COA

Council on Aging

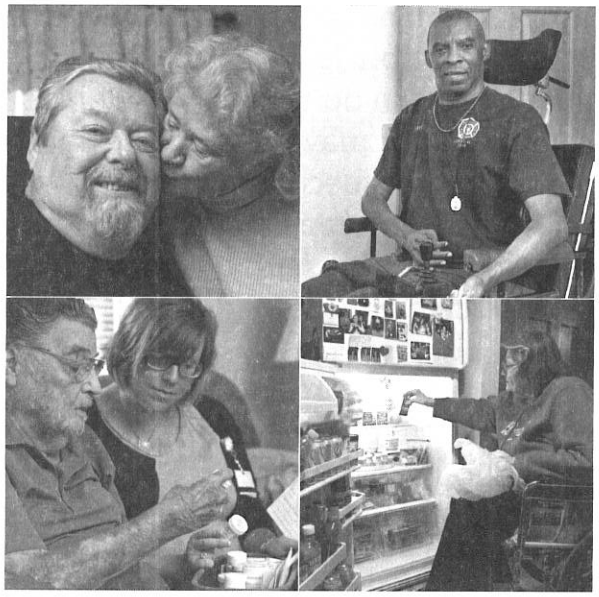
Your Safety First:
Information to help you stay safe and healthy at home

Fall Prevention, Frauds and Scams, Emergency Preparedness and other Household Safety tips

In southwest Ohio, more than 20,000 older adults and people with disabilities receive care in their homes and communities through the Elderly Services Program, PASSPORT, Ohio Home Care Waiver and the Assisted Living Waiver.

Older adults and people with disabilities have a higher risk of being injured at home, needing assistance during an emergency, and falling vicitim to frauds and scams.

The information in this booklet is intended to help you stay safe and healthy in your home or your caregiver's home. Please review it carefully and contact us if you have any questions.



Organization Name:	Contact if you recieve services through:	Phone and Website:
Council on Aging (COA)	• Assisted Living Waiver • Elderly Services Program (Clinton and Hamilton counties) • General Information and Referral • MyCare Ohio • Ohio Home Care Waiver • PASSPORT	(513) 721-1025 (800) 252-0155 www.help4seniors.org
LifeSpan	Butler County Elderly Services Program	(513) 868-9281 (800) 215-5305 www.lifespanohio.org
Warren County Community Services, Inc.	Warren County Elderly Services Program	(513) 695-2271 www.wccsi.org

About Council on Aging

Council on Aging is a state-designated Area Agency on Aging, serving a 21-county region. **Our mission:** *Enhance people's lives by assisting them to remain independent at home through a range of quality services.*

Contact Us: (513) 721-1025 | (800) 252-0155 | www.help4seniors.org

Fall Prevention Tips

Falls are the number one cause of injuries leading to ER visits, hospital stays and deaths among Ohioans age 65 and older.

But, falling is not a natural part of aging and most falls can be prevented. Knowing and managing your fall risk factors can help prevent falls and reduce your fear of falling so you can live an active, independent life.

We want to help you prevent a fall. Each year, your care manager will talk with you about your risk factors for a fall and some simple things you can do to reduce that risk. Your care manager may recommend safety modifications, special equipment or additional services and therapies that could reduce your risk of falling. These things may be covered by Medicare and/or Medicaid.

Fall prevention around your home:

Most falls are preventable and there are things you can do to reduce your risk of falling at home.

1. Secure loose rugs with double-sided tape, tacks, or slip-resistant backing.
2. Use night lights and light bulbs with the maximum wattage safe for your light fixtures. Install a night light along the route between your bedroom and bathroom.
3. If your home has stairs, repair loose stairway carpeting or wooden boards. Do not store items in stairwells or hang items on hand rails.
4. Arrange furniture so you have a clear pathway between rooms. Also, keep electric, appliance and telephone cords out of walkways, but do not put cords under a rug.
5. Make sure your floors are free of clutter.

Fall Prevention Tip:
Install a night light along the route between your bedroom and bathroom.

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6. Place a lamp, telephone or flashlight near your bed. If you wear glasses, keep them close by at night or when you are napping.
7. Use slip-resistant rugs in your bathroom, especially next to the tub or shower.
8. Store food, dishes, cooking equipment and other frequently-used items within easy reach.
9. Clean up spills as soon as they happen.
10. If you have a LifeLine or emergency response device, wear it at all times.

