



MOVING FORWARD

THE NEWSLETTER OF ROCKLAND COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGING
ED DAY, COUNTY EXECUTIVE
CHERYL DEAN WARD, DIRECTOR

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024

OFFICE FOR THE AGING UPCOMING EVENTS

MEDICARE 2025

A HIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling, and Assistance Program) Counselor will offer presentations on Medicare with a focus on upcoming changes to Medicare for 2025. The program will include a review of the various assistance programs available for eligible Medicare recipients. HIICAP & NY Connects Staff will be on-site to assist with EPIC, Medicare Savings Program, Medicaid, HEAP, and SNAP applications.

Programs are subject to change; registrants will be notified of any change.

NOV 14 – 11:00am - 12:00pm

An in-person presentation in partnership with
ROSE MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Call the library to register 845-786-2100

or register online at

<https://rmla-ny.whofi.com/calendar/embed>



NOV 20 – 2:00pm - 3:00pm (Chair Yoga)

In partnership with
SUFFERN FREE LIBRARY

Call the library to register 845-357-1237

or register online at

<https://www.suffernfreelibrary.org/visit/event-calendar/>



Hello Friends!

I am proud to share +200 residents are now better prepared for an emergency thanks to attending our recent Citizen Preparedness Training hosted by our Office for the Aging in tandem with New York State. As a former police commander, I can say with certainty being prepared helps us protect not only ourselves but our neighbors, loved ones, and community.

Every household should always:

- Create an emergency plan.
- Assemble an emergency kit.
- Have emergency drills at home.

For more info on future Citizen Preparedness Trainings, contact the New York State Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services at 518-242-5000.

OFA's recent Cyber Security Awareness Training was also a hit. It underscored safety tips including using strong passwords, being cautious with emails and links, & watching out for scams by phone call or email asking for money or personal information.

We wish everyone a safe and healthy holiday season through the New Year!

All the best,

Ed

Ed Day, Rockland County Executive

Meet the Rockland County Office for the Aging's Assessment Team.

(L-R) David, Caseworker; Chantal, Community Client Services Asst; Kerry, Senior Caseworker; Catherine, Caseworker; and Cydney, Caseworker. We do the in-home assessments for older adults in need of Personal Care, Home Delivered Meals, Personal Emergency Response Systems, and Social Adult Day Services, as well as assess informal caregivers of older adults to assist with their caregiver needs. We also provide animatronic pets for qualifying older adults with dementia, cognitive impairments or who need reminders to use their walker.



News From the OFA!



Director Cheryl Ward

It's amazing to think I began working as Director of the Office for the Aging eight weeks ago. I am humbled to have been chosen to lead this office into the future and I look forward to working with the dedicated staff here at the OFA. I have always known this office was responsible for impacting the lives of so many older adults of Rockland County, however I am in awe of the tremendous scope of services provided by a small team of caring individuals each with unique skills and talents.

As a lifelong resident of Rockland County, I am elated to serve the people of Rockland, especially the older population, a group of people I am most passionate about. Many years ago, as I pursued my degrees in Gerontology and Recreation & Leisure, I completed my college internship at Rockland's Summit Park Nursing Home; my career has truly come full circle.

We are currently in the midst of Medicare Open Enrollment, which continues until December 7th. Our HIICAP (Health Insurance Information, Counseling, and Assistance Program) Team is working along with the NY Connects Team to make sure you get all your questions answered for your 2025 Medicare coverage. HIICAP can be reached at 845-364-2118. We experience a high call volume during this time, so please leave a message and someone will return your call.

Looking forward to meeting many of you over the next several months. The Office for the Aging wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday season!

Best Regards,

Cheryl Ward

Director, Rockland County Office for the Aging



NY Connects
Your Link to Long Term Services and Supports

NY Connects is a service that provides information and assistance about long-term services and supports in Rockland County. This includes a child or an adult with a disability, an older adult, a family member or caregiver, a friend or neighbor, and helping professionals.

A NY CONNECTS SPECIALIST CAN BE REACHED BY PHONE AT 845-364-3444



County Executive Ed Day with OFA Director Cheryl Ward and our amazing RSVP clowns at Rockland County YouthFest.



RSVP clown with children at YouthFest, Director Ward at our Fall Fitness event, Haverstraw Bay Park.



Deputy County Executive Mike Hoblin at our Cybersecurity Awareness Presentation.



