Winter is upon us and for our seniors this can be a tough time. To save money, a lot of us watch the thermostat like hawks. Seniors doing the same thing can endanger themselves because they often don’t realize when they’re cold. Instead, they chalk up symptoms of hypothermia such as confusion, clumsiness and slowed speech as normal signs of aging and not something more serious. There are ways to prevent this from happening.

- Don’t set the thermostat below 65– even at night.
- Install programmable thermostats to regulate the temperature and save on energy.
- Shutting off unused rooms will help keep lived-in areas of the house warmer and also keep energy costs down.
- Avoid giving in to the temptation of space heaters. Space heaters come with a dual risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Keep the heat indoors by making sure drafts are blocked and windows are insulated.
Support Groups

Alzheimer’s Support Groups  
4th Wednesday at 7-8:30 PM  
Seneca Hill Manor Adult Day Care Room  
20 Manor Drive, Oswego  
Contact Kathy Cocciole  
@ 349-5344  
4th Monday at 7 PM  
Divine Mercy Church Parish  
Route 11, Central Square  
Contact Gail Lauricella  
@ 676-7533

Caregiver Support Group  
1st Tuesday of each month @ 3-5PM  
Park United Methodist Church  
2 Hubble Street, Pulaski  
Contact Elizabeth Weimer  
@ 349-3570

Hope for the Bereaved Group  
2nd Friday at 7 PM  
Fulton Mill Apartments  
265 West 1st Street South, Fulton  
Contact Myrtle Craw  
@ 593-6831

Caregiver Support Group  
2nd Thursday of each month @ 3-5pm  
357 State Street, Fulton NY  
Contact: Elizabeth Weimer @349-3570

Support for the Grieving  
Call for date and time  
Mount Pleasant United Methodist Church  
2819 County Route 45, Fulton  
Contact David Grey @ 598-6738

Mental Illness Education & Family Support (LIGHT)  
Every other Tuesday 3-4:30 PM  
Oswego Behavioral Health  
74 Bunner Street, Oswego  
Contact @ 349-5500

Oswego Hospital Bereavement Support Group  
Meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month  
7-9pm Hospital Cafeteria Conference Room  
Contact Donna Lupien @342-6326

Parkinson Support Group  
2nd Tuesday of each month @ 5-6:30PM  
1st Monday of each month @ 12:30-2:30 PM  
The Hearth at Greenpoint  
150 Old Liverpool Road, Liverpool  
Contact Cynthia @ 435-2362 X 140

Cancer Support (groups for Caregivers & Patients)  
1st and 3rd Monday @ 4  
Hematology Oncology Associates of CNY  
5008 Brittonfield Pkwy 3rd Floor, East Syracuse  
Contact @ 472-7504
“Respite: Care for Caregivers”

Respite- the chance to take a breather, the opportunity to reenergize-is as important as any other item on your caregiver’s to-do list. People think of respite as a luxury, but considering caregivers’ increased risk for health issues from chronic stress, those risks are a lot costlier than some time away to recharge. Respite is the key to your own well-being. Respite protects your own health, strengthens family relationships, prevents burn-out and allows your loved one to stay at home up to three times longer. No wonder respite is one of the most frequently requested support services for family caregivers.

R is for “Rest and Relaxation”
Everyone needs a little “R and R”- especially family caregivers. Relaxing is the best way to _refreshed_ to handle your many responsibilities as a caregiver.

E is for “Energize”
Caregiving is often round-the-clock 24/7. _Respite_ isn’t simply “getting a few hours off”. It’s necessary to help you reenergize, reduce stress and provide care for your loved one.

S is for “Sleep”
Caregivers often have sleep problems. _Address_ sleep problems and insomnia before they take too great a toll on your health.

P is for “Programs that can help you”
Respite-which can be in the home or out of the home-can be hard to find but there are _programs available to help you_.

I is for “Imagination”
Let your mind run free; read a book; see a movie. You have been so occupied with the nuts-and-bolts of caregiving that _refreshing your mind_ will actually help you to be a better caregiver.