Other tips around the home:

- Consider purchasing a cordless phone or answering machine so you don't have to get up quickly to answer the phone.
- Consider purchasing a sturdy step stool with side rails.
- Add extensions to pull cords on lights and ceiling fans so they are easy to reach.
- Use caution on icy, slippery or uneven surfaces.
- At home or out and about, wear proper clothing and footwear. This includes shorter pants, skirts and bathrobes, and supportive rubber-soled, low-heeled shoes.

Fall Prevention Tips continued...

Stay healthy to prevent falls:

- Stay active to help build muscle and bone strength and improve balance. Talk to your doctor or care manager about simple exercises and activities you can do in your home.
- Review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist annually for side effects that may increase your risk of falling - especially if you are taking four or more medications.
- Get your vision and hearing checked annually and update your eyeglasses.
- Don't rush! Take your time, especially when getting out of bed or standing up if you have been lying down or sitting for an extended period of time.
- Stay hydrated to prevent low blood pressure, fatigue and confusion. Drink 6-8 glasses of non-alcoholic liquids each day.
- Eat a well-balanced diet with a variety of vegetables and calcium-rich foods like yogurt, cheese, milk, orange juice, tofu and calcium-fortified cereals to promote your health.

In addition to the tips on this fact sheet, be sure to talk to your care manager or doctor if you can answer "yes" to any of the following questions. You may be eligible for services, home modifications or equipment that could help prevent a fall.

- Are you taking four or more medications?
- Do you have difficulty standing in the shower?
- Do you have difficultly standing up or sitting down at a chair, bed or the toilet?
- Do you use furniture (chairs, tables, dressers) to steady yourself as you walk around?
- Do you use the towel bar in your bathroom to help you get up and down from the toilet or in and out of the bath/ shower?
- Do you stand on a chair or box to reach items that are out-of-reach?
- Do you have difficultly with household chores such as sweeping, laundry and cleaning high or low spaces?

STEADY U OHIO

Council on Aging is a proud participant in Ohio's STEADY U campaign. STEADY U is a statewide fall prevention campaign led by the Ohio Department of Aging to prevent falls and fall-related injuries and deaths among Ohio's older adults. More information is available at www.steadyu.ohio.gov.

Preventing Falls... One Step at a Time

Protecting You from Frauds, Scams and Exploitation

Learn what you can do to protect yourself from people who target older adults and people with disabilities for frauds, scams and financial exploitation.

Workers from Council on Aging, the Elderly Services Program, PASSPORT, the Ohio Home Care Waiver and the Assisted Living Waiver will always have an identification badge with their picture and the name of the organization they work for. They will also have business cards with their names and contact information. Ask for identification and look for one of the logos below if someone says they represent one of the above mentioned programs or organizations.

COA Council on Aging of Southwestern Ohio

ESP Elderly Services Program

Our workers may ask for some information about your finances for the purposes of program enrollment and eligibility, but they will not ask for payment, write down account numbers, or share any of your personal information without your permission.

Service providers, such as those from home health, transportation or home-delivered meals, are also required to wear a badge. These providers will not ask for payment or to see your income or medical expense information.

LifeSpan

WCCS Warren County Community Services Inc

Common scams:

- Living Trusts
- Funeral Plans
- Sweepstakes
- Charity Campaigns
- Medical Equipment
- Medicare and Other Insurance
- Home Improvements and Repairs
- Do not accept offers of free medical equipment or respond to door-to-door sales people who sell medical equipment. Only your doctor can prescribe medical equipment for you.

Protection tips:

1. **Be skeptical and wary of strangers at your door**
   - Even if someone claims to be associated with an agency you know, ask to see identification. Feel free to call the organization to check. (Tell the person to wait outside.)
   - Remember that representatives from Medicare and Medicaid do not make house calls or solicit beneficiaries by telephone.
2. **Be skeptical and wary of calls or emails from strangers**
   - Do not make decisions under pressure of a limited-time offer. Ask for written information. Never accept free medical equipment or services in exchange for your Medicare number.
   - Services that are truly free do not need your Medicare number.
   - Don't give personal information over the phone, internet, mail or in person to an unfamiliar company or person –

Frauds, Scams and Exploitation tips continued...

even if you're told it's "just for verification purposes."

