

Plainfield Council on Aging

December 2020 Newsletter



Plainfield Council on Aging
Town Offices, 304 Main St.
Plainfield, MA 01070

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December Notes and Tips during Covid-19

The Plainfield COA would like to extend our warm holiday greetings to all of you. Due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are unable to provide a holiday dinner this year.



An estimated 41% of U.S. adults reported avoiding medical care because of concerns about COVID-19, including 12% who avoided urgent or emergency care, and 32% who avoided routine care. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, people who experience a medical emergency should seek medical care without delay.

Thanks To Highland Valley Elder Services

The Highland Valley Elder Services has kindly donated 100 cloth masks to each of the hilltowns. The masks are free and are made of soft black cloth with the HVES logo. If you need masks, please call Sue LaRock, 743-5345, and leave a message with your name and phone number indicating the number of masks you require. Sue will get back to you shortly as she checks her voice mail several times a day.

Several notices have been repeated this month so that information continues to be available to all of you.

Continued Support From The Plainfield Mutual Support Network

The Plainfield Mutual Support Network (PMSN) in coordination with the Plainfield Police Department, Board of Health, and the Council on Aging is still going strong and ever present in town during the pandemic. Our group of volunteers help with grocery shopping, pharmacy needs and will also reach out to individuals who might like a friendly smile or visit on the telephone. We continue in an environment of social distancing and quarantine requirements and wearing a mask when out in pub-

lic is a must.

Homemade masks are still available. You may contact either Erin Kelly-Dill at 413.336.0123 or Marissa Valenza at 413.634.5703. Thank you for your continued efforts!

Again, for your information, the PMSN web page is (plainfield-ma.us/supportnetwork). One can also check out our Facebook page, (Plainfield mutual aid and support) for additional information. You can also call (413) 634-1030 for requests or more information. Please leave a voicemail and we will get back to you as soon as possible. We have also added the HCDC COVID-19 Hilltown Response to our web page (hilltowncdc.org/covid19) for further information and as a valuable resource.

Flu Clinic Update

Because of this year's pandemic, the annual flu clinic will not be held in Plainfield. If you need the flu shot for this year the following may be helpful:

- ⇒ **Hilltown Community Health Center in Worthington:** If you are a patient at their facility, they can accommodate you.
- ⇒ **Pharmacy:** Check with your local pharmacy for flu vaccine availability and whether you need to make an appointment or not. Do remember to bring your medical information with you, i.e., Medicare card, insurance, etc.



Easy Ride Options

Transportation by Easy Ride can take FRTA registered riders to pharmacies. Another option is that we have the driver pool drivers that can also take riders to the pharmacy (also need to be registered with us) or they can make pickup and delivery as long as the medicine is paid for. We have one driver in Plainfield. Rider would have to call us to make an appointment and more information. (413) 296-4232.

Exercise Classes

For all us stay-at-homers, Joan Griswold is continuing to offer her exercise classes via Zoom. Because of increased demand, she is now offering her classes on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week. If you are registered for one of her classes, you may attend all weekly classes. We are very fortunate she has been willing to invest her time and knowledge in order for us to stay active and healthy. Because we are not meeting in person during the pandemic, donations have dwindled. The Plainfield COA would appreciate any assistance you can give to defray costs. Please send your donation to: The Plainfield COA Exercise Class, 818 West Main Street, Plainfield, MA 01070.

Holiday Program Note

Save the date, Tuesday, December 8th at 11am. Tune in to Mass Appeal on Channel 22 for a Senior Holiday Show! There will be musical performances with the bulk of the show dealing with "senior beneficial content," especially during the pandemic.



Here's to all of you finding a lot of treats this holiday season.



The Plainfield Council on Aging counts on YOUR support to help build important programming for local seniors!

I would like to contribute to the Plainfield Council on Aging. My contribution of \$ _____ is attached.
(Please write your check to The Town of Plainfield and mail to Plainfield COA, 304 Main St. Plainfield, MA 01070)

Name _____

Address _____

Thank You for Helping to Support Your Neighbors!

Plainfield Council on Aging

Seniors Aware of Fire Education



This year's holiday season will be very different for many people because of COVID; one of the things many people will do is decorate their homes with bright lights to shine during this dark time. Here are a few suggestions on how to brighten your corner of the world safely:

- ⇒ Buy lights and electric decorations that are listed by an approved testing agency.
- ⇒ Replace old lighting that has frayed wires, broken plugs, sockets or switches.
- ⇒ Never overload outlets.
- ⇒ Use no more than 3 strands of lights on a single extension cord.
- ⇒ Consider using energy efficient LED lights that stay cool.

For outdoor lights consider:

- ⇒ Using only lights rated for outdoor use.
- ⇒ Plug outdoor decorations into a ground-fault circuit interrupter.
- ⇒ Anchor outdoor lights and decorations with insulated holders or hooks.

Have a SAFE and happy holiday season.