Game Day at the OFA.



MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT UPDATE

October 15th-December 7th

Medicare Open Enrollment began on October 15th and runs until December 7th. We experience a high call volume during this time, we appreciate your patience in returning your calls. If you are looking for immediate assistance, Medicare (1-800-633-4227) is available 24 hours/day 7 days/week and can assist with any questions you may have.

At the time of printing, the Part B premium and deductible amounts for 2025 have not yet been announced.

The 2025 monthly premiums for Part D plans range from \$38.40-\$170.40. There are 2 plans offering a \$0 deductible with premiums for these plans starting at \$113.70. SilverScript Plus, SilverScript SmartSaver, and AARP Medicare Rx Walgreens have been terminated for 2025. Prescription out-of-pocket expenses will be capped at \$2000. All Part D plans will be offering a payment plan option to assist with managing

prescription copayments. Contact your Part D plan for more details on how these changes will affect you.

Medigap pricing for 2025 is not yet available. That information is expected to be released sometime in November. It is important to note, Medigap policies in NY are not subject to the Open Enrollment dates so if you'd like to make a change to your plan, you may do so at any time of year.

There are a total of 25 Medicare Advantage Plans with drug coverage being offered in Rockland; 10 plans have a \$0 monthly premium. These numbers do not include any Special Needs or Medicare/Medicaid dual plans. Plan terminations include Aetna Medicare Discover Value Plan (PPO), Aetna Medicare Platinum Plan (PPO), AARP Medicare Advantage from UHC NY-0002 (HMO-POS), AARP Medicare Advantage from UHC NY-0004

(HMO-POS), Humana Choice 001, 015, & 018 (PPO's), UHC Medicare Advantage NY-0020 (Regional PPO), UHC Medicare Advantage NY-0022 (Regional PPO).

The key to finding the right Medicare Advantage Plan is to make sure the plan covers your providers and medications. Plans offer different additional benefits such as dental, vision, hearing, transportation, or an over-the-counter card. Reach out to the company prior to enrolling to discuss coverage details.

The "2025 Medicare Options" packet is available. The packet outlines Rockland's Medicare Advantage Plans and Medigap pricing. If you're interested in receiving this packet, please leave us a voicemail or email with your full name, phone number, and email address or mailing address to be sent a copy. If you need assistance reviewing plan options, please call to schedule an appointment.

DANA THIESING • ofa@co.rockland.ny.us • (845) 364-2118

SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR 2025 SENIOR CITIZEN AWARDS

Each year the County of Rockland recognizes two older adults who share their time, effort and expertise as volunteers in our communities. From the nominations submitted, the Advisory Council to the Office for the Aging will select AND RECOGNIZE one "Senior Citizen of the Year" and one "Outstanding Contribution by a Senior Citizen."

SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR is a Rockland resident aged 60 or over who volunteers by creating and/or planning programs that provide needed support services and activities that enhance the lives of older adults in the community.

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION BY A SENIOR CITIZEN will be awarded to a Rockland resident aged 60 or over who has made a positive and beneficial contribution to the older adults of the community.



For nomination forms, please visit our website www.rocklandcountyny.gov/ and search "Nomination." Nomination forms must be received by the Office for the Aging by January 31, 2025. For assistance finding the nomination form online, please call (845) 364-2100.

~ HEAP 2024-2025 ~

What is HEAP?

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) helps low-income people pay the cost of heating their homes. Eligibility is based on the number of people in the household and the total gross income calculated from all sources. Here are the HEAP Eligibility Guidelines for the 2024 – 2025 season:

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MAXIMUM GROSS MONTHLY INCOME
1	\$3,322
2	\$4,345
3	\$5,367
4	\$6,390
5	\$7,412
6	\$8,434
7	\$8,626
8	\$8,818
9	\$9,010

How does it work?

The Regular HEAP season opens November 1, 2024. If you are eligible, you may receive one Regular HEAP benefit per season. You may also be eligible for an Emergency HEAP benefit if you are in impending danger of running out of fuel or having your utility service shut off after January 2, 2025.

The Regular HEAP program only looks at gross household income, Regular HEAP does not look at your available resources (bank accounts or investments).

The Emergency HEAP program has a “resource test.” This means we need to ask you about money available in bank accounts or investment accounts before you are eligible for an Emergency HEAP benefit.

