

BOOMERS, ELDERS & MORE

A Monthly Elder Care Newsletter of the Vanderbilt Child & Family Center

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **VCFC UPDATE**
- **LIFTED RESTRICTIONS-KEEPING LOVED ONES SAFE**
- **TRAVEL ADVICE DURING COVID-19**
- **WALK FOR YOUR LIFE!**
- **WORLD ELDER CARE ABUSE AWARENESS DAY**



"I've learned that people will forget **what you said**, people will forget **what you did**, but people will never forget **how you made them feel.**"

-Maya Angelou

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VANDERBILT CHILD & FAMILY CENTER UPDATE

Friends and colleagues,

I am writing to share some exciting news regarding the Vanderbilt Child and Family Center and the Elder Care program. Many changes are underway that will lead to opportunities for expansion and the provision of greater resources for the Vanderbilt community. It is bittersweet for me to share that I am impacted by the changes ahead. As of June 15th, I will no longer hold the role of Family Services Coordinator for Vanderbilt Child and Family Center. I will be using my talents full-time at The Acorn School, the early childhood education component of VCFC. I am delighted to make this change as it is more aligned to my background and work experience.

With this change comes a wonderful opportunity to fulfill the growing needs of our University. I am happy to share that Ms. Stacey Bonner, former Family Services Coordinator and VCFC administrator, will be taking on the role of Wellbeing Manager for Vanderbilt University! In this role, Stacey will be supporting the University on a larger scale through VUHR and will also continue the Elder Care program for VCFC.



Stacey brings over 15 years of experience working with families. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Family Life Education from Spring Arbor University and Masters of Science in Social Work from University of Tennessee. While working in the field, Stacey has served as a foster care case manager, match specialist with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and family services coordinator. Stacey has expertise in elder care resources for family caregivers and will be a wonderful addition to VUHR and to the Elder Care program!

I want you all to know what a privilege and honor it has been to serve as the Family Service Coordinator. I have appreciated getting to know so many of you—hearing your stories and sharing in the joys and challenges of the caregiving journey. I will miss you all dearly.

All the Best!

Toya



How Family Caregivers Can Keep Loved Ones Safe as Stay-at-Home Orders Lift

Consider expert guidance and move forward at your own pace
by Barry Jacobs, AARP

Shirley felt unsettled after ending the call with her adult son, Kyle. He had talked excitedly about their state's announcement that the stay-at-home order had been lifted and that residents could assemble if they adhered to social distancing. He, his wife and their teenage children were eager to take her and his father, Louis, who had moderate dementia, to their favorite restaurant. How soon could they go? he'd asked.

But Shirley had misgivings. She didn't know how to reconcile the TV images she saw nowadays of joyful, mostly mask-free people packing parks and beaches with the online reports she read about nursing home residents, little older than she, dying of COVID-19. She wanted to have fun, too, and couldn't wait to see her grandchildren in person again but wondered if it was truly safe for people like her and Louis to return to normal life. He had diabetes and high blood pressure, as well as his dementia. She had the early stages of COPD, from having been a heavy smoker in her youth. Weren't those the kinds of chronic diseases that doctors said made people more vulnerable to infection? Was the time right to take a chance?

Many Americans are struggling with similar questions. These decisions are more pointed and consequential, however, for family caregivers. They must think about not just their own safety but that of their loved ones, who may no longer have the judgment to choose for themselves. That's a weighty responsibility. What if a caregiver makes the wrong choice? How guilty would she feel if the care recipient became sick and died? Would other family members respond with sympathy or blame?

These are personal decisions with no clear-cut answers. All family caregivers will have to consider the pandemic's spread in their immediate vicinity, their loved ones' specific health conditions, the level of contact they'd consider having with others, and their degree of tolerance for risk. With so much uncertainty about the coronavirus's course in the months ahead, they will also have to be prepared to change tack according to evolving circumstances.

What process should caregivers use to make these difficult decisions? Here are some thoughts.

START WITH MEDICAL ADVICE

Health care professionals are inherently cautious — “First, do no harm,” they're famously taught — so soliciting their opinions about what's safe and what's not is a good place to start. They don't decide what you should do; you do, based in part on the guidance they provide and the needs you and your care recipient have. But if they know you and your loved one well and give their blessing to venturing out of the house to reunite with family, then it is likely prudent.