--Worth Noyes, SAFE Educator
Williamsburg & Cumington Fire Departments

The Senior SAFE program is sponsored by many of your fire departments and the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services.



Would you like to receive your newsletter, in color, by email instead of snail mail?

If so, please email Kristen at **regionalcoanews@gmail.com** to be put on the email list. Include your address so I will know which mailing list to take you off of. Thanks!

Charity – where does it begin?

Everyone has a favorite cause to support. This time of year, we are inundated with requests to part with our money for a really good organization! So, how to tell if this is a good idea or not? How to tell how much is enough?

First, can you afford it? Your budgetary "needs" should be considered first, like rent or mortgage, heat, and groceries. After that, we have "wants", savings, and discretionary spending. Charity contributions are considered discretionary – I cannot think of an exception to this.

Second, which cause do you like? As an ecologist and farmer's daughter, I lean toward environmental, conservation, and agricultural / food issues. We may support medical research, literacy, veteran's programs, animal welfare – the list goes on. We may support local fundraisers or children's programs or the library.

Third, is the cause being considered a valid one, a good one? Valid means not a scam! A good one means considerations such as how much money is spent on management, i.e., does a large percentage of income go to the actual cause. I still like Charity Navigator (**www.charitynavigator.org**) for analysis of many causes, though they will not feature our local scene. One benefit of this resource is that they now show Advisories: charities "that raise concerns". A second benefit is that you can donate anonymously to a listed organization! That means fewer mailings coming in the mail! Less inundation!

With charity in my heart,
Jean O'Neil, TRIAD committee member
413-268-2228, jeanoneilmass@gmail.com

Experts say they're usually fine — but here's what to consider when choosing your specs

by Sarah Elizabeth Adler, AARP
September 24, 2020



Who needs reading glasses? All of us do, eventually, thanks to a condition called presbyopia — a gradual loss of the ability to clearly see things up close — that becomes noticeable for most people beginning in their 40s. Because presbyopia is caused by age-related changes to the lens of the eye, it isn't preventable or reversible. But experts say that the right pair of reading glasses, including those readily available at retailers like a dollar store or pharmacy, can help bring small print and other objects, like your smartphone screen, back into focus.

Here's how to find your perfect pair.

Over-the-counter reading glasses

"Reading glasses from a drugstore are, in fact, perfectly safe," says ophthalmologist Michelle Andreoli, M.D., a clinical spokesperson for the American Academy of Ophthalmology, who notes that over-the-counter reading glasses, including low-cost dollar store options, can help you focus up close and will not damage your eyesight. But, she adds, once your up-close vision starts changing, you can expect it to continue to worsen into your mid-60s. That means the reading-glass strength you start out with will need to increase as the years go by. "A good rule of thumb is that any strength of [reading glasses] will last someone between 45 and 65 about two years," Andreoli says.

Experts say the best way to determine what strength you need in the first place is with a yearly eye exam, which can tell you what power (notated with a number like +1.00 or +2.50) you need. The higher the number is, the stronger the glasses are. If you haven't been to the eye doctor or want a way to double-check in the store, Andreoli recommends grabbing a greeting card from the stationery aisle to carry out a DIY test: Hold the card at a comfortable reading distance and try on several pairs until you find the ones that work best.

If you're stuck between two pairs? "In most cases, when two reading-glass powers seem equally suitable, choose the glasses with the lower power," says optometrist William Reynolds, president of

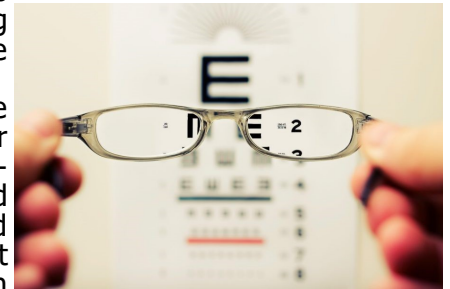
the American Optometric Association. "Picking reading glasses that are too strong typically will cause more discomfort problems than reading glasses that are a little too weak."

Another thing to keep in mind is the activity you'll be using the reading glasses for. Working on the computer, for example, typically takes place at a greater distance than reading a book, and thus requires a lower strength.

Prescription reading glasses

The over-the-counter route isn't right for everyone, Reynolds says, including people who have astigmatism

(meaning the eye's cornea or lens isn't perfectly round) and those who need a different strength for each eye.



In those cases, prescription reading glasses from the eye doctor are a better option. The most popular choice of prescription reading glasses are progressive lenses, Reynolds says. They combine multiple prescriptions in one lens, with a gradual top-to-bottom change, allowing someone to wear just one pair of glasses to correct far-away, middle-distance and up-close vision.

For people who otherwise have no vision problems, Andreoli says that reading-glass lenses that are clear (non-prescription) on top are another popular option available from the eye doctor. They can be worn continuously and eliminate the need to take your reading glasses on and off throughout the day.