If you are eligible for a Regular HEAP benefit you may receive additional discounts from Orange & Rockland Utilities.

When a Regular HEAP benefit posts to your Orange & Rockland (O&R) account, it automatically enrolls you in their Energy Affordability Program (EAP). This program will deduct a significant amount off your O&R bill for the next 12 months. The amount deducted is based on the Regular HEAP benefit amount you receive. See <https://www.oru.com/en/accounts-billing/payment-assistance/new-york/energy-affordability> for more information.

Are HEAP benefits available year-round?

No, the application period normally begins in early to mid-November and continues until March, provided program funds don't run out. The 2024-2025 Regular HEAP season runs from November 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 or until program funds run out. Be sure to apply for Regular HEAP early; you don't need to be facing shutoff to apply for Regular HEAP.

Does it matter what my home's heating source is?

HEAP may be able to help you if you heat your home with: natural gas, electricity, oil, coal, propane, wood, or

corn. Your Regular HEAP and / or Emergency HEAP benefit amount will vary based on the fuel type you use.

What is the Clean and Tune Benefit?

The HEAP Clean & Tune benefit opened October 1, 2024 and will run until September 30, 2025. This program is only available to HEAP income eligible homeowners. The Clean and Tune program will clean the primary heating system once every 12 months. The heating system must be operational. The program also allows for the installation of a carbon monoxide detector if the house does not have one less than 5 years old, or the installation of a programmable thermostat. The program allows up to \$500 for the furnace cleaning and any minor repairs.

HEAP also has a program called HERR (Heating Equipment Repair or Replace) for eligible homeowners.

If a HEAP income eligible homeowner's primary heating system stops working, or is tagged as unsafe to operate, they can apply for the HERR program. HERR is an emergency program, so there is a resource test in addition to other requirements. Call the HEAP unit at 845-364-3486 to be screened for the HERR program if your primary heating system is not operational.

Rockland County Dept. of Social Services HEAP unit: 845-364-3486.

For assistance with HEAP applications call the Rockland County Office for the Aging: 845-364-2110.

NEW SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER OPEN IN HAVERSTRAW!

Any Rockland resident aged 60 and up who is able to participate in the program can join our senior centers located throughout the county.

SOCIALIZATION • ENTERTAINMENT • OUTINGS • TRANSPORTATION
DAILY HOT NUTRITIOUS LUNCH • SOCIAL WORK RESOURCES

Our new center is located at the Central Presbyterian Church of Haverstraw
89 Hudson Ave, Haverstraw, NY
Open Monday-Friday 10:00am-2:00pm



SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTERS

Together, We Thrive!



For information or to join:

Visit: www.mowrockland.org/services/senior-activity-centers/

Email: HaverstrawSAC@mowrockland.org Call: 845.624.6325

Services are funded in part by the Administration for Community Living, New York State Office for the Aging, and the Rockland County Office for the Aging. Contributions are voluntary and confidential and are used to expand the services for which they are received. No one will be denied services because of an inability or unwillingness to contribute.

- ROCKLAND COUNTY OFFICE OF CONSUMER PROTECTION -

Protecting Yourself from Contractor Scams: A Guide for Older Adults

Dear Readers,

As our community in Rockland County faces a troubling rise in contractor scams, it's essential to stay informed and vigilant, especially for our older adults. Scammers often target older adults, exploiting their trust and desire for home improvement. Here's what you need to know to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Understanding Contractor Scams

Contractor scams can take many forms, but they typically involve unscrupulous individuals posing as legitimate contractors. These individuals commonly approach homeowners at their door, soliciting work and explaining that they are working nearby (they likely are not working nearby). They may offer services at an unusually low price or pressure you to make quick decisions. Unfortunately, once they receive payment, they may disappear without completing the work—or worse, they may perform shoddy work that costs you even more to fix.

Common Red Flags

- 1. Unsolicited Offers:** Be wary of door-to-door contractors or those who approach you out of the blue. Reputable contractors usually don't solicit work in this manner.
- 2. High-Pressure Tactics:** If someone is pushing you to make a decision on the spot, it's a red flag. Take your time to think things through and consult with trusted family members or friends.
- 3. No Written Contract:** Always insist on a written contract that outlines the scope of work, payment schedule, and completion timeline. If a contractor refuses, walk away.
- 4. Requests for Large Upfront Payments:** Be cautious of contractors who demand a significant portion of the total cost upfront. A small deposit is reasonable (under Rockland County Law they can't take more than \$1,000.00), but never pay the full amount before the work is completed.
- 5. Lack of Credentials:** Verify that the contractor is licensed and insured. You can check with the Office of Consumer Protection to confirm their legitimacy.