CONSIDER AVAILABLE INFORMATION

Nowadays the airwaves are filled with politicians and public health experts imploring you to do one thing or another to safeguard your health, bolster the economy or support your neighbors. All this should be taken under advisement. You should weigh the information and perspectives they provide as but one factor in your determination of what works best for you and your family. They are not the last word on your situation.

WEIGH RISKS AND BENEFITS

There's no great secret to making a list of pros and cons of a course of action and then deciding which side of the ledger is more persuasive to you. It's just that most of us don't go to that much effort usually. But this is too big a decision for you to shoot from the hip. Slow your decision-making down. Deliberate. Sleep on your thoughts. If you are uncomfortable making any changes, then stay put for now.

USE FAMILY AS A SOUNDING BOARD

Once you have a strong inkling about whether and how you and your loved one will resume activities outside of your home, you may want to confer with close family members to get their feedback. They may have many opinions about what you should do and when, but, again, it is you who will decide. Nevertheless, their agreement to honor your choice will make it easier for you to implement any decision you make — and they won't pressure you further to go out to restaurants unless you're ready.

RESERVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

In all instances, the best caregivers are flexible and creative problem-solvers. During this pandemic it is no different, though the stakes are higher. As the public health situation unfolds, wise caregivers will frequently assess what's going on, plan and adjust as needed and reverse course if necessary. Safety is always paramount — but trusting your own judgment is essential.

The Best Travel Advice For You During COVID-19

Experts' tips on refunds, cancellations, travel insurance and booking new trips

by Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell, *Next Avenue*



Whether you had to cancel a vacation due to the coronavirus pandemic or are itching to plan one, you're probably buzzing with travel questions. So, Next Avenue spoke to a few experts for their best advice.

After months of quarantine living, some people lately have begun leaving home and taking trips; more are expected to do so this summer and fall.

James Larounis, travel industry analyst for the Upgraded Points site, notes that the number of travelers going through Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints increased by 100,000 from March to April — to 230,000. By May 24, according to The Wall Street Journal, it hit 267,451. That's still down markedly from over 2 million a year ago, though, since so many Americans are still fearful of traveling.

Now, to answers to common questions about vacations and the pandemic:

What should I do if I haven't received a refund for a canceled trip this spring?

"I think there are a lot of delays in refunds for trips booked this spring due to the volume of people that are asking for them," says Kareem George, principal for Culture Traveler in Franklin, Mich.

Just ask Phillis Godwin, 76, of Shawnee, Kansas. She had a 7-day Caribbean cruise booked for her family March 15 to 22 and canceled as the pandemic began spreading in the United States. She had bought travel insurance, though it didn't cover expenses related to a pandemic, the \$600 hotel for a one-night stay in the port city or airfare.

“The cruise line eventually cancelled, but I had already set the cancellation of our trip in motion,” says Godwin. She has yet to receive any refund, though, and was only able to connect with a travel insurance claims adjuster in mid-May. Her advice: keep calling and be persistent.

What if I've booked a trip for this summer?

Whether you'll get a refund or a credit toward a future trip, George says, will be up to the policies of the airline, hotel, tour operator or other travel business. Hotels typically allow cancellations up to 24 hours in advance of the stay.

Many travel companies are currently offering incentives to re-book rather than cancel, says George. For instance, you might get a discount for a future lodging stay if you roll over your booking to a new date.

Larounis says that if your flight has been canceled or moved, you can typically get a refund. But, he advises, don't cancel on your own just yet. “Wait for them to cancel first, and the ball will be back in your corner,” Larounis says.

If I really feel like taking a trip, should I plan one for this summer?

No one can predict what the COVID-19 pandemic will do this summer, of course. Due to that unpredictability, shorter and more economical trips may be the answer. “I think people will tend to choose more road trips this summer to places like parks, if they're open,” says George. “I think people could also do shorter flights.”

If you do travel, expect to see new policies for social distancing and sanitation at airports, on planes, with tour operators and at hotels. You'll likely notice hand sanitizers and masks at check-in points. And expect to find your hotel room will have been thoroughly cleaned and left vacant for a period longer than in the past.

