



## Healthy Choices for Living Well

Part of an educational series  
about long-term care choices in  
Broome County.

Action  
*for* Older  
Persons

*Information* you can count on.  
*Assistance* you can trust.

This Series of Real Choices Consumer Education Booklets includes the following titles:

- Paying for Long-Term Care: Understanding Your Choices
- Facility & Community Options: Understanding Levels of Long-Term Care
- Help at Home: Choices in Home Health Care & Support Services
- What You Should Know About Staying at Home: Safety, Security, Modifications & Repairs
- When You're the One Providing Care: Understanding Caregiver Support Services
- Advance Health Care Planning: Making Your Wishes Known
- Adults with Disabilities: Understanding Support Services
- Healthy Choices for Living Well

# Healthy Choices

Living well in our older years depends on more than luck and good genes. While some things aren't under our control, there are many things we can do to assure our older years are healthy, meaningful and enjoyable. Certainly, an important part of living well is remembering that our minds and spirits need nourishment and stimulation as much as our bodies do. No matter what your age is now, it's never too early or too late to invest in your own health.

This booklet introduces a variety of services and activities that can help nurture your mind, body and spirit. It's intent is to give you some general ideas to consider for yourself or someone you care about. With too many options to list individually, you'll want to get a copy of the *Broome County Elder Services Guide* for a comprehensive picture of the programs available to older adults in our local community.

These free Guides can be obtained at: Action for Older Persons, 30 W. State St., Binghamton; the Office for Aging or local senior centers. You may also visit the online Guide at [www.broomeelderservices.org](http://www.broomeelderservices.org)

## **Health Information and Support**

If you've been diagnosed with a chronic disease, support groups can provide valuable information as well as personal support to you and/or your family. Review the Health Information & Support section of the Elder Services Guide to locate a group that can help you. You can also ask your doctor for suggestions.

If you use the internet to research your condition, be very careful to use only reputable sites. Look for sites maintained by well-known foundations, hospitals, government agencies or educational institutions. The addresses for these websites typically end in ".org" whereas ".com" indicates a commerce oriented site.

## **Wellness & Fitness**

Exercise is great preventative medicine. Talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise would benefit you and how much is most appropriate for you. Then, find a way to fit it in your day.

The Wellness and Fitness section in the Elder Services Guide lists a number of "Exercise Programs" to consider. You will find choices

ranging from water aerobics at the Boys & Girls Club or Jewish Community Center, to a walking program organized by the Office for Aging. The Office for Aging can also send you a brochure of fitness and exercise programs in Broome County.

## Nutrition Programs

There's something to be said for the old saying, "we are what we eat." As people age, nutrition becomes even more important to our quality of life and physical well-being, not less important.

When you're tempted to settle for canned soup and crackers, or tea and toast, think twice. If you read the labels on these "comfort foods," you'll see that they contain very little protein, vitamins and minerals--our body's building blocks. In some cases, they contain lots of sodium and/or sugar that can be harmful.

Shopping and cooking for one or two people may seem like a fruitless endeavor, but your health is worth it! The Nutrition Programs & Education section of the Guide lists programs to help pay for food or meals; free Nutrition Education programs; sources of ready-made meals for home delivery; and a list of senior

meal sites. Look in the Help at Home section under “Shopper Services” to find assistance with grocery shopping.

## **Employment & Training**

Just because you’re older or have a disability doesn’t mean you can’t contribute to your community. Many people choose to continue working both for the financial and personal benefits that working affords. Visit the Employment & Training section in the Elder Services Guide to get started. The Office for Aging and the Broome Employment Center are two agencies that can talk to you about employment options.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

Another way to stay involved with your community and to feel productive is by volunteering some of your time to help others. The rewards are high while the time commitment is more flexible than paid employment. Opportunities range from simple, helpful tasks to “jobs” that will provide you with a meaningful challenge.

Action for Older Persons, the Office for Aging and the Southern Tier Independence Center all

rely on volunteers. The United Way of Broome County can offer additional suggestions. RSVP (the Retired Senior Volunteer Program) provides volunteer opportunities at 130 agencies. The *Volunteer Opportunities* section of the *Elder Services Guide* lists more possibilities.