Tips for Avoiding Scams

- **Do Your Research:** Get multiple estimates from different contractors and compare their credentials and reviews. The Office of Consumer Protection can provide you with a complaint history for a contractor. And a google search can provide insights into their reputation.
- **Take Notes:** Jot down information you might want to remember/have. Was the work vehicle lettered? Make a note of the license plate number. What did the individual look like? Was the interaction recorded on a home security camera? Never underestimate how useful this information might be in the future when trying to identify a scammer.
- **Ask for References:** Request contact information from previous clients. A trustworthy contractor will be happy to share their successes.
- **Consult Family and Friends:** Talk to your loved ones about any home improvement plans. They may have recommendations for reputable contractors they've used.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If something feels off or too good to be true, don't hesitate to walk away. Your safety and peace of mind are paramount.

What to Do If You've Been Scammed

If you believe you've fallen victim to a contractor scam, report it immediately. Contact the Office of Consumer Protection at 845-364-3901 or CPLCAL@co.rockland.ny.us. The sooner you act, the better your chances of recovering lost funds.

Final Thoughts

Staying informed is your best defense against contractor scams. By recognizing the warning signs and taking the necessary precautions, you can protect yourself and ensure your home improvement projects are handled safely and professionally. If you have any concerns or need assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to family members, friends, or local community resources. Stay safe and be vigilant and please share this information with others.

 NUTRITION

A Registered Dietitian's Healthy Eating Tips for the Holidays

The holidays have arrived—the time of year when we get together with family and friends to celebrate! Since many holiday festivities center around food, this time of year can be challenging for those attempting to eat healthy. However, going into the holidays with a plan and knowing what choices to make will help alleviate this added stress. Read on for a registered dietitian's healthy eating tips to navigate the holidays this year.

- 1. Start your day with a healthy breakfast.** Many people want to “save room” for the big holiday meals they are about to enjoy—sacrificing nutrition throughout the day. It is important to remember to maintain adequate nutrition and hydration during the day to maintain blood sugar levels, and prevent overeating later in the day.
- 2. Loop the buffet.** If you are at a gathering with a self-serve option, scope out your options. If there are foods that you know you look forward to having during the holidays, make sure to go for those options first. You can construct your meal with the foods you absolutely want and not end up with extras you may feel obligated to pick. If there are many options that you look to enjoy, start with a small portion of each. Wait a few minutes after you are finished eating, and if there is something you want more of, honor that choice. After all, the holidays only come around once a year! Having smaller portions of multiple items can ensure that you are satisfied and not craving more, which can lead to overeating, feeling bloated, and sluggish.
- 3. Bring a healthy dish.** When attending a party or gathering at a friend or family member's home,



volunteer to bring a dish. This way you can prepare something you know is a healthy option. So if you get to the party and realize there are no healthy options to choose from, you know you have your accompaniment to enjoy. You can also pair it with the other foods you like to eat this time of year.

- 4. Provide healthy options.** If you are hosting this year, be sure to provide healthy options for you and your guests to enjoy. Adding fruits or vegetables to your appetizer menu with a dip or spread can encourage everyone to make a healthy choice. Also be sure to include water, in addition to other non-alcoholic options, to ensure you are staying hydrated. This can also help control hunger and prevent overeating.
- 5. Incorporate activity.** To help promote digestion, incorporate movement after you eat. This can look different for everyone. Maybe step outside for some fresh air with a friend and walk and talk for a few minutes. Consider walking the family dog. Or volunteer to help wash dishes. This way you are including some type of movement to promote digestion of the big meal you ate!
- 6. Remember why you are there:** to spend quality time with those you love. Try to make a point of focusing on the experience and enjoying the time you are spending with the people you care about most. When you make it less about food, you may be less likely to overindulge.

Healthy eating can be difficult over the holiday season, but that doesn't mean it's impossible.

