

# Trending Healthy

## Aging Unbound!

May 2023

### May is Older Americans Month *Aging Unbound!*

What a fantastic concept--AGING UNBOUND! Aging looks different for different people. It's not a one-size-fits-all experience. How do *\*you\** experience the changes as you age? What is *\*your\** vision for a good life in your older years? While we can't control everything about the changes that come with aging (my joints can testify to that), we can all take charge of many aspects of our lives: we can impact our health, our living environment, how and when we choose to engage with others. Read on for more information about the history and purpose of Older Americans Month and check out the other articles in this edition of Trending Healthy to learn about some of the new and continuing trends impacting older adults.



Established in 1963, Older Americans Month (OAM) is celebrated every May. Led by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), OAM is a time for us to acknowledge the contributions and achievements of older Americans, highlight important trends, and strengthen our commitment to honoring our older citizens.

This year's theme, *Aging Unbound*, offers an opportunity to explore a wide range of aging experiences and to promote the importance of enjoying independence and fulfillment by paving our own paths as we age.

This May, join us as we recognize the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OAM and challenge the narrative on aging. Here are some ways we can all participate in *Aging Unbound*:

- **Embrace the opportunity to change.** Find a new passion, go on an adventure, and push boundaries by not letting age define your limits. Invite creativity and purpose into your life by trying new activities in your community to bring in more growth, joy, and energy.
- **Explore the rewards of growing older.** With age comes knowledge, which provides insight and confidence to understand and experience the world more deeply. Continue to grow that knowledge through reading, listening, classes, and creative activities.

- **Stay engaged in your community.** Everyone benefits when everyone is connected and involved. Stay active by volunteering, working, mentoring, participating in social clubs, and taking part in activities at your local senior center or elsewhere in the community.
- **Form relationships.** As an essential ingredient of well-being, relationships can enhance your quality of life by introducing new ideas and unique perspectives. Invest time with people to discover deeper connections with family, friends, and community members.

For more information, visit the [official OAM website](#), follow ACL on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and join the conversation using [#OlderAmericansMonth](#).

(Reprinted from the Administration for Community Living)



Editor's Note: Hello! My name is Michelle Fogus, and I can be reached at [michelle.fogus@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:michelle.fogus@dshs.wa.gov) if you have any comments or suggestions about stories you'd like to see. It's a great pleasure to work on Trending Healthy! I look forward to hearing from you.

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## Wondering what services are available for older adults and caregivers?

**Call us or stop in!**

Call or stop by one of our offices to learn more about the many resources available in each of the communities we serve.

**Clallam County:** Forks Office (360) 374-9496, Sequim Office (360) 452-3221

**Grays Harbor:** Aberdeen Office (360) 532-0520

**Jefferson County:** Port Townsend Office (360) 385-2552

**Pacific County:** Long Beach (360) 642-3634, Raymond (360) 942-2177

**Or visit our website: [www.O3A.org](http://www.O3A.org)**

## Make Your Voice Heard!

***O3A Needs Your Input  
on Four-Year Plan***



Every four years, O3A develops an Area Plan to direct our services and focus in our ever-changing world. As part of that plan, we seek community input to guide our work and investment over the next four years. Your feedback is critical to this project: it lets O3A know what's working, where any gaps in services may be, and how to focus our services to best meet our community's needs.

You may have seen paper copies of this survey in our offices or your local senior center, and you may have already completed one. If so, THANK YOU! We greatly appreciate you giving us your time and comments.

The survey can also be completed online [here](#) or you may call our administrative office at 360.379.5064 or 866.720.4863 and give your answers over the phone. You are welcome to share this link and the survey with your own friends and neighbors.

We value the voices in our communities and look forward to hearing from you!



## What is Digital Equity and Why Does it Matter?



You've probably noticed that more and more of our lives take place online. Sometimes that's the only way to access services--the days of going into local offices and businesses to fill out paper forms are rapidly receding in the rear-view mirror. During the pandemic, students had to access classes online; many of us ordered groceries online, met online with health providers, and stayed in touch with family and friends via email and video chats.

But this increasing reliance on Internet access has a downside: many people have been excluded because of cost, availability of broadband in rural areas, and digital literacy--a fancy term for knowing how to use all this technology.

Federal and state funding has been made available to help address the "digital divide" by expanding broadband access to areas and groups that have been left out. Some of the funding will go towards expanding the infrastructure so that more remote areas can have broadband. Some will go towards "digital equity" to address the other barriers, including cost, access to laptops and smart phones and tablets, and addressing digital literacy.

Keep an eye out for community meetings! Teams across the state are holding focus groups to hear from community members about the barriers they face. Use your voice and be part of the solution!