T is for “Take Five”
… or better yet, take ten. Do you find yourself saying, “I wish I had just ten minutes to myself”? Don’t feel guilty. You need a reprieve- a few minutes to temporarily disengage.

E is for “Exhale”
A simple breath in and then a long exhale can help you focus and increase your vitality. A few _deep breaths_ can give you more energy, reduce stress, and lift your mood.
Winter Safety Tips

1. Listen to weather reports regularly and take note of bad weather on the horizon.

2. Have a battery-powered radio and extra batteries so you can still listen to the weather reports.

3. Stock up on fresh water and dried or canned food.

4. Set up a buddy system with a neighbor who will check in on you in case of a storm; give them a list of your emergency contacts.

5. If you have a caregiver, make sure there is an emergency plan in place if your caregiver is unable to get to you due to bad weather.

6. Find out if your local pharmacy and grocery store make deliveries.

7. If you use a motorized wheelchair or scooter, think about getting a back up battery or have a backup such as a cane or walker.

8. Have at least a seven-day supply of your medications with you. If you use oxygen have an emergency supply to last you three days or more.

9. For all your medical equipment that requires a power source, check with your medical supply company about a backup power source.

10. Keep walkways and steps around your home clear of debris to help prevent slips and falls.

11. Use salt and sand on driveways and sidewalks in the winter to melt snow. Have a plan in place of someone that can assist with shoveling or clearing pathways.

12. Make sure your gutters are clean to prevent leaks in your house.

13. If you drive, winterize your car by checking antifreeze levels, tire tread and pressure and check your windshield wipers and washer fluid. Stock your car with some emergency supplies as well.

14. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Always take a cell phone if you have one.

15. If you need to go outside in cold weather, bundle up in layers of clothing, and wear a hat, scarf and gloves. Wear appropriate shoes with good tread.

16. Have flashlights with batteries as an emergency light source in case power goes out.

17. If you have a pet, have an extra supply of pet food.
Helping seniors beat the holiday blues.

For most of us, the holidays are a wonderful time of the year. But for many seniors the holidays can be highly stressful, confusing or even depressing. There are many influences that contribute to seniors being at risk for the “Holiday Blues”.

Many seniors face loneliness. Even if family members live in the same city, adult children often become so busy with their own lives and social obligations during the holidays that they fail to recognize how much their parents/grandparents look forward to spending time with them.

Another contributing factor for the “Holiday Blues” is that so many seniors have outlived cherished friends and family members and often the holidays remind them of these losses.

Here are some simple tips to assist a senior with the Holiday Season.

- **Stroll down memory lane.** You can use photo albums, music and food to remind someone with memory issues of holidays past. Encourage your loved one to talk of their holiday memories.

- **Plan ahead.** If the senior tires easily, consider having a place where they can escape the excitement of the days activities for some quiet “down time”. You may also want to assign someone in the family to be the senior’s companion for the day to make sure that the person is comfortable.

- **Eliminate obstacles.** If you are having the holiday gathering at a person’s home with memory impairment, don’t rearrange the furniture and if possible avoid moving items around. This could be a source of confusion and anxiety for the person.

- **Avoid Embarrassing moments.** Try to avoid making comments that could embarrass a senior with short term memory issues. For example, don’t make things embarrassing for them by saying “Don’t you remember?”

- **Get out of the house.** Seniors need new things to anticipate. Get out and participate in activities that are free such as taking a drive to look at holiday decorations, window shopping at the mall or attending holiday concerts.

- **Be inclusive in meal preparation.** Involve your senior in the holiday meal preparation by breaking down the tasks. Have your senior assist with peeling vegetables, greasing a pan, folding napkins or arranging flowers. This gives them a sense of belonging and assisting for the holiday.

- **Reach out.** Loneliness is abundant during the holiday season. Encourage your loved one to invite friends over for holiday treats, or participate in a holiday activity such as a senior luncheon or sing-a-long.