Source: <https://counselingwellnesspgh.com/a-registered-dietitians-healthy-eating-tips-for-the-holidays/>

Five Simple Steps to Create a Safer Environment for Older Adults

by Brett Brenner, Today's Caregiver

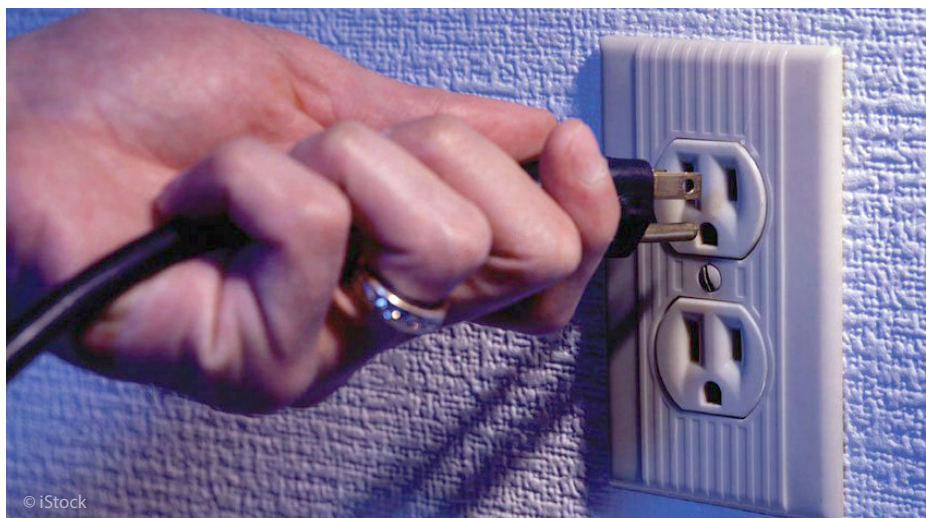
Electricity is such a common part of our everyday lives. Many wake up each morning to the sound of an alarm clock and then proceed to turn on lights around the house before using a whole host of other electrical appliances throughout the day. It's our norm. Yet in spite of the safety, comfort and entertainment electricity provides, electrical accidents are a leading cause of home fires every year.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), adults over 65 have the highest risk of death from fire, and the risk only increases with age. For those 75 and over, the risk is 2.8 times higher than the general population. What's more, many older adults have remained in the same home for an extended period of time, and electrical fires are more common in older homes with aging electrical systems.

In honor of National Electrical Safety Month in May and on behalf of the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), I encourage caregivers to familiarize themselves with some basic tips to help maximize the safety of the seniors in their care while minimizing the risks associated with electricity.

1. Verify that the home's electrical system is in compliance with the most up to date electrical codes. Contact a licensed electrician to conduct a quick home electrical safety inspection. The electrician should determine the following:

- Circuit breaker panel board is properly labeled. When the power goes out in a specific section of the home, labels serve as a quick way to know which breaker to flip to restore power.
- Circuit breaker has a detection system designed to prevent fires. This is commonly known as an arc-fault circuit interrupter



(AFCI) and can detect a circuit breakdown and disconnect the power before a fire erupts.

- Wall outlets should also include detection devices such as a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI), which can detect an imbalance or leakage of electrical currents that can cause lethal shock.
- Let the electrician know if you're noticing any of the following: frequently blown fuses or tripped circuit breakers; a tingling feeling or slight shock when you touch an appliance; outlets and/or switches that are warm or make crackling, sizzling or buzzing noises; or flickering or dimming lights.

2. Make sure the home is properly lit. Install night lights near stairways, walkways and other areas to ensure they are illuminated to avoid tripping hazards. Lamps should be easily accessible in seating areas and in bedrooms and touch-lamps are especially useful to seniors. Make sure light bulbs are the appropriate wattages for night lights and lamps, and consider using fluorescent bulbs as they consume less energy.

3. Set calendar reminders to routinely check the performance of

detection devices. Press the "test" buttons on GFCIs, AFCIs and smoke detectors. You should replace smoke detectors that are more than 10 years old and replace batteries at least once a year.

4. Ensure that outlets and power cords are properly loaded. No more than two appliances should occupy a single outlet as overloaded outlets can easily overheat and start a fire. Also, check electrical cords for signs of damage and never run cords under rugs or carpets or pinch them under furniture, doors or windows.

5. Only use electric products that are certified by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). The "UL" mark indicates that the product has been tested and approved for safety. Be cautious of counterfeit electrical products, which are often sold at deep-discount stores. They may have erroneous UL labels. Look for spelling errors on the product packaging as a red flag that the product may be counterfeit.