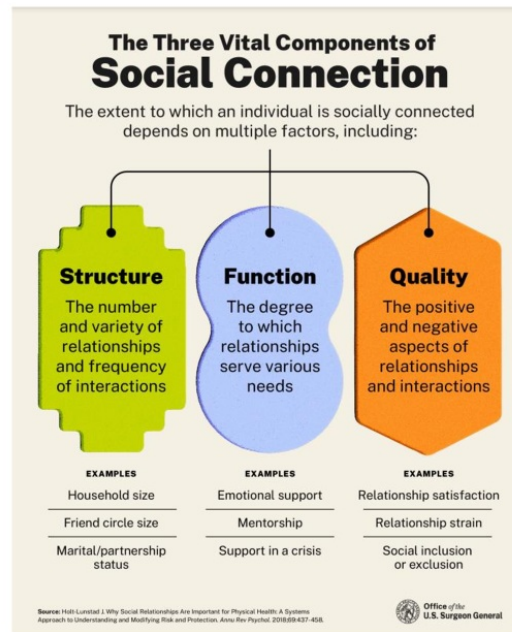
## Social Isolation Can Hurt You

You might be surprised to learn that social isolation affects our physical health. It makes sense intuitively that it affects our mental health: being isolated and lonely can lead to depression and even suicidality.

But research shows that being socially isolated can have a negative impact on physical

health as well--and that it's the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day! It increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and diabetes; it also increases the risk that a person suffering from these issues will not receive timely care.

The US Surgeon General recently released an Advisory about social isolation. Read it [here](#) for more information about what it is, how it impacts us, and steps we can take to create more social connection.



Also, check out the article in this edition about O3A's ElliQ project--an innovative way to help reduce loneliness for some older adults!

## Wellness Corner: Tips to Stay Safe in the Heat

### Calls to Action



Try to avoid being outdoors in the sun between 10 AM - 4 PM



Never leave children or pets in a vehicle



Stay hydrated. Eat and dress light



Use life jackets or flotation devices on the water



Stay in a cool place during the heat of the day. Check with local authorities for cooling center status



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE - SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Monday, August 22, 2022



## Wellness Corner: Spring Recipes

Looking for some quick and easy recipes? [AllRecipes](#) has got you covered!

When we say there's something for everyone, we're not kidding. How about trying some **Basic Air Fryer Hotdogs**? Or a probably-healthier choice, **Pan-Seared Tilapia**? If you're a native Midwesterner (or even if you're not), maybe you gravitate more towards **Beer Brats**. Make the kids happy with **Easy Baked Chicken Tenders**.

Check out these recipes and much, much more at the link above. We can't guarantee that all of them are healthy...but there are many healthy options. Have fun exploring!

## Wellness Corner: COVID Updates

This month, Governor Inslee, following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), declared an end to the federal COVID emergency declarations.



Overall, the news is positive: case rates are way down, as are hospitalizations and deaths. However, COVID is not gone. It's important to stay aware of the risk to older adults, who make up a large proportion of hospitalizations and deaths, as well as the risk to those with compromised immune systems. Consider keeping a good mask handy for crowded indoor spaces or when you may be around others who have symptoms or have tested positive. Continue to practice good hygiene.

It's great that we can more or less return to normal! But it's also good to remember that we need to continue to stay vigilant and protect ourselves and others.

**For more information** about COVID, including cases and vaccination rates for different counties, visit the [state Department of Health website](#).



## ElliQ Robot Companion Project

Wow, it has been so much fun to set up our ElliQ companion robots for participants in our pilot project! Seeing the look of delight on someone's face as ElliQ greets them for the first time, or hearing how much they love having the company during their day, or learning which features they're most excited about has given us an idea of what these devices might mean for older adults who are socially isolated and lonely. (See the article above for some of the negative effects of social isolation on health.)

One of my favorite moments was when Jan called to tell us that her ElliQ has made her "braver": she talks to neighbors now, telling them about her "roommate" and even inviting some of them inside to meet ElliQ. Jan also told us that it was great when family visited recently. Her two-year-old great-granddaughter danced with ElliQ, and the whole family played the trivia game.



Something that makes this extra special is seeing how this robotic companion also increased Jan's interactions with other people. It gave her an ice breaker and a way to invite others into her life.

It's too early for any official results, but the preliminary data are very promising, indicating that participants in our rural area may be using their ElliQs even more frequently than users in other parts of the U.S. Hopefully ElliQ will be another tool to help combat loneliness and isolation, and to promote health and well-being in other ways, as we move forward.

Stay tuned--more to come in the next issue of Trending Healthy!

## Medication Safety Tips: Setting Reminders

One of the most common issues around medication is forgetting to take prescribed medications and/or accidentally doubling up on doses. Both under- and over-medicating have risks. Fortunately, there are several options for reminding us.



### Medication Dispensers

If it's hard to remember when to take medication or whether you've already taken it, consider using a **medication dispenser**. The simplest are *pill boxes* (also known as medi-sets) that have designated spaces for a.m. and p.m. meds and are marked with days of the week. These are widely available at drug stores and grocery stores.

