

# Caregiver Chronicles

March 2022



Caring for Caregivers

AREA AGENCY ON AGING OF DANE COUNTY  
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March is the month of expectation.

—*Emily Dickinson*

## Serenity Comes When You Trade Expectations for Acceptance

When I came across this month's cover quote from Emily Dickinson, it originally made me think of living in Wisconsin. I've always thought March was a tough month with just enough warm weather to lull us into the expectation that Spring has arrived. Sometimes we even put away the parkas only to get hit with another major storm or two. This year as we round the corner into year three of the pandemic, I feel hope for more normalcy but—like for early Spring weather—I remain cautious against overly-high expectations. Chances are there will be ups and downs.

March weather is also a good analogy for the expectations we have as caregivers. Like the winter storm that dashes dreams of an early Spring, or the Omicron variant that clamped down after freer Summer months, there's a fact that flies in the face of caregiver expectations time and time again. The truth is that you simply can't make people do anything before they're ready.

When I give presentations on caregiving issues and resources, it's pretty much a given that someone will ask how they can make the person in their care act "in their own best interests" (meaning their best interests as defined by the caregiver). Adult children caring for their parents worry about escalating incidences of falls and ask how they can get their parents to move to a safer place. Stressed-out spouses ask how to make their partners see the need to accept help. Still others disagree on acceptable levels of COVID-19 exposure risk. The answer?

***You won't be any more successful forcing these issues than you will be in vanquishing Winter before it's done.***

So then what? What happens when the solution you sincerely believe is the safe and right thing meets with resistance? The only effective thing you can do is accept the reality of the situation. If you consider all the losses that aging and illness can bring, it will make sense that those we care for are holding on to as much independence as they can for as long as they can. The expectation that you can change something outside of your control is largely going to frustrate you, disappoint you, and may even cause more suffering. Acceptance alleviates stress and eventually helps us make positive changes. It may even help us to accept things more easily in the future.



You may find the short video below on Radical Acceptance provides a helpful way to understand the difference acceptance can make. Click on the link or photo below to watch:

<https://youtu.be/iVwIVwGOnpo>



**Radical Acceptance by Dr. Shireen Rizvi, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, Rutgers University, July 9, 2020.**

Accepting reality doesn't mean that things can't change. Change is always possible, but not until we are willing to see things as they are:

- Mom isn't ready to move.
- My wife isn't ready to have a stranger come into the house and assist her.
- Dad doesn't want to attend adult day care.

***Accepting reality doesn't mean caregivers should throw up their hands and wait for a crisis.***

Once you see the situation exactly how it is, you can be more effective and creative in thinking about alternatives. For example, you can try enlisting a trusted person like your care partner's pastor or physician or old friend to make the case for change you would like to see. Another option is to try self-care instead. If you are thinking of applying for a *Caring for Caregivers* grant to help your parent in their home and they won't allow it, get a service for your own health and wellbeing. Contact me at the Dane County Caregiver Program to learn how. I can also direct you to support groups, share resources, and am always happy to listen. If you can't make something happen for your loved one, you can get what you need for yourself.

Here's hoping if March comes in like a lion, it goes out like a lamb. As a lifelong Wisconsinite, I accept the need to hang on to the parka for now.



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## Take Care of Your Health: Get More Vitamin D in Your Diet



*Vitamin D needs  
increase with age!*



**Vitamin D comes from sunlight, so getting more from your foods may be important during the Winter months when cold and dark keep us indoors.**

**Vitamin D**, is a fat-soluble vitamin that plays a role in creating and maintaining strong bones and teeth. Vitamin D also helps the body fight infections and maintains the function of nerves and muscles. It's critical for the absorption of calcium.

Vitamin D comes from sunlight, supplements, and occurs naturally in some foods. In the winter months, it can be difficult to get the recommended amount of vitamin D from sunlight which can lead to vitamin D deficiency. During this time, it is important to consume more dietary Vitamin D or take a supplement to get adequate amounts.

Vitamin D deficiency can lead to an increased risk of bone fractures, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, and decreased immune function. Vitamin D has also been coined the "happy vitamin" and adequate levels are important to avoid low mood or symptoms of depression.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA)  
per day for adults:

- Men & Women 19-70 years: 15 mcg or 600 IU
- Men & Women 71 and older: 20 mcg or 800 IU

The Area Agency on Aging has a [Senior Nutrition Program](#) with a variety of resources to help older adults and their caregivers including nutritional counseling, Senior Dining Sites, and home-delivered meals.

Programs are available to adults age 60 and over in Dane County. For more information on the nutrition program or nutritional counseling, contact **Shannon Gabriel, RDN, CD** at **608-261-5678** or [Gabriel.Shannon@countyofdane.com](mailto:Gabriel.Shannon@countyofdane.com).