For more information and tools to keep seniors safe, visit the Electrical Safety Foundation website, <https://www.esfi.org/>.

Fire Safety: What You Need to Know

As we grow older, our bodies change: poor eyesight, loss of hearing, arthritis, dementia, and side effects from medicine we are taking among other things can make it harder to react to a fire. Unfortunately, people ages 65 and over have an increased risk of dying in a home fire. In fact, in 2020, older adults (65+) in the United States had a 2.5 times greater risk of dying in a fire than the total population.

Here are some fire safety tips from the United States Fire Administration:

- If you can't hear your smoke alarm, consider getting one that has a different sound or one that comes with a bed shaker or strobe light.
- Use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Discuss your fire escape plan with family and neighbors. Contact your building manager or fire department to discuss your plan if you need extra help escaping.
- Caregivers should check the smoke alarms of those who are unable to do it themselves.
- If you use a walker or wheelchair, check all exits to be sure that you can go through the doorways.
- Never smoke around medical oxygen.

Rockland County's [Healthy Neighborhoods Program \(HNP\)](#) offers home visits to identify and discuss health and safety issues in the home for eligible residents, including low-income residents, seniors, and at-risk families. They discuss fire safety, carbon monoxide safety, and cooking safety, and they provide free products (as supplies last) such as smoke alarms (including smoke alarms for those who are hard of hearing) and carbon monoxide alarms.

For more information call: 845-364-3290.



Protect Yourself From COVID-19, Flu, and RSV

Older adults are at higher risk of getting very sick from respiratory viruses, such as COVID-19, flu, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The good news is that there are actions you can take to protect yourself and others.

The best way to reduce your risk is to get vaccinated. Staying up to date on vaccinations, including recommended COVID-19, and flu shots, is one of the best ways to protect ourselves, our families, friends, and community members from severe complications. Check



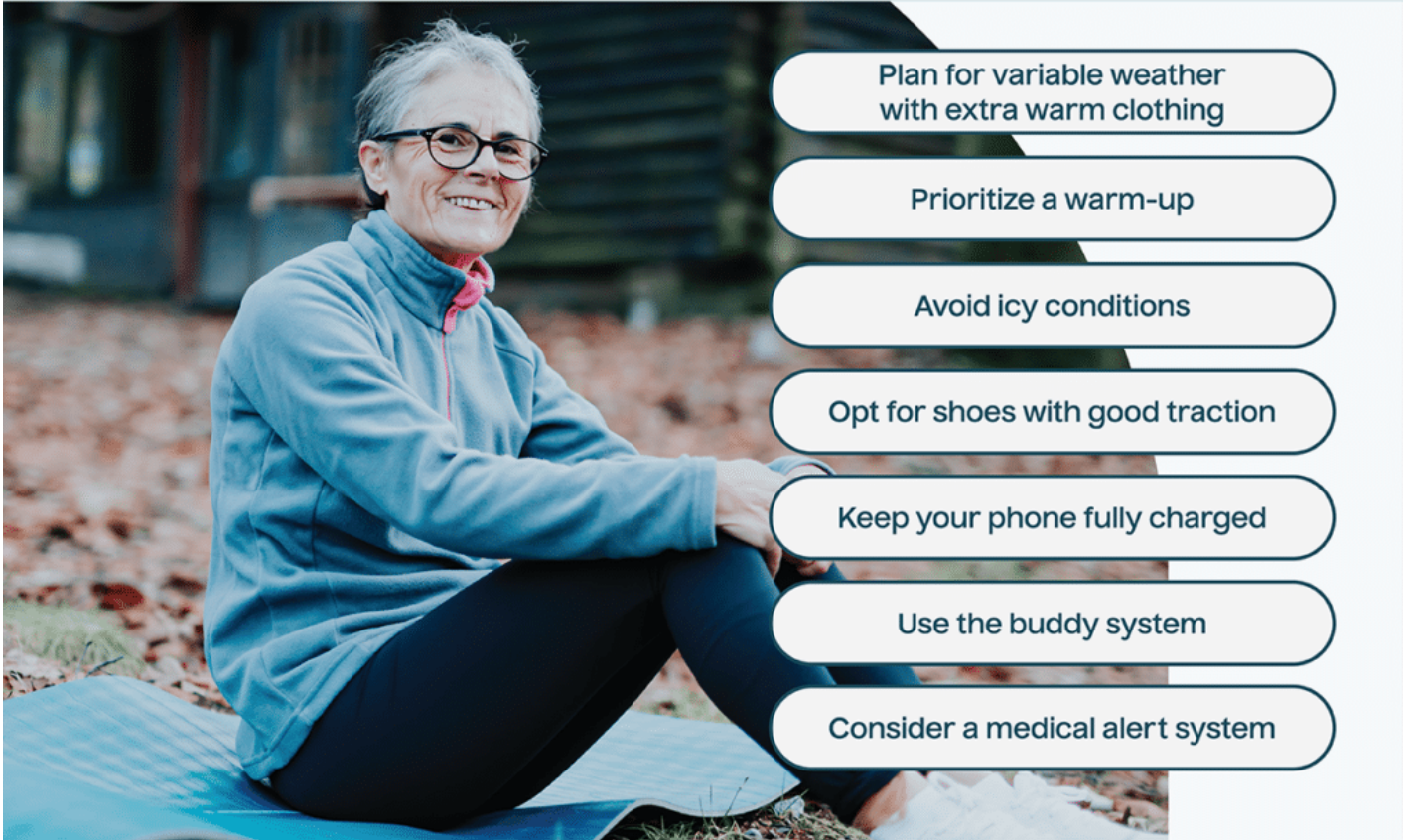
www.vaccines.gov to find out where to get COVID-19 and flu vaccines near you.