- **Monitor medications and alcohol.** Be sure to keep older adults on their regular medication schedule and be aware of medications that may be affected by alcohol consumption.
Updates

- **Home Delivered Meals Volunteers Needed**  Volunteers are the heart of the program and their daily visits contribute to the general well being of home bound seniors every bit as much as the nutritious meal they deliver. Please consider volunteering daily, weekly or even just once or twice a month. For more information please contact Chris Parks, Volunteer Coordinator at (315) 598-4712 ext. 1807.

- **Heating and Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)**  HEAP, the federally funded energy program that assists low income families with their home energy bills, opened November 16, 2015. Anyone age 60+ or receiving disability benefits and in need of heating assistance can contact the OFA to request an application at 349-3484. It you are out of fuel or have received a shut off notice, Emergency HEAP will be available beginning January 4, 2016 by calling the Emergency Assistance number at the Department of Social Services, 963-5021.

- **Medicare**  Open enrollment ended December 7th but if you are having issues with your insurance, you may qualify for a special enrollment period. Contact the OFA at 349-3483 and speak with one of our insurance counselors to discuss your options.

- **Senior Citizen of the Year Nominations**  Oswego County Office for the Aging is accepting nominations for Senior Citizen of the Year. The name of the person selected will also be nominated for the New York State Senior Citizen of the Year and will be eligible to travel to Albany in May for a recognition luncheon. Nomination applications are available by contacting the Office for the Aging at 349-3484.

- **Caregiver Support Group Schedule:**
  - **Pulaski:**  1/5, 2/2, 3/1
  - **Fulton:**  1/14, 2/11, 3/10
  Support Groups are held from 3-5pm and are FREE. For more information call Elizabeth Weimer @ 349-3570.

- Care-giver’s Book Loan Program— there are many books available at our office to be signed out for free. Stop in today and check out our Book Loan Program.

- **P.A.L.S. (Pulaski Assisting Local Seniors)**  Are you looking for an opportunity to volunteer? P.A.L.S. is looking for volunteers to help local Pulaski Seniors. Check out their next meeting on January 25th at 7pm, back room of Stefano’s Pizza Shop in Pulaski, NY. You may also contact them via phone at (315) 509-4313 or check out their Facebook page.
Updates Continued

- Oswego County officially is a NY Connects County. What is NY Connects you ask? NY Connects is a way to receive information and assistance on Long Term Services and Supports available in New York. The new statewide resource directory: http://www.nyconnects.ny.gov/ allows individuals to directly search for and learn about applying for public benefits, available home care services and much more. There is also a new toll free number 1-800-342-9871, which routes callers to the appropriate County to obtain information on available long term services and supports.

- **Office For The Aging is on Facebook**! Have you checked out the Office for the Aging Facebook page? There are updates posted and interesting articles, please check it out and like the page.

- **Office for the Aging also has a website**. [www.oswegocounty.com/ofa](http://www.oswegocounty.com/ofa)

**Upcoming Events in Oswego County**

Here is a brief listing of some upcoming community events/festivals.

- **Salmon River Winter Festival** (FREE) in Pulaski Jan. 29th, 30th and 31st. Contact information: [www.halfshire.com](http://www.halfshire.com)

- **Oswego Fire and Ice Festival** (FREE) in Oswego Feb 6th. Contact information: warmuposwegofestival@gmail.com or (315) 719-4494.

- **Oswego Wing Festival** (costs money) Oswego Feb 12th from 5-9pm at the Lake Ontario Conference Center. Contact information: 342-4040.

- Also available on the county website is a calendar of events in Oswego County listed by month. [http://visitoswegocounty.com/more-to-see-do/calendar/](http://visitoswegocounty.com/more-to-see-do/calendar/)

- A listing of Oswego school events, sporting events, city and college events can also be found at: [http://www.iheartoswego.com](http://www.iheartoswego.com)

**Funding Provided in part by, the NYS Office for the Aging, the US Administration on Aging and Oswego County**