To boost your Vitamin D intake, consider adding some of these foods to your menu on a regular basis:



- 1 tsp. Fish oil (cod liver): 11.3 mcg
- 3 ozs. Salmon (sockeye): 11.1 mcg
- 1/2 cup mushrooms: 7.9 mcg
- 3 ozs. Tuna (canned): 3.9 mcg
- 1 cup orange juice (fortified): 3.4 mcg
- 1 cup milk (fortified): 2.9 mcg
- 1 cup breakfast cereal (fortified): 2 mcg
- 1 egg: 1.1 mcg

*Look for food products that are fortified with Vitamin D. Fortified means that Vitamin D has been added to the product*

## Recipe:

*Easy, delicious, and nutrient dense  
Veggie Stir Fry*

### Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. olive or avocado oil (or oil of choice)
- 1/2 lb. protein, such as cubed chicken breast, sliced steak or tofu
- 2 cups mixed fresh vegetables (peppers, zucchini, broccoli, onions, snap peas, mushrooms, etc.)

### For the sauce:

- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger or dash of ginger powder



### Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large wok or skillet over medium heat.
2. Cook the protein stirring regularly, until light browned. Add vegetables and cook for another 5-10 minutes, until soft. Remove protein and veggies from pan and set aside.
3. Mix all sauce ingredients in a small bowl. Add the mixture to your pan and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Simmer for about 3 minutes or until slightly thickened.
4. Add vegetables and protein back to the pan and stir to combine.
5. Serve over brown rice or noodles for a filling meal.

## Monthly MIPPA Moment: Medicare Will Soon Cover At-Home COVID 19 Tests

*MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act) has a goal of educating older adults on Medicare's cost-saving benefits and preventive services.*

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced plans to make over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 tests available to people with Medicare at no cost under the Part B benefit by early Spring. Similar to mandates for the privately insured, Medicare beneficiaries will soon be able to access up to eight OTC COVID-19 tests per month for free. Previously, Medicare was not included in this initiative due to the complexities of the Medicare program, which covers over 61 million individuals.

Tests will be available through certain eligible pharmacies and other participating entities that Medicare approves with payment from Medicare directly. This is the first time that Medicare has covered an over-the-counter test at no cost to beneficiaries. *Until the program is in effect*, CMS advises people with Medicare continue to obtain free tests through the following existing channels:

Request four free OTC tests for home delivery at [covidtests.gov](https://covidtests.gov).

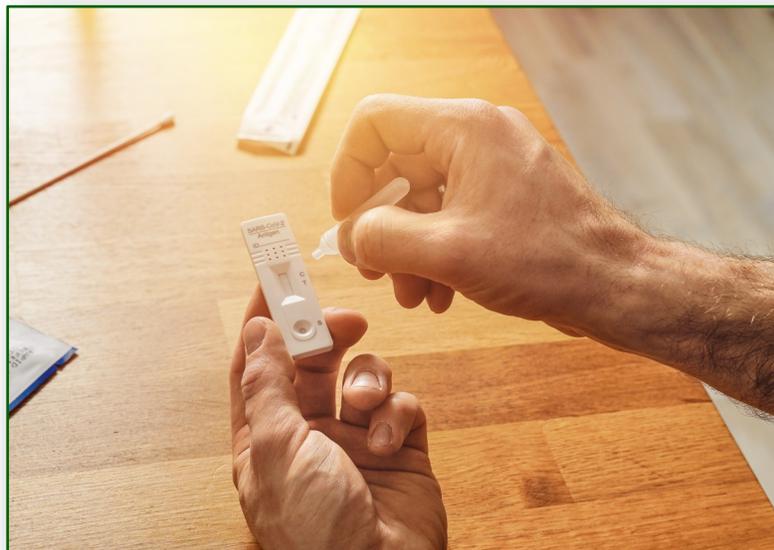
Access COVID-19 tests through healthcare providers at over 20,000 free testing sites nationwide. A list of testing sites can be found at <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/community-based-testing-sites/index.html>.

Access lab-based PCR tests and antigen tests performed by a laboratory when the test is ordered by a physician, non-physician practitioner, pharmacist, or other authorized health care professional at no cost. In addition to accessing a COVID-19 lab test ordered by a health care professional, people with Medicare can also already access one lab-performed test without an order, also without cost sharing, during the public health emergency.

Read the CMS press release at:

[Biden-Harris Administration Will Cover Free Over-the-Counter COVID-19 Tests Through Medicare | CMS](#)

*Adapted from CMS.gov. For more MIPPA Program information, call MIPPA Program Specialist, Leilani Amundson, at 608-240-7458. This project was supported by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services with financial assistance, in whole or in part, by grant number 2101WIMIAA, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.*



# FREE Virtual (Online) Welcome to Medicare Seminars

Sponsored by Area Agency on Aging of Dane County's  
Elder Benefits Specialist Program

## What you need to know about enrolling in Medicare

If you are turning age 64 this year, we can help you make informed choices about your Medicare options! You'll receive accurate and detailed information from unbiased experts in benefit programs.