## **Social/Recreational Activities**

It's easy for people who are older or have a disability to become isolated in their homes. Physical changes such as limitations in hearing, vision or driving ability can make socialization a challenge. Loss of contact with friends or family can leave people with limited regular social contacts.

Few people remain healthy and happy once isolation sets in. That's why it's continually important to explore your options to stay connected with others - even if it seems like a difficult task at first. Consider joining a club, attending a Senior Community Center, volunteering in the community or attending an educational event. Review the *Social/Recreational Activities* section of the *Elder Services Guide* for even more ideas.

If you can't leave home and you're often alone, consider joining a Friendly Visitor program through your church or the Broome County Council of Churches' Faith in Action Volunteer Program; or sign up to receive a telephone reassurance call from RSVP's "Good Morning, Broome!" program. Staying in touch with others is an important part of our well-being.

## Education

Research has shown that an active mind is a healthier mind. Brain stimulating activities may help avoid memory loss and improve mood. To keep your mind active, you can read, do puzzles, or research a topic on the internet from your own home.

You could also audit a college course for free at one of our local colleges; take a course at Lyceum, a lifelong learning association for individuals age 50+ ; learn to use the computer; or attend a class at a Senior Community Center. Broome Community College offers classes through the OWLs (Older Wiser Learners) program at local senior centers. These ideas and more are listed in the *Education* section of the *Elder Services Guide*.

# Protect Yourself

It's sad to say, but older and/or disabled adults can be targeted for scams and fraud. They can even be mistreated by those who care for them. That's why it's important to know where to turn for help if you think someone is taking advantage of you.

You may feel foolish if you've been taken in by a scam, or you may feel guilty if you're thinking of reporting a family member for stealing your money, but trained professionals are available who will respect your concerns and who will help you take appropriate action. If you're not sure whom to call, start with the Senior Resource Line at Office for Aging at 607-778-2411. Other important phone numbers include:

- Attorney General's Office-Consumer Fraud and Protection Bureau  
607-721-8779 or 800-771-7755
- Adult Protective Services Unit  
Broome County Dept. of Social Services  
607-778-2635 or 800-342-3009

While these agencies will keep your information confidential, you have the option to make an anonymous call. *The Consumer/Fraud Protection* and *Elder Mistreatment* sections of the *Elder Services Guide* offer additional phone numbers that may help.

# Healthy Choices Checklist

It's time to take a look at your life and to ask yourself if you're making the best choices for YOU.

	YES	NO
Do you understand your medical needs and follow your doctor's orders?		
Do you complete doctor-approved exercises at least 3 times per week?		
Do you eat 3 balanced meals each day?		
Do you have meaningful activities to do on a regular basis?		
Do you have social contact with friends or family at least a few times weekly?		
Do you spend time on activities you enjoy at least a few times each month?		
Do you keep your mind active and learn new things on a regular basis?		
Do you keep yourself safe from scams, financial and physical abuse?		
Do you monitor yourself to be sure you're meeting the needs of your mind, body and spirit?		

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, make a commitment to yourself to find a way to meet your need(s). Consider the suggestions in this booklet and refer to the Broome County Elder Services Guide. Contact one or more of the agencies listed for further ideas, or call to meet individually with a CARE Volunteer who can help you develop a plan that works best for YOU.

# STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Disabled and older adults have more care options than ever before. While having many choices is important, the long-term care system may seem complicated or overwhelming at times. That's why CARE volunteers are here to offer free guidance and support to help you meet your needs.

## CARE Volunteers can help!

Community

Advocacy

Referral

Empowerment

Call today to have a CARE Volunteer help make the long-term care system work for you.

# 607-722-1251



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All information herein is accurate as of December 2004. However changes in agencies and services occur frequently. For the most current information, the reader is encouraged to directly contact agencies, the Broome County Office for Aging at (607)778-2411 or the Broome County Online Elder Services Guide at:

[www.broomeelderservices.org](http://www.broomeelderservices.org).

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