RSV is a common respiratory virus that usually causes mild, cold-like symptoms. Most people recover in a week or two, but RSV can be serious. Infants and older adults are more likely to develop severe RSV and need hospitalization. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends an RSV vaccine for everyone ages 75 and older and adults ages 60-74 at increased risk of severe RSV including those with chronic heart or lung disease, certain chronic medical conditions, and residents of nursing homes or other long-term care facilities. RSV vaccine is not currently an annual vaccine, meaning older adults do not need to get a dose every RSV season. That means if you have already gotten an RSV vaccine, you do not need to get another one at this time. The RSV vaccine is available at many pharmacies or check with your health care provider.

Contact your healthcare provider and visit the CDC website for more information on: flu, COVID and RSV. Information about the flu is also available on the [Rockland County Department of Health's flu webpage](#).

How Can Older Adults Exercise Safely in Cold Weather?

ncoe | Adviser
national council on aging



Take Advantage of Our Free Classes!

The Rockland County Department of Health offers free programs to help you feel better, take charge of your life, and connect with others. Call (845) 364-2500 to find out which is right for you!

A Matter of Balance: Learn to reduce your fear of falling and improve your strength and balance.

Tai Chi for Arthritis: Learn the ancient Chinese practice to increase strength, balance, posture, prevent falls and improve mind, body, and spirit.

Put It Out Rockland: Get help to quit smoking or vaping.

Better Choices, Better Health: Learn ways to better manage your health conditions.

Living Well with Diabetes Program: Learn to manage your diabetes and prevent complications.



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 Visit us on our website: www.RocklandCountyNY.gov

Nutrition and the Brain

by Raghunath M. Mehta, M.D.

The relationship between nutrition and the brain is interesting and complex. The brain is an organ that continuously requires a constant supply of nutrients to function optimally. Different dietary components influence the brain's cognitive functions, overall mental wellbeing, and acuity.

The Brain's Nutritional Needs

The brain is a highly active organ consuming about 20% of the body's energy despite accounting for only 2% of its weight. This energy is primarily derived from glucose obtained from carbohydrates in our diet. The quality of these carbohydrates is crucial. Complex carbohydrates found in all grains, vegetables and fruits provide a steady supply of glucose, whereas simple carbohydrates found in sugary snacks and drinks can lead to spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels, negatively impacting brain function. In some studies it was found that the cognitive functions improved after added sugar from the diet was stopped.

Essential Nutrients for Brain Health

Long-term consumption of excessive sugar has been linked to cognitive impairments. Diets high in refined sugars can reduce synaptic activity in the brain and promote inflammation leading to memory and learning difficulties. Consuming complex carbohydrates like whole grains and vegetables offers a more sustained energy release, promoting stable brain function throughout the day.