Will it be safer to stay in an RV, a hotel, an Airbnb or a bed and breakfast or boutique hotel?

While you may think it would be safer this summer to travel and stay in an RV, Larounis cautions, “Some parks may still be shut down. And if they are open, the bathrooms and showers are typically communal, so they won't necessarily be any safer [from COVID-19] than staying in a hotel.”

George says many of his clients plan to stay in smaller bed and breakfasts and boutique hotels, to avoid the chance of coronavirus contagion from larger crowds at bigger hotels.



“As for Airbnb, I see both sides,” says George. “If you’re not sure the restaurants will be open at your destination, you might have the desire to control the environment by bringing your own food. On the other hand, it’s really hard to standardize sanitation policies [at Airbnbs]. It’s a matter of comfort level and trust of the cleanliness of the people you’re renting from.”

Should I book international travel later this summer, this fall or into next year since many parts of the world are starting to reopen?

You’ll likely have more luck booking flights to major destinations globally, says George. “There’s so many more variables if you’re traveling to a remote location,” says George. “The key is to know the entry requirements, whether you’ll have to remain in quarantine once you arrive and how you will get around once you get there.”

As for cruises, George notes, they’ll depend on which ports are open.

Should I buy travel insurance?

That’s a personal decision and experts are split about it. But travel insurance policies haven’t included pandemic coverage. And policies vary enormously in what they’ll reimburse and what they’ll cost.

“You have to understand what you’re buying,” says George. “If you’re not working with a travel adviser, call the travel insurance company and make sure you understand all the allowances,” says George.

His recommendation:

"If you want to buy travel insurance, get a policy that lets you cancel for any reason. Just understand that such policies are generally much more expensive than other ones."



Seasoned traveler Godwin offers travel insurance advice based on her own experiencing cancelling her planned cruise in March. “Do not let them talk you out of covering all the expenses,” Godwin says. “I let the agent talk me out of covering the airfare, and I will be out \$2,500 just for that.”

Should I book now for a trip this fall or in late 2020 or in 2021?

Hard to say. Safety from the pandemic is an unknown, and so is pricing. But there may be some good deals if you’re willing to take a chance.

“Right before the pandemic, I saw prices coming down and now we’re seeing them start to come down again,” says George.

Larounis predicts that, to win back customers, prices for flights and hotels will continue to fall or there will be large incentives, as the cruise industry already is offering. Cruise lines typically let you cancel months in advance.

What if I want to travel but have underlying health conditions that make me more vulnerable to the coronavirus?



“See your doctor before taking a trip,” says George. “Be more transparent than ever about all of your issues, so your doctor can advise and give you input.”

And, he adds, ask your doctor whether activities you plan would be safe for you.

Kerri Fivecoat-Campbell is a freelance writer whose work has appeared on Forbes.com, AOL.com, Mainstreet.com, Creditcards.com, Bankrate.com and elsewhere.



8 Great Reasons to Walk More

It's good for your heart and weight, but the benefits go further

by Barbara Stepko, AARP



Ready to get walking again? Doing so can be crucial for your health, not to mention helping you to take off the weight you put on during stay-at-home restrictions (the not-so-charmingly dubbed quarantine 15). For a little extra motivation, here are eight reasons to get started with regular walking — whether you choose to do so with one of our indoor walking workouts or out in the fresh air.

ADD YEARS TO YOUR LIFE

Want to keep adding candles to that birthday cake? A major study, published this past March in JAMA, found that the more steps participants over age 40 took, the lower their mortality risk from all causes.

Taking into account factors such as the subjects' health status, researchers discovered a 51 percent lower mortality risk for those who took 8,000 steps a day, compared with those who took 4,000. And the more the subjects walked, the greater the benefit. In fact, extending a stroll to 12,000 steps a day was linked to a 65 percent lower risk of death. Even better, a rigorous walk wasn't required to see these benefits; low-intensity strolls appeared to be just as effective as higher-intensity power walks for the nearly 5,000 study participants.

If you think it's too late for you to reap such benefits, know this: A study published in the International Journal of Stroke showed that those who became fit later in life cut their risk of a potentially deadly stroke in half.

