

Preparing Seniors



FOR EMERGENCIES AND ISOLATION

Any major change in the day-to-day lives of seniors can induce stress and anxiety. With the current coronavirus pandemic circling the world, this only emphasizes the need for us to help prepare our elderly parents and family members for any emergency that may arise.

When we think of how to help the elderly overall, many of us reflect on how we would help our own senior parents.

Here are a few preliminary steps to be prepared.

Emergency Kit — Building an emergency kit can slightly vary for each person, but here are some universal supplies that will come in handy.

Water — Have enough water reserved for at least 7 days (1 gallon per person).

Stock Up on Non-perishable Food Items — Minimize the stress of not having enough on hand. Canned soups, pasta, sauces, cereal, canned vegetables and fruit are all good basic items. Non-dairy almond milk can be kept on the shelf until opened.

Medical Information — If they need medical attention, be sure they have all the necessary information for medical teams. This goes for anyone in your family; however, when someone is elderly they may not remember all the necessary information in an emergency. We recommend getting a Vial of Life kit. This is an invaluable tool for anyone. Go online to the site www.vialoflife.com. This is a free service and it has been created to reduce panic during an emergency situation. Basically, it helps you compile all your medical information into one place, including a copy of an EKG, living will or equivalent, DNR form, power of attorney, and a recent picture of yourself or loved one.

Pre-packaged Medicines — Make sure that they have all the medications they'll need for two to three months. If they need help organizing them, you can order a pill organizer. If your loved one needs oxygen, has incontinence, goes to dialysis or needs wound care, make sure you know how to help get supplies and treatment.

Providing Connectivity

Many seniors have been living in social isolation long before it became obligatory, but when an emergency situation arises they will undoubtedly feel more anxious. Having virtual forms of communications set up ahead of time will help alleviate that extra stress.

Support Network — Make sure they have a list of people they can call if an emergency arises. It may be wise to have numbers and names printed out and put in an obvious place like on the refrigerator or next to their bed. Additionally, make sure numbers are inputted into their cell phone and add a photo of the person to help jog their memory.

Phones, iPads, or Computers — Set up their devices ahead of time so they can speak to you directly through FaceTime. In addition to just chatting on FaceTime, it is even possible to play chess via video together, get grandchildren to share their latest art project, or even cook something while on camera.

Set Up A Schedule

Work on a plan for your parents to talk to specific family members on different days. Put a schedule together and get the whole family involved. Once they know they will be speaking to someone every other day or so, it gives them something to look forward to.

We've heard of many grandparents enjoying watching their grandchildren perform little shows for them, singing, or even just showing them a craft or gardening project. Any form of connectivity will help reduce loneliness and isolation.

Remember that these tools for moments of crisis and isolation may change over time depending on your parent's health and/or level of memory loss. Review every six months to see how they are coping and make adjustments accordingly. Their situation can change quickly and it is wise to continue to evaluate regularly.

If you would like more information, please contact a Maplewood Senior Living community. Our knowledgeable staff of professionals understands and is here for you and your loved ones throughout the journey.