- Treat your Medicare or Medicaid number as you do your credit card. Never give your number over the telephone or internet to strangers.

3. **Guard your important documents**
   - Retrieve mail daily – or have someone you trust do it.
   - Don't leave checkbooks, etc. lying about.
   - Destroy unneeded financial documents.
4. **Be cautious about payments and lending**
   - Pay only for services rendered. For example, do not pay in advance for home repairs.
   - Do not allow someone to write checks for you unless you have formally authorized them to do so. (e.g. Guardianship, Representative or Protective Payee, Power of Attorney and Durable POA)
   - Do not lend money or belongings to someone working for you.
5. **Do your homework when hiring home health help**

   For guidance go to: aging.ohio.gov/news/boomerang/2009September/myfamily.asp
6. **Get more information:**
   - **Ohio Hopes:** ohiohopes.org or 1-800-411-2267
   - **Ohio Department of Job and Family Services:** jfs.ohio.gov/factsheets/APS_FactSheet.pdf
   - **Ohio Department of Insurance:** insurance.ohio.gov or 1-800-686-1527
   - **Council on Aging:** help4seniors.org (click on Resource Directory, then Health and Safety) or 1-800-252-0155
   - **Ohio Attorney General:** OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov or 1-800-282-0515
   - **Medicare Fraud:** 1-800-447-8477 or stopmedicarefraud.gov
   - **National Do Not Call Registry:** donotcall.gov or 1-888-382-1222

Where to report:

Report fraud and scam attempts to your local police department. Report abuse, neglect and exploitation to your county adult protective services (APS) office:

- **Butler County APS: (513) 887-4081**
- **Clermont County APS: (513) 732-7173**
- **Clinton County APS: (937) 382-5935 or (937) 382-2449 (24-hr)**
- **Greene County APS: (937) 562-6315**
- **Hamilton County APS: 513-421-LIFE (5433)**
- **Montgomery County APS: (937) 225-4906**
- **Warren County APS: 513-695-1423**

Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies are often unexpected, but there are things you can do now to ensure your safety and comfort.

As someone who receives in-home care services, we want to help you understand what you can do to prepare for an unexpected emergency or disaster, such as a winter storm or power outage.

Putting aside a few things now will help ensure your safety and comfort during an emergency.

Emergency Preparedness:

1. Get a Kit
2. Make a Plan
3. Stay Informed

Stay informed!

Before, during and after an emergency, it is important to stay informed:

- listen to weather reports or local news
- listen for emergency sirens
- consider having a weather radio or a battery powered radio with back-up batteries

Make an emergency supply kit

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for an emergency is to set aside an emergency supply kit.

Here are some items to consider when you are creating an emergency supply kit:

1. Non-perishable food (boxed or canned) that does not require use of electricity to prepare or open. Enough for three days.
2. Bottled water: at least one gallon per person, per day for drinking and sanitation.
3. Extra blankets
4. Battery powered equipment such as a flash light and radio. Don't forget extra batteries!
5. If you have pets, set aside an extra supply of food and water.
6. If you rely on medications or medical supplies, such as oxygen, it's a good idea to have a back-up supply available during an emergency.
7. Make copies of important documents, including insurance information, social security card, Medicare and Medicaid information, a list of prescription medication and other medical equipment and supplies you use on a regular basis. Put these items in a sealed plastic baggie to protect them.
8. A list of your emergency contacts: nearby family or friends who may be able to assist you in an emergency.

Make a plan for what you will do in an emergency. Things to consider:

- Who will you contact if you need help (family, friends, a neighbor, the fire department)? How will you contact them?
- Can you safely stay in your home if the power is out for a prolonged period of time? If not, where will you go and how will you get there?
- If you have a communication disability, make sure your emergency plan explains the best way to communicate with you.

Emergency Preparedness tips continued...