BOLSTER YOUR BRAIN

It's not a stretch to say that just a little walking (or other aerobic activity) grows your brain. Researchers have found that regular aerobic exercise appears to increase the size of the hippocampus, the region of the brain responsible for memory. And the benefits can be pretty immediate. A University of Maryland study of people ages 55 to 85, for instance, showed that a single session of exercise increased activation in the brain circuits associated with memory.

Getting out there regularly may even help those already experiencing memory problems. According to a Neurology study, just 35 minutes of continuous walking or stationary biking three times a week, combined with a heart-healthy Mediterranean diet, improved the scores on thinking tests of subjects who had "verified cognitive concerns," such as remembering or concentrating.

TRIM THOSE EXTRA INCHES

As we get older, fat that used to primarily land on our hips and thighs can start to shift to our bellies. That spare tire is stubborn, but regular cardio sessions may reduce it. "You don't lose a ton of weight exercising, but what you do lose tends to be centrally located," says Tim Church, M.D., a professor of preventive medicine at Pennington Biomedical Research Center at Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge. "A disproportional amount of weight is lost in the abdomen through physical activity.

"In a small study of 27 obese women, researchers from the University of Virginia found that power walkers were able reduce abdominal fat (not just the outer flab but dangerous visceral fat, which surrounds the organs and puts you at risk for diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease). What's more, they did so without dieting.

Walking can also help you stick to your diet. In a study published in the journal *Appetite*, stressed-out office workers, after breaking away from their desks for a 15-minute walk, ate only half as much chocolate as they normally would.

SAVE YOUR VISION

Hold the carrots. Moderate walking, it turns out, may be even better for our eyes. A Swedish study, published in the journal *Ophthalmology*, examined the possible link between specific types of physical activity, including walking, and the risk of age-related cataracts in more than 52,000 participants. Walking or bicycling more than 60 minutes a day, versus hardly ever, was associated with a decreased risk of cloudy lenses, particularly in the long term.

Your Another eye-opener: According to research from UCLA, brisk walking may also lower your risk of glaucoma, with the most active people having a 73 percent lower risk than the least active.

The benefits may be threefold. First, exercise is believed to decrease your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure — all of which can contribute to cataracts. Cardio may also lower intraocular pressure (the pressure in your eyes), which can cause distortions in the retina, lens and cornea and wreak havoc with your vision. Further, being active increases the blood flow to the optic nerve in the retina.

GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

If you're among the 50 percent of people over age 65 with chronic sleep problems, walking could be your ticket to more quality shut-eye — which is important for everything from preventing heart disease to staying sharp as you age.

In 2017 researchers at the Morehouse School of Medicine analyzed data from 4,000 older adults and found that those who were socially active and walked for exercise were 50 percent less likely to have trouble falling and staying asleep.

If you can walk first thing in the morning, so much the better, as exposure to early light appears to help you reset your natural circadian rhythm. Indeed, a study at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center found that postmenopausal women between the ages of 50 and 75 who walked briskly for 30 minutes in the morning were 70 percent less likely to have trouble falling asleep.

CHILL OUT MORE EASILY

You've heard that meditation is good for calming your mind and fending off depression, but if you're the restless type, know this: An afternoon of mindful walking may offer many of the same stress-busting benefits. A study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, for instance, found that an aerobic-walking exercise that incorporated Buddhism-based meditations was more effective in reducing depression in the participants ages 60 to 90 than a traditional aerobic-walking program.

This comes as no surprise to Mary Maddux, cofounder of Meditation Oasis. "Mindful walking clears your mind and helps you reconnect with your body," she says. To try it, breathe in a relaxed, natural manner and walk at an unhurried pace.

Take in what's going on around you and what you're experiencing through your senses. Listen to the birds chirping, leaves rustling or children playing. Feel the cool breeze across your face. Concentrate on what's going on with your body — your breathing, the sensation in the soles of your feet as they touch the ground. "Let it all go, and you can come back refreshed and be able to see things with new eyes," Maddux says.

