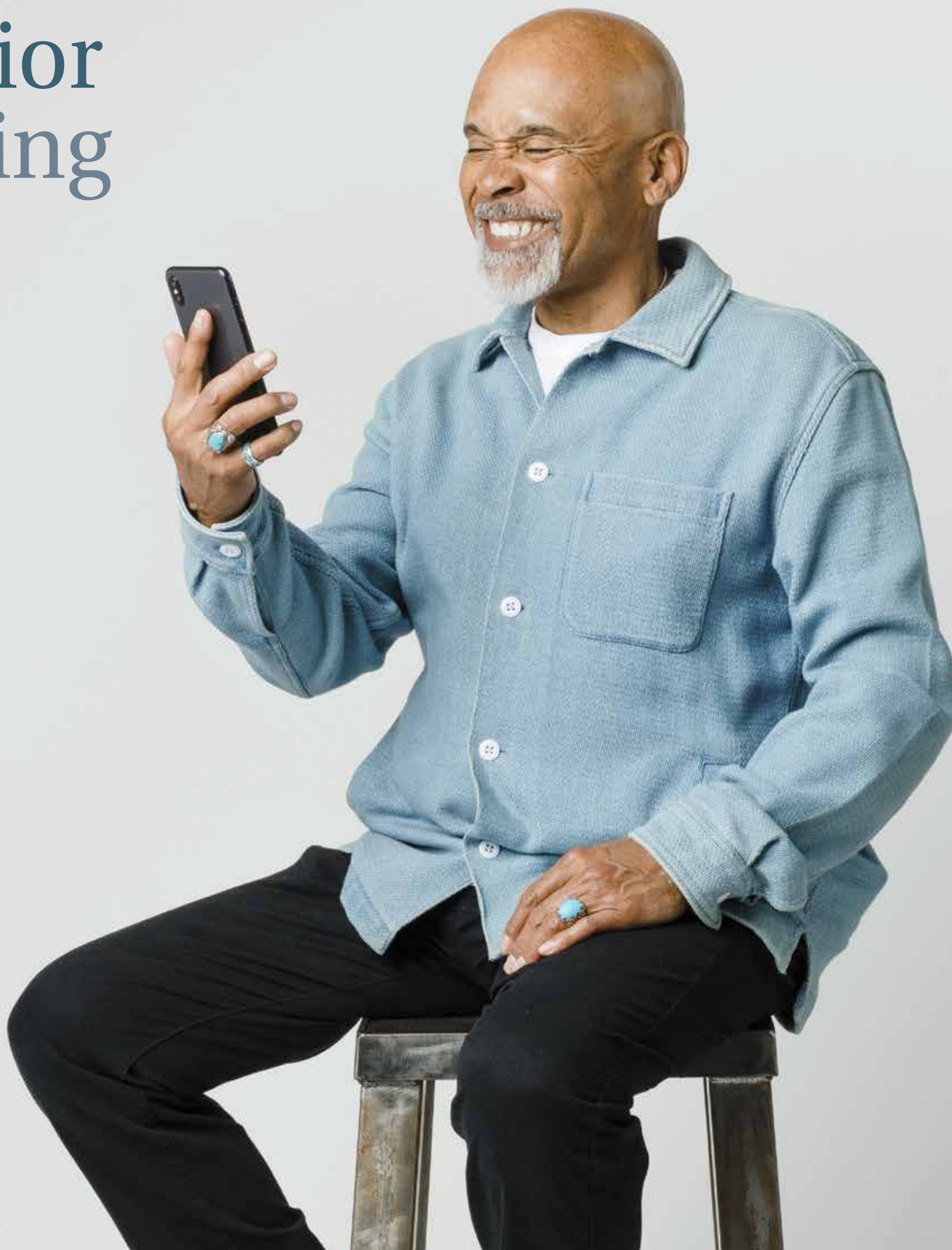


Senior Living



Stay Safe With Technology

Dealing with COVID-19 has been a challenging time for Americans. Thanks to technology, there are ways for at-risk populations such as seniors to stay safe at home.

