



# 'Care Share

## Staying Connected While Staying Home

By Susan Stiles, PhD • March 18, 2020

The COVID-19 outbreak requires us to change our daily habits, stay indoors unless absolutely necessary, and – if we have to go outside – maintain significant physical distance from other people. These restrictions may exacerbate an already growing problem for older adults: social isolation. Social isolation can (but does not have to) lead to loneliness, and studies have shown that both isolation and loneliness can put older adults at higher risk for heart disease, dementia, mental health issues, and stroke.

But limiting physical interaction does not have to mean stopping social interaction altogether. Doing a variety of activities online can help you remain connected with, and even expand, your social circles.

We've gathered tips – some high-tech, some low-tech – from our Aging Mastery Program® to help you stay active and involved:

- E-mail a friend with whom you haven't been in touch in a while and rekindle your friendship.
- Read a book to a grandchild or family friend over the phone or via video chat.
- Share memories (and clean out a closet at the same time). Take out that box of photos that you've been meaning to sort through. Then, get in touch via e-mail or phone with the people in the photographs and reminisce about your shared experiences.
- Do an online workout. Choose from one of the thousands of fitness routines available on YouTube and work out together, but in separate locations, with your exercise buddy.
- Volunteer online. This is a great way to do good for others right from your home. Options include supporting projects at the United Nations, assisting the Smithsonian Institution, or helping people in need at the Crisis Text Line.
- Host a virtual get-together. If you can't meet your friends in person for coffee or lunch, move the gathering online via a group video chat.
- Teach others your skills. If you've been waiting to show the world your special talents, now's your chance. Use your phone to create short teaching videos and post these online. Remember that despite the potential negative effects of social isolation, the COVID-19 outbreak demands we all practice it to protect our health and well-being. Try out some of our tips or come up with creative ideas of your own to use technology to help you stay connected to your social circles.

<https://www.ncoa.org/blog/staying-connected-whilestaying-home/>



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## 2020 Census Reminder

As the country focuses on COVID-19, it's easy to overlook other matters. Currently, the 2020 Census is a matter of great importance that needs everyone's attention. If you haven't already completed the 2020 Census, be sure to take the time to do so. And please check in with other family and friends to ensure they have completed the form. The invitations to complete the census have been mailed. You can respond online, by phone, or by mail.

Why is completing your Census form important? According to the Census Bureau, "The 2020 Census will determine congressional representation, inform hundreds of billions in federal funding every year, and provide data that will impact communities for the next decade." Essentially, it's an important way to make sure that you count in government decisions.

Beware of scams and imposters posing as Census workers. The Census Bureau will never ask for your full Social Security number, bank account or credit card numbers, money or donations, or anything on behalf of a political party. And the Census will not ask you for your citizenship status.

For more information and to find out the questions that are asked, or to complete the form, go to <https://2020census.gov/>.

Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Public Health Emergency, doctors and other health care providers can use telehealth services to treat COVID-19 (and for other medically reasonable purposes) from offices, hospitals, and places of residence (like homes, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities) as of March 6, 2020. Coinsurance and deductibles apply, though some healthcare providers are reducing or waiving the amount you pay for telehealth visits.

If you have coverage through a Medicare Advantage Plan, you won't have to pay out-of-pocket costs (called cost-sharing) for COVID-19 tests. They may also offer more telehealth services than what was included in their approved 2020 benefits.

## Don't Fall For Scams

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It can be hard to keep up with the many changes in Medicare and other programs through the COVID crisis. However, though scammers repurpose their old tricks, the same tips for you staying safe remain.

Don't trust caller ID. With simple technology a scammer can make it look like they're calling from any number they like. If someone calls you and asks for your personal information, including birthdate, social security number, etc. hang up. It is a scam.

Sometimes the best way to protect yourself from a telephone scam is to have a script ready. If you have something written up, laying by your phone, where you just need to read it when you feel you are uncomfortable and want to hang up, it will help you stick to it by having it prepared ahead of time. Telephone scams work because the scammers have their script and force you to think on your feet.

In addition to not wanting to seem rude, which they use against you, they use psychology as well. Con artists have been around and will remain, but without victims they are just noise.

Please call MT SMP if you have received a fraudulent call. Whether or not you have given out your personal information to someone over the phone, please report it by calling **1-800-551-3191**.