holidays and their relationships. The holiday season is a time to be a loving daughter, son, grandchild or cousin. Don't be afraid to ask for help to make that happen.



Slow Cooker French Cassoulet

1 tablespoon olive oil	pepper
6 slices turkey bacon	¼ cup tomato paste
1 large onion, finely chopped	3 (15 ounce) cans great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
4 eaches boneless, skinless chicken thighs, chopped	1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained
¼ pound fully-cooked smoked sausage, diced	3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
3 cloves garlic, minced	
1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves	
2 eaches bay leaves	
½ teaspoon ground black	

Instructions:

Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat and cook bacon until crisp and brown, turning often, about 10 minutes. Remove bacon and drain on paper towels; crumble when cool. Set bacon aside.

Cook and stir onion in the same skillet until translucent, about 5 minutes. Stir in chicken, sausage, garlic, thyme, bay leaves, and black pepper.

Cook until chicken pieces are browned, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in tomato paste.

Transfer chicken mixture to a slow cooker and stir in crumbled turkey bacon, great Northern beans, and diced tomatoes.

Cover the cooker, set on Low, and cook until cassoulet is thickened and the chicken is very tender, 4 to 5 hours. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Nutritional Information

Serving Size: 6 servings • Calories: 521
www.allrecipes.com/recipe/223505



Berry Panna Cotta

¼ lemon
 1 pint heavy cream
 ½ cup confectioners' sugar
 1 cup milk
 3½ teaspoons unflavored gelatin
 ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
 1½ cups sliced fresh strawberries
 1½ cups fresh raspberries

Instructions:

Cut the rind from 1/4 lemon into long strips. Place strips in a saucepan with cream and confectioners' sugar.

Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Set aside to steep for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine milk and gelatin in a small bowl. Let sit for 5 minutes.

Reheat the cream mixture until hot. Remove from heat. Stir in gelatin mixture and vanilla extract. Remove lemon rind.

Pour into 8 ramekins and refrigerate until set, about 1 to 2 hours.

To serve, arrange strawberry slices and raspberries on top of each custard.

Nutritional Information

Serving Size: 8 servings • Calories: 277
www.allrecipes.com/recipe/274691

America's Choice In Homecare®

Since 1998, Visiting Angels has been providing adults and seniors with the needed assistance to continue living at home. At our nationally known, locally owned agency, it is our mission to maintain the independence and familiar surroundings for those in need.

We offer help with personal care, light housekeeping, meal preparation, transportation, shopping, companionship, respite care for families, live-in care and assistance with daily living activities. Call us today for a free, no obligation consultation! We care every day, in every way!