Here are some ideas of apps and websites to help when sheltering at home.

FOOD DELIVERY

If you aren't able to do your own grocery shopping or prefer to avoid the risk, look into grocery pickup or delivery services such as Walmart Grocery Pickup or Instacart.

For prepared meals, download apps for restaurant delivery, such as GrubHub or UberEats.

Remember that the workers who deliver your food are assuming a lot of risk to keep you safe. If you are able to tip generously, do so.

HEALTH TECH

Virtual doctor visits can keep you from having to visit your doctor in the office, where you might be exposed to the virus. Check with your doctor's office about options for getting non-emergency care via telemedicine. Some complicated or urgent issues may require an in-person visit.

If loved ones want to help manage your health conditions from afar, look into digi-



© ADOBE STOCK

tal health devices that can track your health and upload the information to the cloud. An Apple Watch can track EKGs, sleep cycles and activity levels.

Other wearable health devices can monitor heart-beat, temperature and other vitals, as well as activity, and might also include fall-detection sensors.

ONLINE PROGRAMS

It's important to stay active and keep your brain engaged while sheltering at home. If you're feeling out of touch with peers or your community, look into virtual programs offered by your local library, senior center or senior living community.

You might find book clubs, hobbyist groups, writers'

workshops, meditation classes, cooking classes, cultural discussions and more.

Your library is probably offering curbside pickup, to prevent you needing to go into the library to pick up your reserved materials.

Call your library or senior center or check their website to ask about services they're offering.

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS

Staying in touch with family and caregivers is crucial during the pandemic.

Consider purchasing a video conferencing device, such as a Facebook Portal or Google Home Hub. With the touch of a button, you can check in with loved ones or ask for assistance.

Watching your Diet for GERD

Heartburn can get more severe as you age. If you have two or more episodes of heartburn a week, you could be diagnosed with gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. Changing your diet can go a long way toward managing this condition.

More than 25% of people over age 75 take medication for heartburn, according to the Cleveland Clinic. Conditions that can worsen heartburn as you age include weight gain, side effects of medications and hiatal hernia, according to the clinic.

The National Institutes for Health recommends a slate of diet changes that can help control GERD. They include losing weight, avoid eating within three hours of bedtime, decreasing dietary fat and volume of meals and avoiding dietary irritants.

DIET CHANGES

Paying attention to what you eat is an effective way to manage heartburn. Learn which foods trigger your heartburn episodes and avoid them. Track your food intake for a month by keeping a small notebook or making notes in an app on your phone. Note any heartburn



© ADOBE STOCK

symptoms you experience, and at the end of the month, look for patterns in your records. Some common trigger foods include alcohol, peppermint, onion, citrus juice, coffee, tomatoes and fatty foods.

Making changes to your diet might be challenging, but you will be rewarded with fewer uncomfortable episodes of

heartburn, and it will get easier to stick to the changes you've made.

CHANGES IN ROUTINE

Changing when you eat is also important to reduce GERD episodes. Eating large meals can trigger heartburn, so focus on eating smaller meals throughout the day. Eating too close to bedtime

also can trigger GERD, so consider bumping up your dinner schedule.

DRINK MORE WATER

Another change that has been proven to help prevent GERD episodes is drinking more water. This practice, of course, comes with numerous other benefits for your general health, as well as skin and hair.

A 2019 study from Massachusetts General Hospital showed that replacing a few servings per day of either coffee, tea or soda with water may reduce risk for symptoms of GERD. The Mayo Clinic recommends total fluid intake of 125 ounces a day for men and 90 ounces for women, with 20% coming from food.

Multi-Generational Housing

For many reasons, families are increasingly finding that living arrangements that include multiple generations under one roof are beneficial.

Fast Company points out that the seismic shift in housing actually represents a return to the way humans have lived for thousands of years, and will lead to big changes to the buildings we call home.

THE TREND

Fast Company cited a John Burns Real Estate Consulting survey that showed that 41% of Americans shopping for a new home said they planned to have an elderly parent or adult child living with them.

