

# Senior Sense



Vol. XIV No. 2

## *Your Relationships*

### **Setting Limits with Parents**

When our children were young, one of the basic rules for positive parenting was to set and enforce limits. Children need structure and boundaries in their lives to feel safe, both emotionally and physically. Younger children usually need more structure. As children grow and gain experience and maturity, caring parents relax those boundaries so children can explore their worlds in ways that are consistent with their abilities. When we reach adulthood, we gain the wisdom and freedom to make our own decisions about the amount of structure we need in our lives (at least that's the plan).

One of the ironies of growing older is that it sometimes becomes necessary for adult children to create structure for their aging parents. Just as young children need help avoiding hazards in their environment, seniors may also need

assistance in avoiding situations that they may no longer recognize as risky. As seniors' physical and decision-making abilities decline, caregivers need to sensitively negotiate more structure in the senior's life.

Another aspect of this need to create structure is to define limits in caregivers' relationships with seniors. Seniors whose daily lives tend to be lonely sometimes expect, or even demand, more contact with their adult children. Many of those adult children are torn between wanting to provide the care a parent wants and needs, but also needing to care for their own growing children, manage the expectations of a job, and balance all the other demands of our daily lives.

If you find yourself struggling to set limits on your parent's expectations, consider these tips:

- Separate *needs* from *wants*. The distinction between these two may be difficult, and your definition may differ from your parent's. What many isolated parents want is more

interaction with caregivers, but this sometimes gets disguised as “needing” lots of things such as minor home repairs, groceries, and errands.

- Become more assertive. Parents’ never-ending requests can trigger guilt and resentment among caregivers. Many caregivers continue to try to comply with every request, while resentment grows. Stress builds and gets taken out on family and co-workers. Caregivers can interrupt this downward cycle by being more assertive (not submissive or aggressive) with demanding parents. Set limits on what you can do for your parent, and explain this firmly, calmly, and with care.
- Include fun activities in your caregiving. Caregiving too often becomes the mundane tasks required for getting through the day – meal preparation, laundry, bathing, etc. Relationships are nurtured by sharing enjoyable activities. Talk with your parent about what she might enjoy doing, such as taking a drive, attending a performance, or visiting family. Try to build in time for some of these along with the necessary chores.
- Don’t let others set limits for you. You know better than anyone else what your relationship with your parent can and should be. Comments from others may cause you

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to feel guilty that your caregiving does not somehow measure up. Guilt is a powerful motivator, but it also breeds resentment.

Parent-child relationships often include memories of past disagreements, poor decisions, and unmet dreams along with all the love. These deep-seated memories don’t just disappear when adult children begin making more caregiving decisions for aging parents. Try to negotiate the limits of caregiving calmly and lovingly, and revisit them as circumstances change.

*Adapted from AARP, 2003.*

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## *Your Health*

### **It’s Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes: Take Your First Step Today**

Adults ages 60 and older are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Yet many older adults find it hard to believe that they have the power to prevent or

delay the disease.

That’s exactly what scientists found in a major research study on diabetes prevention. In fact, adults over 60 were *more successful* at preventing or delaying the onset of

type 2 diabetes than were all other age groups. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) wants older adults to

know that it's not too late to prevent type 2 diabetes.

Almost 40% of adults ages 40 to 74 – or 41 million people – have pre-diabetes, a condition where a person's blood glucose (sugar) level is higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Pre-diabetes raises a person's risk for developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The risk of getting diabetes increases as you get older--almost one in five people over age 60 have diabetes.

The good news is that the landmark Diabetes Prevention Program study showed that type 2 diabetes can be delayed or even prevented by losing a small amount of weight by following a low-fat, low-calorie meal plan and exercising for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. The study showed that lifestyle changes are more effective than the use of a diabetes medication for people aged 60 and older, with a 71% reduction in the development of diabetes.

Losing 5% to 7% of your current body weight, if you are overweight, through healthy eating and exercising regularly, can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes. For a 200-pound person, this equals 10 to 15 pounds. Now is the time to take control of your health, for both yourself and your family. And, help your friends and loved ones and your communities to prevent diabetes by starting on a new, healthier lifestyle.

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NDEP offers free booklets and tip sheets designed to help at-risk older adults stop diabetes in its tracks. For example, take a walk around the neighborhood instead of watching television. Buy healthy snacks instead of keeping cookies and chips in the cupboard for grandkids. Visit the park on a nice day, or have a dance party in your living room. These are small steps, but the rewards are big.

