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# Family Matters

A MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS, CAREGIVERS & PROVIDERS





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As one of the owners of Family Matters, I understand that navigating the healthcare system can often feel overwhelming for both seniors and their caregivers. However, this journey can become much more manageable and even empowering with the right knowledge and resources.

*I would like to share some essential tips to help you make the most of your healthcare experiences:*

First, familiarize yourself with your health insurance. Whether it's Medicare or a private plan, understanding your coverage—especially for preventive care and prescriptions—is crucial. Don't hesitate to reach out to your insurance provider for any clarification you may need.

Second, maximize your medical appointments by being prepared. Bring a list of medications and any questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor. Consider having a trusted friend or family member accompany you to ensure you cover all important points, including any follow-up instructions and appointments.

Lastly, remember that numerous resources are available to assist you. Programs like the California Department of Aging offer free Medicare counseling, while the Eldercare Locator can connect you with local services based on your zip code.

We are here to support you in your healthcare journey, and I hope these tips help you feel more confident and informed.

Sincerely,

Jacob Laffen  
Co-Owner and COO  
Family Matters In-Home Care



# Better Rest in Later Years

*As we age, our sleep patterns naturally change, and many seniors find it more challenging to get the restful sleep they once enjoyed. Understanding these changes and adopting strategies to improve sleep can significantly affect how refreshed we feel in the morning.*

## Understanding Age-Related Sleep Changes

One of the most common changes in sleep patterns is a decrease in REM sleep, the deep sleep stage where dreaming occurs and the body undergoes essential restorative processes. Seniors may experience more frequent awakenings at night, often due to physical discomfort, the need to use the bathroom, or simply lighter sleep, often interrupting beneficial REM sleep.

Recent studies have shown that these changes are linked to alterations in circadian rhythms, which are the body's natural sleep-wake cycles. Factors like reduced melatonin production and changes in the brain's sleep regulation mechanisms contribute to these shifts.

## Practical Tips for Better Sleep

**1. Establish a Consistent Sleep Schedule:** Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends, can help regulate your body's internal clock.

**2. Create a Relaxing Bedtime Routine:** Before bed, engage in calming activities such as reading, listening to soft music, or practicing gentle stretching exercises. Avoid screens at least an hour before sleep, as blue light can interfere with melatonin production.



**3. Optimize Your Sleep Environment:** Ensure your bedroom is cool, quiet, and dark. Use blackout curtains, earplugs, or a white noise machine to block out disturbances.

**4. Stay Active During the Day:** Regular physical activity, like a daily walk or gardening, can help you fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep.

**5. Watch Your Diet:** Limit caffeine and heavy meals before bedtime. If you're hungry before going to sleep, opt for a light, healthy snack such as nuts or berries.

*We all deserve a good night's rest!*



## SIMPLE OVERNIGHT OATS

*With a bit of preparation at night, overnight oats are a perfectly nutritious way to start the day.*

### WHAT YOU NEED:

- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup milk (dairy or non-dairy)
- 1/4 cup Greek yogurt (optional for creaminess)
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds (optional for added fiber)
- 1 teaspoon honey or maple syrup (optional for sweetness)

### BEFORE GOING TO BED:

1. In a jar or small bowl, combine the rolled oats, milk, Greek yogurt, and chia seeds.
2. Stir well to ensure all the oats are coated with liquid.
3. If desired, add honey or maple syrup for sweetness.
4. Cover the jar or bowl with a lid or plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
5. In the morning, stir the oats and enjoy them cold, or heat them slightly in the microwave if preferred.

### MAKE IT YOURS!

Customize your oats with sliced bananas, berries, diced apples, raisins, dried cranberries, or apricots for texture.

For added creaminess and protein, stir in a spoonful of almond butter, peanut butter, or cashew butter.

Sprinkle with chopped nuts, seeds, or a dash of cinnamon!

# Indoor Sensory Garden

Creating an indoor sensory garden is a delightful way for seniors to connect with nature while staying cozy indoors! These gardens stimulate the senses—sight, smell, touch, and even sound—bringing joy and relaxation into the home.

## Step 1: Choose Your Containers

Select easy-to-handle pots or planters. Lightweight and colorful options add fun to the process. Make sure they have drainage holes to keep plants healthy.