A Pew Research study shows that about 20% of Americans lived in a home with two or more generations in the 1950s. That dropped to just 12% in 1980, before climbing again to 20% in 2016, representing 64 million Americans.

The trend is driven by growing racial and ethnic diversity, longer life expectancies and feelings of social isolation among families.

In recent years, young adults have become the group most likely to live in a multi-generational household, overtaking those 85 and older, a group which had long domi-



© ADOBE STOCK

nated the trend.

BENEFITS

There are many benefits to families living under one roof. Aside from sharing a mortgage or rent, they might save money on child care and gas, while getting more family

time. Chores and household tasks can be shared, and seniors can enjoy more companionship.

REAL ESTATE CHANGES

A trend in the new home building industry is the offering of multi-generational floor

plans. These plans are more than just a typical single-family home with a mother-in-law suite. They might include multiple kitchens and living spaces, as well as separate entrances and garages.

The remodeling industry also is seeing an uptick in

garage conversions, as well as major remodels to make homes more suitable for multi-generational living.

If your family is considering a multi-generational arrangement, get in touch with a local builder or remodeling contractor to check into your options.

Reach Out to Nursing Homes

Nursing homes and other senior living facilities have been hard hit by COVID-19 and have responded with measures meant to keep residents safe.

An unintended consequence has been some seniors feeling isolated. There are ways to help, however.

MASKS

In the early days of the pandemic, when supplies took a hit and became scarce, an army of helpers put their sewing machines to work to help fill the gaps.

Contact local nursing homes to see how their supply of cloth masks is holding up. Consider donating masks, either homemade or store bought, or ask if you can make a financial donation to cover costs of masks and other personal protective equipment.

STAY IN TOUCH

Due to restrictions placed on nursing home visitation, some residents haven't been able to see visitors for months. Many communal spaces and dining areas are closed, limiting the interactions residents can have.

Stay in touch with family by sending snail mail. They will appreciate the thought you put into the gesture.

AARP recommends sending gifts that remind seniors of



© ADOBE STOCK

family, such as a custom-made jigsaw puzzle of a family photo.

Ask about “adopting” a senior citizen in need of companionship. Visit within guidelines established by the facility. Get to know his tastes and interest and send small gifts or pass along interesting reading materials you think he

might enjoy. If he has access to a smartphone or tablet and an internet connection, plan a virtual meal where you can each enjoy a meal while chatting via video.

If you are part of a house of worship, consider asking youth in the congregation to make encouraging videos to send to nursing home resi-

dents, or organize a care package delivery.

HELP BOOST EMPLOYEE MORALE

Employees at nursing homes and other senior care facilities have had additional demands placed on them, aside from their regular responsibilities, during the

pandemic. Look for ways to help show them you appreciate their efforts. This might include sending gift cards for local restaurants or coffee shops. You also could arrange to send donuts and coffee at breakfast time for employees to enjoy. They will appreciate being recognized for their hard work.

Use Telehealth Wisely

The pandemic has brought telemedicine into the mainstream.

While previously online doctor visits were an emerging concept, the pandemic accelerated their adoption by the public.

Here are some tips to make the most of your doctor's telemedicine capabilities.

DailyCaring.com lists challenges in mobility and transportation as barriers to seniors being able to attend in-person doctor visits, as well as challenges for their caregivers. Managing chronic health conditions can be made more manageable with telehealth visits.

When seniors find their doctors to be more accessible, they are more likely to keep recommended intervals for doctor visits. In addition, with wearable technology that can track health information, doctors can access data to help them better treat patients from afar.

CHALLENGES

NIH notes that some seniors who are not digital natives might need some technological training in order to use telehealth services.

In addition, AARP reports that some government insur-



© ADOBE STOCK

ance programs have been slow to sign off on coverage for telehealth visits and may have restrictions that prevent some people from accessing care.

TIPS

It's important to know that not all visits can be conducted virtually. Check with your doctor's office about whether

your specific concern or condition is a good fit for a telehealth visit. As usual, if you are experiencing symptoms such as chest pain, symptoms of a stroke or any other life-threatening situation, call 911 or visit an emergency room.