WARD OFF DEPRESSION

Joggers love to talk about the "runner's high." But can you get a psychological boost going at a slower pace? Looks that way. According to a 2019 study published in *JAMA Psychiatry*, walking for an hour a day (or 15 minutes of running, if you're so inclined) can reduce your risk of major depression. What's more, study authors found that you can lower your chances of becoming depressed by a whopping 26 percent for each major increase in physical activity (say, swapping one hour of couch time for an hour of brisk walking) when you record that increase with a tracking device.

KEEP YOURSELF MOVING FOR THE LONG TERM

If all the recent news about walking's powerful link to longevity doesn't grab you, newer studies showing how it can preserve your mobility and independence might.

The thing is, walking isn't just good for those who can do it easily. Beyond mobility benefits, studies show links between walking and faster recoveries from heart surgeries and from chemotherapy for breast cancer.

One of many studies to back up the connection between forcing yourself to walk and being able to keep walking recently came from Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. Doctors there found that just one hour of brisk walking a week — or less than 10 minutes a day — was enough to reduce the risk of disability in adults who already had osteoarthritis.

In a similar vein, a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found big pluses for sedentary seniors who started exercising regularly (moderate walking being the main activity). Not only did they cut their risk of suffering a disabling injury or illness, but those who did develop a physical disability were one-third more likely to recover from it, compared with seniors who remained inactive.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

June 15, 2020

Elderly, Global Focus, Safety



It can be hard to imagine that anyone would deliberately want to harm an elderly person, but unfortunately, elder abuse does occur. Some instances of elder abuse are intended to exploit the person financially; you've probably heard of scams targeting seniors. In other cases, caretakers simply don't provide the basic necessities, like nutritious food, appropriate medication, safety, or assistance with hygiene.

Help spread the word this June 15, which is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. If you see something, say something.

HOW TO OBSERVE WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Know the symptoms of abuse

Bedsore, bruises, or chafing could indicate that your loved one is being restrained to a bed or wheelchair, or otherwise physically abused. If he or she has recently lost weight, malnutrition or dehydration could be at play, while poor hygiene is also an indicator of possible abuse. Watch, too, for changes in the person's mood; if they seem depressed, anxious, agitated, or listless, see if you can discover why. In short, any changes to an elder's behavior, disposition or physical condition could be cause for concern.

If you suspect something, say something

If you do detect signs of abuse, document them. Take pictures of bruises or injuries, get a statement from the victim or any witnesses, and keep a log of any suspicious behavior or circumstances. You can then address your concerns with the manager or director of the long-term care facility or home care provider; if they do not take action, contact the police or an elder abuse attorney.

Spread the word with social media

It might seem counterintuitive to help prevent the abuse of elders using tools that are largely considered the domain of younger generations, but there's really no better way to get the word out and foster awareness than through social platforms. Share informational articles on Facebook and use the hashtag #WEAAD on Twitter.

WHY WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY IS IMPORTANT

Older Americans may be unable to advocate for themselves

Many seniors are not in a place to stand up for themselves, whether it's because they're physically frail or because they're scared of speaking up and fear repercussions. It's crucial for all of us to be on the lookout for signs of elder abuse, and to speak up if something seems wrong.

Seniors deserve our respect and our attention

In so many cultures, elders are revered—and rightfully so. Their experiences, memories, and perspective on life are valued for the lessons that younger folks can learn. And if older people aren't encouraged to pass along the skills and wisdom they have accumulated during their lives, then the culture as a whole suffers. We owe it to older generations to ensure that their so-called Golden Years are not tarnished by neglect.

It reminds us to look out for each other

It's easy to see bad things and not say anything—whether that's senior abuse, or a mugging on the street. But this holiday reminds us just how important it is to look after, and look out for, our fellow humans. It reminds us to exercise compassion on a daily basis, and care about others rather than just ourselves.

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY DATES

Monday, June 15, 2020

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Wednesday, June 15, 2022

Thursday, June 15, 2023

Saturday, June 15, 2024

You're Invited!



VANDERBILT CHILD & FAMILY CENTER

**VIRTUAL
CAREGIVER
SUPPORT GROUP**

Tuesday, June 9, 2020
12:00-1:00 PM
RSVP: toya.y.cobb@vanderbilt.edu

A second yellow horizontal line is positioned below the text.

Join us as we celebrate our caregiving victories and brainstorm ideas for future programming.