Fredric Grethel, a board member of The Vision Council, a nonprofit optical industry trade association, notes that prescription reading glasses might also be a better choice for someone who wants more options, such as blue-light blocking lenses or an antireflective coating — not to mention a greater selection of fashionable frame choices. "The world has really changed from some years ago," Grethel says of the numerous reading-glass options — both over-the-counter and prescription — available today. "Now they're fashionable, they're fun, and they can give you personality."



How to Strengthen Your Lungs to Fight COVID-19

by Michelle Crouch, AARP
July 31, 2020



As you know, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can cause serious lung damage and breathing problems — along with a host of other health issues. And as the virus continues to spread, you may be wondering if strengthening your lungs will help you fight it off if you are infected.

"One of the first things that happens with COVID is that you get short of breath and your oxygen saturation begins to fall," says Raymond Casciari, a pulmonologist at St. Joseph Hospital in Orange, California. "The better condition your lungs are in, the better off you will be."

To get your lungs into better shape, the top critical-care pulmonologists we interviewed all agreed that the best option — hands down — is regular old physical activity, the kind that gets your heart rate up. "Anything that makes you breathe faster is basically a breathing exercise," says Joshua Denson, a pulmonary and critical care specialist and assistant professor of medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine. "My first advice would not be, 'Go sit in a chair and breathe deeply.' I'd say, 'Get on a bike and ride 20 minutes a day,' or 'Go for a brisk walk.'" Aim for activity that ramps up your breathing.

Staying active is especially important for older Americans, because lung function decreases as you age. Over time, the muscles that support your breathing become weaker, lung tissue loses elasticity and the air sacs inside your lungs become baggier. Studies show exercise can slow that decline and boost lung function.

Aerobic activity also helps air get into the deepest parts of your lungs that you don't use when you are sedentary, says Bruce Levy, chief of the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

"If there are any secretions or pollutants you've breathed in, aerobic activity helps you clear them out of your lung and decreases your risk of infection or pneumonia," he says. "Aerobic fitness also helps your body obtain oxygen from the environment and use it in the most efficient manner," he says. "If you happen to get COVID, if you've been doing cardio, that's going to help you."

What's important for lung health, Levy and others say, is to exercise at an intensity that quickens your breathing rate and leaves you feeling breathless, whether it's swimming, biking or walking briskly.

"Some older adults are deathly afraid of feeling 'short of breath,'" Casciari says. "I have to convince them that it's a good thing."

How breathing exercises can help: Deep breathing exercises are another way to get air deep into your lungs and clear secretions. Although they're not as effective as physical activity, they are better than doing nothing for people who are sedentary, pulmonologists say, and they can be particularly helpful for people who have mobility issues.

"If you're bedridden, or caring for someone who's bedridden, doing some controlled breathing can be very useful because there is no other way to train," Levy says. "If you are not exercising, the base of your lungs can partially collapse, which increases the risk for infection if you breathe in a virus."

Levy notes that if you already exercise regularly (and don't have a chronic lung condition), breathing exercises may not confer any additional respiratory benefit, but they certainly won't cause any harm. Besides, you may reap other benefits: Research shows slow, controlled breathing can help lower your heart rate, stabilize your blood pressure and ease anxiety.

Good News!

By Deborah Hollingworth

Already December! The Good News is that the deep frost arrived late and with the last spurt of warm weather there was still time to plant more tulips. There's hopeful news about a Covid vaccine, and the election is behind us. Perhaps there is reason to believe that the next few months will not be so stressful.

Dealing with Covid may mean not seeing the whole family for holidays, but senior centers are coming up with new ideas to celebrate. Whether it's a drive by and pick up Turkey dinner, or holiday gift cards that may arrive in your mail box, we are inventing new ways to reach out to family and friends. The theme song for the long winter that lies ahead is....don't hibernate....keep in touch.

Zoom meetings for coffee and chat, book clubs, writing groups, puzzle exchanges, cooking classes and/or recipe exchanges and exercise classes are still happening.

Senior centers are also making calls to "phone buddies", so if you'd like a phone call, for no reason other than to chat, let them know. As the days get shorter and colder, it's important to keep in touch.

Times like these, we need to be inventive, thoughtful and on the look out for ways to help.



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'Mass Appeal': *Special Senior Edition!*

Council On Aging Directors from throughout Western Mass have been working with Mass Appeal co-host Patrick Berry on a special edition of the show that will focus on older adults. What began as a collaboration to highlight area Senior Center holiday performers, morphed into an entire show dedicated to the topic of aging adults in our area.



Tune in to WWLP Channel 22 for Mass Appeal on Tuesday, December 8th at 11am for an hour filled with information and local entertainers performing both original holiday pieces as well as traditional favorites. Topics that co-hosts Alanna Flood and Patrick Berry will delve into the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of older adults, caregiver stress, nutrition, and fitness. When a group of dedicated, compassionate, committed Senior Center Directors teams up with a talented television duo, the results are definitely worth watching!