- 1. Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** These essential fats found in fish, flaxseeds and walnuts are critical for maintaining the structure and function of brain cells. Omega-3 fatty acids are an integral component of cell membranes and play a role in the anti-inflammatory process. DHA is a major structural component of the brain while EPA has anti-inflammatory properties.
- 2. Antioxidants:** Vitamin C and E, flavonoids, polyphenols, beta-carotene and other antioxidants help protect the brain from oxidative stress by neutralizing free radicals. Their deficiency contributes to cognitive decline. Foods rich in antioxidants include nuts, fruits and dark chocolate.
- 3. B Vitamins:** Vitamins B6, B12 and folic acid are essential for brain health. They help produce neurotransmitters in the brain such as serotonin, dopamine and gamma-ami-

nobutyric acid (GABA). Deficiencies in these vitamins have been linked to depression and cognitive decline.

- 4. Minerals:** Iron, zinc, magnesium and copper are crucial for brain function. Iron is necessary for oxygen transport, zinc and magnesium play roles in neurotransmitter functioning, and copper is involved in brain development.
- 5. Choline:** Nutrient which is a precursor to neurotransmitter acetylcholine and plays a key role in memory. It also helps the development of brain structures and is particularly important during pregnancy and early childhood. Choline is found in foods such as eggs, liver, and

peanuts. In some studies it has been shown to prevent age-related memory decline.

- 6. Hydration:** Water is often overlooked as a key component of brain health. Dehydration even at mild levels can impair cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and executive functions. The brain is made up of about 75% water, so maintaining proper hydration is essential for nutrient delivery, waste removal and overall brain efficiency. Drinking an adequate amount of water throughout the day helps maintain focus, concentration, and mental clarity.



The Gut-Brain Connection

The gut-brain axis refers to the bidirectional communication between the gut and the brain. The gut microbiome is composed of trillions of bacteria and influences the production of neurotransmitters and other neuroactive compounds in the brain. A diet rich in fiber, prebiotics and probiotics supports a healthy gut microbiome which in turn promotes brain health.

Diet and Mental Health

The impact of diet on mental health is profound. Diets high in refined sugars and unhealthy fats have been linked to increased depression and anxiety while diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats are associated with better mood and better cognitive functions.

Ultimately, nutrition plays a pivotal role in maintaining brain health and cognitive functions. As research continues to uncover the intricate connections between diet and brain health it becomes increasingly clear that what we eat profoundly affects how we think, feel and perform.

Caregivers: Tips to Help Your Loved One Stay Socially Active

from www.health.harvard.edu

Our relationships make us who we are. Most of us thrive on seeing friends, co-workers, and family. Unfortunately, as we get older it is often hard to maintain those relationships because of challenges such as impaired hearing and sight, compromised mobility and reliance on others to get around, and chronic illnesses that make social interactions taxing.

Family and friends move away; long-time friends and loved ones die. Consequently, older adults can lose touch with the world. This physical and social isolation can lead to depression and anxiety. As a caregiver, encourage your loved one to socialize.

Plan visits at home and away with friends and family members. Find a local adult day program or senior center with activities and opportunities to meet and mingle with others. Teach your loved one how to use a computer and keep in touch by email or Facebook.



- Sign up your loved one for Tai Chi, water aerobics, or another fitness activity at the local senior center.
- Encourage him or her to volunteer in the community.
- Take day trips together to nearby museums, restaurants, or libraries.
- Enroll him or her in a group that shares a common interest, such as bridge, knitting, or books.
- Take a class together in art, cooking, computers, or a foreign language.
- Schedule regular phone, Zoom or Skype calls with friends and family members who live far away.

Take Care of Yourself as a Caregiver



Activities like these can lower your stress, boost your mood, and help make you a better caregiver, too.

Learn more about caregiving at www.nia.nih.gov/caregiving.



Rockland County

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



**Meet with an Alzheimer's Association staff member at:
Rockland County Office for the Aging
50 Sanatorium Road, Building F
Pomona, NY 10970**

- **Are you caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or other dementia?**
- **Do you have questions about memory loss?**
- **Would you like information about local resources to help a family living with dementia? We are here to help.**

**Alzheimer's Association staff will be available at the Rockland County Office
for the Aging on the first Wednesday of every month
from 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

By appointment only.

**Please call 800.272.3900 and ask to speak with Theresa Aguilera, or call Rockland
County Office for the Aging to schedule an appointment directly at 845-364-2110.**

The program is supported in part by a grant funded by the New York State Department of Health.

**For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association
at 800.272.3900 or visit alz.org/hudsonvalley**