For more tips on how you can prevent type 2 diabetes, visit [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov) or call 1-800-438-5383 and ask for the "It's Not Too Late to Prevent Diabetes" tip sheet. It's not too late to prevent diabetes, especially for older Americans. Take your first step today!

### **Baked Roasted Veggies**

- 2 teaspoon vegetable oil
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and thickly sliced
- 2 carrots, peeled and cut into sticks
- 1 green pepper, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

1. Wash hands and assemble clean equipment.
2. Preheat oven to 375°. Two 14" lengths of foil will be needed for the veggies.
3. Wash and prepare all vegetables. Combine all ingredients in a bowl (or

zip-lock bag) and toss to combine oil and seasonings.

4. Divide veggies in half and place on the center of two sheets of foil. Fold up and fold edges closed. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 45 minutes.

Makes 2 servings.

Nutrient Analysis, per serving:

Calories:	134
Carbohydrate:	26 grams
Fat:	3 grams
Protein:	3 grams
Cholesterol:	0 milligrams
Fiber:	4 grams
Sodium:	499 milligrams

(312 mg. with ½ teaspoon of salt or 21 mg. with no added salt.)

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## Your Resources

### Creating a Safe Home

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), about two-thirds of all hospital emergency room visits by older adults involve falls. Many of these injuries could be avoided by taking a closer look at the design and safety of your home.

#### Electrical Cords

Rearrange your furniture so the outlets are visible and easy to use without extension cords. If you use an extension

cord, place it on the floor against a wall, out of walking areas. If you want to secure it to the wall, use tape – not staples or nails. Don't run electrical cords under carpeting or set furniture on the cord.

#### Light

As we age, lighting becomes increasingly important. Evaluate the lighting in your home. Are there areas you have to walk through in the dark to turn on the lights? If so, have an electrician install a light switch at the entrance. Add additional lights and nightlights in the kitchen, hallway and bathrooms. Replace light switches with “glow switches” that can be seen in the dark. You may also want to install rocker type switches that are easier to turn on and off. On sunny days open the blinds and let in the sunlight. To improve outdoor safety, install automatic outdoor lighting that comes on at dusk or is motion sensitive.

#### Stairs

The stairs in your home should be lighted so that each step can be clearly seen. If you don't have lighting, add it,

using the maximum wattage bulb allowed by your light fixture. Install light switches at the top and bottom of the stairs. Make sure the railing is

secure and that the steps are not uneven.

*If your laundry room is in the basement, consider moving it to the first floor. This will eliminate having to carry laundry up and down the stairs plus reduce the risk of falling on the stairs.*

## Laundry

If your laundry room is in the basement, consider moving it to the first floor. This will eliminate having to carry laundry up and down the stairs plus reduce the risk of falling on the stairs. A rolling cart can help you more easily move wet clothes into the dryer. If you are purchasing a washing machine, consider buying an Energy Star front loading washer. The front loading feature will make it easier to transfer clothes to the dryer and the Energy Star rating will save on water on water and energy use, which translates into dollars.

## Shelves

It may be time to stop using those high shelves that are difficult for you to reach. Move items you regularly use within your reaching distance. Don't push items to the back of the shelves. For ease of use, shelves should be no more than 18 inches deep.

## Step Stools

Whether you are reaching something on a high shelf or changing a light bulb, it is never a good idea to stand on a chair, box, table or the counter. Invest in a sturdy step stool with a handrail you can hold onto while standing on the top step. Another option is to ask someone to help you.

## Throw Rugs

Throw rugs are a common injury hazard. Use rugs with slip-resistant backing, a rug mat or secure them with carpet tape.

## Bathroom

Create a slip-resistant bathroom by equipping your showers and bathtubs with non-skid mats. Use non-skid bathmats on the floor. Add at least one grab bar in your bathing area. Grab bars can help you get into and out of your tub and shower and help prevent falls.

## Pathways

Move furniture and other items to make a clear path to your exits. Removing clutter in your home will not only improve your safety, but also help reduce household

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pests.

Your safe home should include a smoke detector, evacuation plan and easy access to a phone for emergencies. A few minor changes in your home can help prevent injuries from occurring. More safety tips can be found at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).



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**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

Dear Friend:

SENIOR SENSE is a quarterly publication provided by your local county Cooperative Extension office. It is prepared by Extension Family & Consumer Sciences specialists at The University of Georgia specifically for the educational needs of older Georgians.

Please contact your local Cooperative Extension office for more information on these and related topics.

**Learning for Life**

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CHFD-E 76

Senior Sense 2-7

April, 2006

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.  
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