U.S. News and World Report offers the following tips for a successful tele-

health visit.

- You'll need a telephone line, a high-speed internet connection, a smartphone, tablet or computer for access to video streaming, and you will likely need an app your doctor's office will provide.

- Be sure you have filled out any paperwork your doctor's office requires before the visit.

- Check with your insurance company to be sure the visit will be covered.

- Prepare as you would for any other doctor's visit, including making notes of symptoms and questions you'd like to ask, as well as a list of current medications.

- Find a quiet, private, distraction-free location in your home to have your visit.

Try Virtual Tourism

With quarantine and social distancing requirements during the pandemic, it's been more difficult to take a vacation. Luckily, technology is primed to take you around the world virtually.

It's never been easier to expand your horizons by seeing the world without leaving home. Here are some ways to dabble in virtual tourism.

GOOGLE EARTH

Google Earth is a website and app that you can access from a PC, tablet or smartphone. Using satellite and local 360-degree photography, you can "fly" to destinations worldwide. Immersive images of historical and cultural sites even include extra content to help you discover the history and context of the area. If you're nervous about tackling this technology, look for online courses that teach users the basics of Google Earth and facilitate virtual "trips" for beginners.

OTHER VIRTUAL OPTIONS

There are various other online options for virtual tourism, but you'll need to do some legwork to find the resources you need. Think of it as vacation planning.

Thrillist offers a list of VR and 360-degree photography resources at www.bit.ly/2DplyTZ. They include a tour of Japanese bamboo forests and sushi restaurants, a trip to Northern Ireland's coasts, the Great Wall of China, the Northern Lights, dozens of World Heritage Sites, national parks and more.

SKIP THE LINES

One benefit of visiting destinations virtually is the ability to skip the lines, and in some cases, the hike required to access the attraction. Take it easy with a virtual visit to destinations such as Disney World, Niagara Falls, Mount Rushmore, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Pyramids of Giza, the Eiffel Tower, the Colosseum and more.

The Guardian offers a list of links to popular attractions you can visit virtually. Some include interactive educational components so you can learn something new on your virtual travels. Others include 360-degree aerial images, providing you a view you'd be hard-pressed to have access to when visiting in person.

Grab some friends and plan a trip to a new destination.



Aging in an Urban Area

As the number of seniors continues to increase, cities are making efforts to become friendlier to their aging populations.

By 2030, nearly 20 million Americans will be age 80 or older. In addition, 87% of the people in North America will live in urban areas by 2030, according to [Governing.com](#). Given that surveys have shown that seniors prefer to age in place, cities will need to adapt to their needs.

THE TREND

In 2017, A Place for Mom, a senior housing services provider, published a survey showing seniors prefer walkable neighborhoods. According to a synopsis of the survey, “Cities should plan for multi-use, multi-generational communities in suburban centers to serve these growing needs.”

European cities have been on the cutting edge of adjusting to the demographics shift.

The National Institutes of Health published a study of two European cities — in The Netherlands and Poland — that have made improvements in safety, affordability and access to services in order to support their aging populations. These have included better access to public transportation and more walkability, the use of universal design



© ADOBE STOCK

principles, and improvements in access to health care and housing, among others.

According to an NIH report on the study, “Cities may be the best possible environment for older people to live and age in place, if they are under a cycle of continuous reinvention and adaptation to guarantee they are in line with the

needs of an older population.”

[Governing.com](#) gives the example of ensuring crosswalks are accessible to seniors. “Have you ever thought the walk signs at street corners weren’t long enough? Probably not. But if you’re over 65 years old, it may be a different matter. What seems like a reasonable

amount of time to cross a street is more like an Olympic sprint for the elderly.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are concerned about your friends and loved ones being able to age comfortably in your community, reach out to your city council or mayor’s office about how you can help

support any ongoing efforts. There may be an advisory council or task force tackling this topic that could use your help. If no efforts are in place, start the conversation by sharing your concerns about your city’s accessibility for seniors. Encourage your local lawmakers to begin exploring solutions to the problem.