For extra security, there are automated dispensers. These are preloaded, usually with 1-2 weeks worth of medication, and timers are set so the medication is dispensed appropriately. Most have audible reminders as well. Med dispensers help avoid the problems of both missed doses and taking extra doses. Look at dispenser options available from Amazon [here](#).

### Set Reminders on Your Phone

The simplest way to do this is to set recurring reminders with the alarm function. You can also add reminders to your calendar, but these are usually easier to miss than audible alarms.

### Med Reminders through Your PERS (Lifeline Button) Provider

In addition to medication dispensers, some PERS providers now have automated reminders that can be done as phone calls or through your PERS unit. If you have a PERS, contact your provider or Case Manager to ask about the options.

**O3A Gets One-Time Hunger Relief Funding**



## Over \$350,000 Will Help Address Food Insecurity

*Christina Stensrud shows the MAV loaded up for a recent event. The MAV distributes food, Covid information and supplies, and a wide array of general resource information and assistance.*

The Washington legislature recently approved one-time Hunger Relief funding to help fill the gap left by the end of pandemic add-ons to SNAP benefits. The reduction in benefits, combined with rising food prices and reduced availability of food at some food banks, created a hardship for many.

O3A received \$369,000, about \$240,000 of which went to senior nutrition programs (congregate and home-delivered meals), with the remainder going to the MAV (Mobile Assistance Van) and additional home delivery of food for housebound seniors.

The extra funding will allow us to feed hundreds of people a month over the next several months. The MAV serves about 500 people monthly in Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties and started expanding services to the west end of Jefferson and Clallam counties as of this month. The North Beach Senior Center, which operates the MAV and coordinates the home food delivery program, also serves another 125-150 people in that program.

## TRENDING HEALTHY SPOTLIGHT

### AAAs Celebrate 50 Years

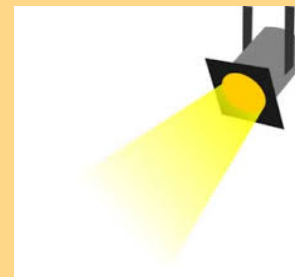
Fifty years ago, Area Agencies on Aging were formerly established as part of the 1973 Older Americans Act reauthorization. Since then, AAAs have established themselves as the local leaders in aging well at home. And as part of their continued evolution, AAAs have launched and coordinated a growing range of innovative services and supports that help enable older adults to age well at home and in their communities.

Whether it is information and referral/assistance, in-home care, transportation, advocacy, meals, health insurance counseling, vaccination outreach and promotion, caregiver and kinship family supports, or social engagement, AAAs have charted the course for valuing and supporting all of *US* as we age.

(reprinted from USAging)

#### AAA Facts:

Each state has at least one AAA; Washington has 13. Different AAAs offer different services.





All AAAs share the goal of providing resources to and advocating for older adults.

## **What YOUR Olympic Area Agency on Aging (O3A) Does:**

### **Information and Assistance**

Free consultation, assistance, & advocacy for older adults, adults with disabilities, and their families. “One-stop” information about a wide array of state & local resources.

### **SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors)**

Free, unbiased, confidential assistance with Medicare and related health insurance issues, including enrollment, assessing best plans & programs, & trouble-shooting

### **SLAC (Senior Legal Advice Clinics)**

Free civil legal assistance for adults age 60+ on issues such as landlord/tenant rights, Social Security, wills, and Powers of Attorney. By appointment only.

### **Caregiver Support**

Family Caregiver Support Program, Kinship Caregivers Support Program, & Relatives as Parents provide support for unpaid caregivers, including counseling, training, respite, and other services. RAP program provides limited financial assistance for costs such as school supplies, sports fees, and instrument rentals. MAC/TSOA programs provide respite and other services for unpaid caregivers and limited in-home care and other services for qualifying adults who do not yet qualify for or do not choose to be on Medicaid long-term care services.

### **In-Home Care (Medicaid Long-Term Care)**

Case Management services for those who qualify functionally and financially and need assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), such as bathing, dressing, & medication management. Provides in-home caregivers, some medical equipment and supplies, and other services.

Health Homes (with physician referral) to help access, coordinate, & navigate medical services for those with complex, chronic health care needs.

### **Senior Nutrition and Transportation**

O3A contracts with local providers for congregate and home-delivered meals, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and Senior Volunteer Transportation services.

### **Long-Term Care Ombuds Program (LTCOP)**

Education & advocacy for the rights of those in nursing facilities & assisted living facilities.

**...And more!** Current initiatives include the MAV (Mobile Assistance Van), O3A Homeshare Project, ElliQ Companion Robot Project, and fall prevention programs.

Is there a topic related to healthy aging that you want to learn more about? If so, let us know!

Please send comments to [michelle.fogus@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:michelle.fogus@dshs.wa.gov)



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