



HIRING IN-HOME CAREGIVERS

Question: Last month after knee surgery I hired a home care aide. I'd like to hire one for my parents who live in another city. Any tips?

Answer: Hiring in-home help is a challenge. It's a balancing act of trust, finances and safety.

First, be clear about what you need. A doctor orders home health care. Medicare and most insurance covers home health care. Nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and social workers come to your home for however many visits are ordered and insurance pays for it (you might have a co-pay). Home care, such as you got to help after your surgery, is not covered by your health insurance and a doctor cannot prescribe it. If you have long-term care insurance, find out if your policy covers home care. If so, your insurance might contract with certain agencies and you can get a list. Medicaid covers some home care as well. Otherwise, home care is strictly out-of-pocket.

Once you determine you need home care and how you will pay for it, determine how much you can afford. Home care is paid by the hour. Do you need someone overnight to help you to the toilet? Do you need help half the day for companionship or each

afternoon to help with dinner and a bath? To find someone to help you or your loved one, follow these steps:

- Interview several candidates. Find a good match for you or your parent.
- Check the background of the applicant, or ask the agency how they check.
- Get everything in writing—tasks, rates, minimum and maximum hours, etc.
- Don't commit. You can try someone out for a week and switch if needed.

The best advice is to allow time to do research before you need it. When you are leaving the hospital in 24 hours, you don't have time to thoroughly check out your options. If you are having elective surgery and you think you'll need some assistance afterward, start asking friends for referrals and calling local agencies. If you think your parents need someone, start looking now in their area by calling their local area agency on aging or county department of senior services.

Source: "Your Life: Help at Home," Camille Noe Pagan, *Arthritis Today*, January-February 2014.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

"Charles Dickens walks into a bar and orders a martini. The bartender asks, 'Olive or twist?'"

—A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

Go Green!

Receive Social Services Corner by email.

Call (888) 994-3863, ext. 2370,

or email info@wrmail.org.

Do you or does someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or visit www.wrpioneers.org to find out more about our assistance programs.



VIDEO GAMES AT MY AGE?



Absolutely! Playing video games can help adult brains as much as they entertain younger ones. According to the National Institute of Health research, playing 3-D video games improved older adults' ability to multitask and boost memory, perception and information processing. These simultaneous skills are required for everyday activities such as driving and shopping—two activities that are known to become more difficult as we age.

Single-player games available on your computer, like solitaire or Sudoku, are entertaining and good training for the brain. They keep cognitive skills in good working order. Something as basic as solitaire helps with visual information processing, counting, following sequences and hand-eye coordination that comes from using a mouse or touch pad.

There are social games that help us stay connected to friends, families and even random players many miles away. "Words With Friends," "Logo Quiz" and

hundreds of other games offer free versions consisting of competitive play or solitary play. Luminosity is very popular at the moment (www.luminosity.com). Their Human Cognition Project supports clinical and academic research in neuroscience using computer games to study the brain. They provide trivia and memory games on a wide variety of subjects. Solitary and multiplayer games are available for your smartphone, tablet or computer.

Video games include those played on your TV, such as Wii or Xbox. These systems offer multiplayer games, single-player games or games where you compete against the computer itself. Many of these contain a physical element of play, which is great for winter days or if you don't like to exercise.

Different types of games offer different types of exercise for the brain. And as with physical activity, any exercise you can get is good. Games that engage us in visual recognition, trivia, recall and word play keep our neurons firing, entertain us, connect us to the outside world and keep us in the loop with the youngsters!

Sources: "Grandparents Play More Computer Games Than You Think," Jason Bittel, *Slate*, March 6, 2013. "Video Game Training Improves Cognitive Control in Older Adults," *NIH Research Matters*, September 16, 2013.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Staples, Inc., www.staples.com, (800) 333-3330

Staples sponsors "Easy on the Planet," a free recycling program that provides information to help businesses think eco-consciously. Old technology products brought to participating stores are responsibly and securely recycled, at no cost (see website for list of accepted products). A Staples Rewards® for \$2 is given for each ink or toner cartridge recycled, up to 10 cartridges per customer, per month.

Earth911, Inc., www.Earth911.org

The Earth911 website offers recycling guides, a search tool for recycling solutions, and many articles about how to recycle and reuse household items. Its website hosts a range of advertisements.



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“You got to sorter give and take in this old world.”

—Will Rogers

To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit www.wrpioneers.org.