## Step 2: Pick the Right Plants

Go for a variety of textures and scents. Think soft lamb's ear, fragrant lavender, and vibrant succulents. Herbs like mint or basil smell tremendous and can be used in cooking!

## Step 3: Add Sensory Elements

Incorporate elements like smooth stones, sand, or a small water fountain for soothing sounds. Add LED tea lights for ambiance.



## Step 4: Arrange and Enjoy

Place the garden where it's easily accessible. Enjoy watering, touching, and smelling your plants daily—it's all about engaging the senses!

*An indoor sensory garden is a simple yet wonderful way to bring nature's beauty and calm into your life.*

*Happy gardening!*



# Mindful Movement for Seniors



Staying active throughout our lives is paramount for maintaining overall health, vitality, and well-being. One delightful way to do this is through mindful movement, particularly gentle yoga and stretching exercises. These practices help you stay physically fit, nurture mental well-being, and bring a sense of peace and relaxation to daily life.



clarity. Mindful movement encourages deep breathing, which calms the nervous system and can lead to

better sleep and a more positive outlook. According to a study in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, seniors who practiced yoga regularly reported lower levels of anxiety and depression.

## The Benefits of Gentle Yoga and Stretching

Gentle yoga and stretching exercises offer many science-backed benefits, especially for seniors. A recent study published in the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity* highlighted that regular participation in these activities can significantly improve flexibility, balance, and strength. Flexibility is crucial as it allows us to move more freely and reduces the risk of injury. Stretching helps keep the muscles supple and supports joint health, which is essential for maintaining mobility as we age. Balance improves stability and reduces the risk of falls — a common concern for many seniors.

But the benefits aren't just physical. Yoga and stretching have been shown to reduce stress and promote mental

## Incorporating Mindful Movement into Daily Life

Starting a mindful movement practice doesn't require fancy equipment or extensive training. Begin with just a few minutes each day, focusing on gentle stretches and simple yoga poses. The key is *consistency* —regular practice can lead to noticeable improvements in both body and mind. Whether done in a chair or standing, these exercises easily adapt to individual needs and abilities.

Embrace the journey of mindful movement. It's a beautiful way to honor your body, soothe your mind, and enhance your overall quality of life.



## Carol's Corner

Family Matter's founder Carol Pardue-Spears stays in close touch with our caregivers and clients to make sure everyone is well cared for. Here, she answers some of the most frequent questions our clients ask.



Q:

*I'm lucky to have healthy parents of an advanced age, but they have lost many friends these past few years. How do I help them stay positive?*

*A.* Emotional wellness is just as crucial as physical health in our later years.

For both seniors and their caregivers, the journey of aging often involves facing grief and loss that can be deeply challenging. Acknowledging these emotional hurdles and recognizing they are a natural part of life is essential. However, it's equally vital to adopt strategies that promote emotional well-being, helping both seniors and caregivers navigate difficult times with resilience.

One of the common emotional challenges for seniors is the feeling of isolation or sadness that can accompany the loss of loved ones or the transition into new life stages. On the other hand,



caregivers may experience compassion fatigue as they balance the demands of caregiving with their own emotional needs.

Current psychological research highlights the power of mindfulness and staying connected as key strategies for emotional wellness. Simple mindfulness exercises, such as deep breathing or guided meditation, can reduce stress and

bring a sense of calm. Being social and continuing to forge new friendships—whether through family, neighborhood, or community groups—provides essential emotional support.

At Family Matters, we believe in the power of communication. Talking openly about feelings of grief and loss can be incredibly healing. Remember, you don't have to face these challenges alone. Seeking help is a vital first step in maintaining emotional wellness.

Prioritizing your emotional well-being is a daily commitment. Together, we can embrace the journey with positivity and strength!



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## Helpful Smartphone Apps for Seniors



### Medisafe Medication Reminder

Keep track of medication, reducing the risk of missed doses or medication errors.

### Lumosity

Engage in mental exercises to help maintain and improve cognitive health.

### Workout for Older Adults

Stay fit and healthy in the comfort of your own home.

### My SOS Family

Peace of mind for both seniors and their caregivers by ensuring that help can be quickly summoned in an emergency.