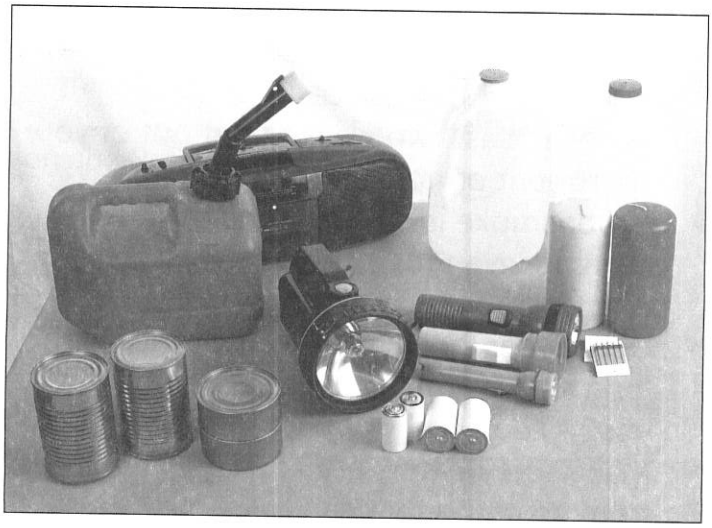
- Do you have any special medical needs that may put you at risk during an emergency?
- If you have special medical needs or you think you would need help to leave your home during an emergency, contact your local fire department or emergency management agency BEFORE AN EMERGENCY to let them know. They may add you to a list of other people who will need special assistance during an emergency.

Create a personal support network. Things to consider:

- If you think you'll need help during an emergency, talk to family, friends and others who will be part of your plan and support network.
- Write down and share information about your special needs with people in your support network. Teach those who will help you how to use any lifesaving equipment and administer medicine in case of an emergency.
- Make a plan for how to stay in touch with your support network during an emergency.
- Make sure that someone in your local network has an extra key to your home and knows where you keep your emergency supplies, medications and medical equipment.
- Remember your pets! Identify someone in your local support network who may be able to help take care of your pets - especially if you need to leave your home and can't take your pets.

Gather information about your medications and medical supplies. Things to consider:

- If you take medicine or use a medical treatment on a daily basis, try to gather a back-up supply that will last several days. If you are unable to obtain a back-up supply, be sure to always fill prescriptions on the first day you become eligible for a refill, rather than waiting until the day you run out.
- Keep written copies of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and orders for medical equipment in your emergency kit.
- If you undergo routine treatments administered by a clinic or hospital, talk to your service provider about what you can do if you are unable to get to your treatments.
- Consider other personal needs such as eyeglasses, hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, wheelchair batteries and oxygen.



References and More Information:

Ready.gov: www.ready.gov/seniors

Additional Safety Information

The following information is from the American Geriatrics Society Foundation for Health in Aging: healthinaging.org

Keep Emergency Numbers Handy

Always keep a list of emergency numbers by each phone and write them big enough that you could read it easily if you were in a hurry or frightened. Be sure to list numbers for:

- Local Emergency Services (if other than 911)
- Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Family member or friend to call in case of emergency
- Doctor's office

Protect Against Fire and Related Dangers

- Replace appliances with fraying or damaged electrical cords.
- Don't put too many electric cords into one socket.
- Install a smoke detector and replace the battery each time you change your clocks for Daylight Savings Time.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and in rooms with fireplaces.
- Know at least two ways to get out of your apartment or home.
- Never smoke in bed or leave candles burning, even for a short time, in an empty room.
- Don't wear loose clothes or clothes with long sleeves that could catch fire when you're cooking.
- Make sure heaters are at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn, such as curtains, bedding or furniture.
- Turn off space heaters when you leave the room.

Avoid Bathroom Hazards

- Set the thermostat on the water heater no higher than 120°F to prevent scalding.
- Have grab bars installed in the shower and near the toilet to make getting around easier and safer.
- Put rubber mats in the bathtub to prevent slipping.
- Tell your doctor if you are having a hard time getting in and out of your tub. Your doctor can help you get a special tub chair or bench that is safe to use.

Prevent Poisoning

- Never try to heat your home with your stove, oven, or grill since these can give off carbon monoxide, which is a gas that you cannot see or smell, but is deadly.
- Make sure there is a carbon monoxide detector near all bedrooms, and be sure to test and replace the battery twice a year.
- Keep all medications in their original containers so you don't mix up medicines.
- Ask your pharmacist to put large-print labels on your medications to make them easier to read.
- Take your medications in a well-lit room, so you can see the labels.
- Bring all of your pill bottles with you to your doctor's appointments so he or she can look at them and make sure you are taking them the correct way.
- Never mix bleach, ammonia or other cleaning liquids together when you are cleaning. When mixed, cleaning liquids can make deadly gases.