



# Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

*Senior Adults 2007*  
**Learning for Life**

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The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

## ***The Problem***

- Georgia's senior adult population will nearly triple by the year 2025, with the largest rate of increase among those over 85 years of age (US Census population projections). Of the total population in Georgia, 9.2% were 65 years or older in 2005 (US Census Bureau).
- Many seniors will remain healthy and active until much older resulting in opportunities for volunteering, nontraditional jobs and recreation. There will also be increased demand for specialized services in housing, education, health and nutrition as a result.
- Seniors are seeking to remain independent as long as possible and frequently choose personal care homes for assisted living as it becomes necessary.
- Identity theft and telemarketing persist as important problems among seniors.
- Poor nutrition in seniors can prolong recovery from illnesses, increase the costs and incidence of institutionalization, and lead to a poorer quality of life. Good nutrition can help lessen the effects of diseases including osteoporosis, obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, gastrointestinal problems, and chronic undernutrition.<sup>1</sup>
- The Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey shows that in 2006, 59.3% of adults over age 65 are obese or overweight.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, physical activity can prevent, delay or control many of the chronic diseases that plague older adults. Unfortunately 60% of senior adults are inactive.<sup>3</sup>
- Chronic medical conditions and reduced immunity from aging put seniors at high risk for foodborne illnesses.

## ***Research-based Solutions***

- New research findings regarding nutrition, activity levels, caregiving and assistance with activities of daily living are enabling seniors to maintain independence and an enhanced quality of life much longer.<sup>1</sup>
- The CDC and the American College of Sports Nutrition recommend that older adults should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on 5 or more days a week. Aerobic, strength and flexibility exercises should be part of this program.<sup>4</sup>

## ***Extension's Role***

- Provide educational programs which allow seniors to meet their changing life needs in housing, financial management, health, nutrition and family care giving.
- Offer weight control and physical activity programs oriented toward older adults.
- Offer seniors opportunities for community involvement as volunteers.

## ***Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem***

- 508 Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs reached 13,082 senior citizens with 16,063 hours of education in 2007. Highlights include: 1,000 senior participants in the Walk Georgia Program, 718 in diabetes focused programming, 496 in weight loss focused programming, 231 in natural gas energy education, and 68 in the cancer prevention cooking schools.

## ***Impact on Georgians***

- The 1,000 seniors who participated in the 8 week Walk Georgia exercise programming each logged an average of 22 miles of exercise per week over the course of the program.
- Of the seniors who participated in Cancer Prevention Cooking Schools, 98% report that they intend to or already use nutrition labels to choose healthier foods, 89% report that they intend to or already consume non-fat and low-fat dairy products daily, 79% report that they intend to or already eat whole grains daily, 74% report that they intend to or already are physically active at least three days per week.

## ***References***

1. American Dietetic Association. Position Paper of the American Dietetic Association: Nutrition Across the Spectrum of Aging. *JADA* 2005; 105(4): 616-633.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System Georgia – 2006 *Overweight and Obesity Grouped by Age*. Accessed Jan. 11, 2008 at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/age.asp?cat=OB&yr=2006&qkey=4409&state=GA>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System Georgia – 2006 *Physical Activity Grouped by Age*. Accessed Jan. 11, 2008 at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/age.asp?cat=PA&yr=2005&qkey=4418&state=GA>
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Are there special recommendations for older adults?* Accessed on Jan. 15, 2008 at [http://www.cdc.gov/print.do?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fncccdphp%2Fdnpa%2Fphysical%2Frecommendations%2Folder\\_adults.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/print.do?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fncccdphp%2Fdnpa%2Fphysical%2Frecommendations%2Folder_adults.htm)

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