**March 19, 2022, 9-11:30 am**

Email [aaa@countyofdane.com](mailto:aaa@countyofdane.com) to register by 3/10/22

This seminar will be offered via Zoom.

**Additional Dates:**  
**(Location: TBD)**

May 21, 2022  
July 16, 2022

September 17, 2022  
November 12, 2022



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Assistance They Need**

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Website: [www.daneadrc.org](http://www.daneadrc.org)

Email: [ADRC@countyofdane.com](mailto:ADRC@countyofdane.com)

Click on the button to follow the ADRC on  
facebook.





**CAREGIVER  
TELECONNECTION**



[www.caregiverteleconnection.org](http://www.caregiverteleconnection.org)



| Date                               | Time   | Topic  | A LEADING VOICE FOR CAREGIVERS |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>Wednesday</b><br><b>March 2</b> | 11:00 am Eastern<br>10:00 am Central<br>9:00 am Mountain<br>8:00 am Pacific  | <b>Caregiving 101, What Does it Mean to be a Caregiver with Lucy Barylak, MSW</b> <i>Caregiving is not often something we seek out. Many times you just find yourself doing different tasks for your loved one. Join Dear Lucy as she shares tips on how to recognize that you are a caregiver, along with the challenges and rewards of caregiving.</i>   |                                |
| <b>Thursday</b><br><b>March 3</b>  | 2:00 pm Eastern<br>1:00 pm Central<br>12:00 pm Mountain<br>11:00 am Pacific  | <b>Online - How to Stage your Loved One's Dementia and What Does it Mean with Tam Cummings, PhD</b> <i>This session will explore staging tools used to identify the progression of dementia in your loved one. Understanding the stage of dementia helps us better communicate, plan for care, and prepare for the next stage of the disease. <b>**Sponsored by VITAS Healthcare**</b></i>   |                                |
| <b>Tuesday</b><br><b>March 8</b>   | 11:00 am Eastern<br>10:00 am Central<br>9:00 am Mountain<br>8:00 am Pacific  | <b>Online-Consejos para Cuidadores sobre las actividades de la vida diaria para seres queridos con demencia con el Dr. Nestor H. Praderio, MD</b> <i>El Dr. Néstor H. Praderio presentará un método básico para ayudarlo a afrontar los retos diarios de la nutrición, la higiene personal y otros comportamientos difíciles relacionados con diferentes tipos de demencia.</i>  |                                |
| <b>Monday</b><br><b>March 14</b>   | 1:00 pm Eastern<br>12:00 pm Central<br>11:00 am Mountain<br>10:00 am Pacific | <b>Caregiver to Caregiver with Bill Southern and Dena Boyd</b> <i>Interactive panel of family caregivers will discuss the challenges and rewards of caregiving, what they have learned, and what they would advise other caregivers. During a Q &amp; A, they will talk with listeners <b>**Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection**</b></i>  |                                |
| <b>Tuesday</b><br><b>March 22</b>  | 12:00 pm Eastern<br>11:00 am Central<br>10:00 am Mountain<br>9:00 am Pacific | <b>Anxiety: Good or Bad? with Evalyn Greb, LCSW</b> <i>Caregivers today face not only the stress of taking responsibility for two people (sometimes more), but the reality of a world different from any time in their life. This session will speak to the burden of so many issues facing our world today in addition to caregiver response, often exhibited in high anxiety. Sometimes anxiety helps us, but we need to be able to know when it is not helping and learn some techniques to dial it down.</i> |                                |
| <b>Thursday</b><br><b>March 24</b> | 2:00 pm Eastern<br>1:00 pm Central<br>12:00 pm Mountain<br>11:00 am Pacific  | <b>Online - Take Your Oxygen First with Dr. James Huysman, PsyD, LCSW</b> <i>Join Dr. Jamie Huysman as he discusses why caregivers should "Take Your Oxygen First". As caregivers, you are often so busy giving to others, that your needs and health often take a back seat, which can make things harder for yourself in the long run. Learn about how you can take steps toward bringing your own needs and health to the forefront.</i>  |                                |
| <b>Tuesday</b><br><b>March 29</b>  | 2:00 pm Eastern<br>1:00 pm Central<br>12:00 pm Mountain<br>11:00 am Pacific  | <b>Online - What is hospice and what is palliative care? with Gilbert Cortez, RN</b> <i>What are the differences and benefits between the two and what qualifies a patient for hospice/palliative care? Join Gilbert Cortez, RN with Guiding Light Hospice as he talks about what you need to know about these different types of care.</i>  |                                |