



Tipsheet: How Can I Help the Elderly?

Many older people in the Twin Cities are active and independent. However, some seniors live at (or near) the poverty level, are isolated, and lack a support system or other services to help them maintain their independence.

Promote a Healthy Lifestyle and Habits

Pain and limited flexibility of joints, poor stamina, and reduced muscle strength are frequent health problems among older adults. Research indicates that even small amounts of physical exercise can lead to major improvements in physical and psychological well-being. A healthy diet can reduce the risk of disease and lessen chronic problems such as high blood pressure.

You can:

- Accompany an older person to the doctor for a consultation on a diet and exercise plan.
- Look for senior exercise and nutrition classes and encourage an older parent or relative to attend.
- Schedule a weekly walk with an older person in your neighborhood.
- Assist with meal preparation or shopping.

Daily Living Needs Assistance

Difficulty in performing the necessary tasks of daily living—such as bathing, dressing, eating, or driving a car—limits independence and can lead to a nursing home admission if family members are not able to help. Adults who are 85 years or older and those with chronic illnesses are most at risk. Senior service agencies can provide help with daily tasks at low costs.

You can:

Encourage teenagers to help an aging relative or neighbor with simple chores, driving, or yard work. Contact an agency that offers home health care or other services, and set up a time for staff to assess the needs of an older relative.

Source: Public Health Improvement Goals 2004, a Minnesota Department of Health report. For a free copy, call 651-296-9661.

Resources: [United Way 2-1-1™](#) is a free and confidential, 24-hour information/referral line that can connect you to over 40,000 community resources. Just dial 2-1-1 or 651-291-0211.
