



Healthy Holidays: Seniors Need to Stay Active and Engaged

Seniors look to Home Care Assistance's Balanced Care Method™, which promotes smart lifestyle choices and maximum independence, to stay healthy this holiday season

(Palo Alto, CA – November 22, 2011) [Home Care Assistance](#), North America's premier provider of in-home care for seniors, urges aging adults to stay active in order to enjoy good health during this year's holiday season. While nonagenarians, a person whose age is in the nineties, may not be able to go "dashing through the snow" as fast as they did in their youth, they can make an effort to see friends, do volunteer work, play a rousing game of Scrabble or even knit holiday sweaters for their nieces and nephews. Extra servings of pumpkin pie, however, are best avoided.

Each of those actions during the festive season can lead to a better quality of life for seniors, according to studies of elders in Okinawa which boasts more centenarians per 100,000 people than anywhere else on Earth. To ensure older adults throughout North America can benefit from the findings of these studies, Home Care Assistance developed its Balanced Care Method™ to reflect the five components of healthy longevity identified among the Okinawans: healthy nutrition, physical and mental stimulation and a sense of calmness and purpose.

"The holidays are actually a great time for seniors and the people who care for them to focus on healthy lifestyle choices that enhance aging," says Kathy Johnson, PhD, CMC and CEO of Home Care Assistance. "We incorporated these choices into our Balanced Care Method™ because our goal is to promote maximum independence and a healthier lifespan for our clients."

To illustrate how the five aspects of healthy aging can be woven into holiday celebrations, Johnson offers these suggestions:

Physical activity: Taking a walk after a hearty holiday meal is a good idea for those of any age, but it is particularly beneficial to seniors. Even aging adults who are less ambulatory can take part in some form of exercise, whether it is lifting their feet repeatedly while seated in a sturdy chair, or raising their arms skyward several times in a row.

Healthy diet: Comfort foods drawn from family or ethnic traditions are especially enjoyed by seniors during the holidays. However, the recipes for these dishes should be adapted to the palates and dietary needs of aging adults. Lean meats, such as turkey breast, are readily available during this time of year and serve as a healthy alternative to red meat for seniors. Also limit the intake of sweets and desserts that accompany celebrations – except perhaps for antioxidant rich dark chocolate. Other "super foods" for seniors that are beneficial to include in holiday meals are blueberries, flax seed, carrots, eggs, nuts and salmon.

Sharp minds: While dementia and short-term memory loss are common among seniors, mentally-stimulating activities can help them delay, or possibly even prevent, the onset of these conditions. Designing holiday festivities around skill-based games, such as Scrabble, checkers, backgammon or Boggle, not only makes the event fun for party-goers, but these activities can also help seniors maintain cognitive function. Engaging in pattern-following crafts like knitting or needlepoint also stimulates the brains of older adults in ways that can help keep them mentally fit.

Social ties: Though the holiday season can bring back memories of lost loved ones, this time of year also offers numerous opportunities for seniors to engage with other people, whether through social gatherings, phone calls, e-mail or greeting cards. Research shows that social ties keep people healthy by providing emotional support; limiting stress levels; and helping seniors maintain an irreplaceable level of independence. While group activities in family homes or senior centers can be the centerpiece of holiday celebrations, aging adults can also benefit from receiving a daily phone call or email because it helps them feel connected to those they care about.

Calmness and Purpose: For some seniors, participating in a religious service helps them maintain a calm center and focus on their life purpose; while others may prefer practices such as yoga or meditation. The holidays also offer ample opportunities for older adults to fulfill a purpose by volunteering at local organizations and nonprofits. Sharing personal stories or reading special holiday stories to younger family members and friends can also help seniors maintain a sense of connectivity to those around them.

For more information about Home Care Assistance, please visit: www.homecareassistance.com or call 1-866-454-8346.

ABOUT HOME CARE ASSISTANCE

Home Care Assistance is the leading provider of home care for seniors across the United States and Canada. Our mission is to change the way the world ages. We provide older adults with quality care that enables them to live happier, healthier lives at home. Our services are distinguished by the caliber of our caregivers, the responsiveness of our staff and our expertise in Live-In care. We embrace a positive, balanced approach to aging centered on the evolving needs of older adults. A 2011 Franchise500® Company, Home Care Assistance has received numerous industry awards including *Entrepreneur's* Fastest-Growing Franchises and *Franchise Business Review's* Top 50. For more information about Home Care Assistance, our services and franchise opportunities, visit homecareassistance.com or franchise.homecareassistance.com.

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