

MEDIA RELEASE

Visiting Seniors Over the Holidays

The North East LHIN reminds Northerners of an easy way to make a difference in the life of a senior

Thursday, December 27, 2012 – Over the holidays, take time to visit a loved one in their senior years and ask them if they may need some extra help to maintain their independence.

In Northeastern Ontario there are 104,060 seniors, of which a quarter, or some 26,385, live alone.

“Keeping seniors strong, healthy, and on their feet, as well as helping to design communities that will support the needs and mobility of our senior population is everyone’s responsibility,” said Louise Paquette, CEO of the North East LHIN. “We need to ensure our seniors are getting the help they need. And that’s where fellow Northerners come in.”

The North East LHIN funds many services from Meals on Wheels to Home Care to Assisted Living so that seniors can remain as independent as they want, with as much care as they need. But many seniors may not know about services available in their communities or feel that they qualify for them.



Sudbury Rising members Marilyn Shorthouse (left) and Shirley Miles act out skit illustrating potential tripping and safety hazards in the. The Sudbury Rising Stars bring their blend of educational drama to community groups in the area to help keep seniors on their feet, healthy and strong.

Sometimes, a nudge by a family member can prompt them to get the help they need.

“You need to spend some quality time with them and be a little nosy,” advised Russ DeCou, Executive Director of Meals on Wheels Sudbury. “Take a look in their fridge. Ask whether they are having breakfast? What do they do they do at mid-day? Are they able to get out and do their shopping?”

Listening and observing can tell you a lot. But remember, look beyond the pantry, at the whole picture. “Watch their mobility and look for tripping hazards,” says DeCou.. “Is there a clear path between their favourite chair and the kitchen?”

One of the biggest threats to a senior's health and independence is a fall. It is the most common cause of injury with about 5,600 seniors visiting emergency departments each year in Northeastern Ontario due to falls and another 1,200 seniors hospitalized. Falls can have a huge impact on senior's lives, causing suffering and reduced mobility. And not all recover ... About 5 per cent of seniors die from falls and another 20-30 per cent pass away in the year following hospitalization.

Besides tripping hazards or poorly lit rooms, diet and medication can also play a role in causing falls as seniors who are getting inadequate nutrition will be less steady on their feet, and many side effects from medications can affect balance. A call to one of the North East LHIN's 22 meal providers or a visit to their pharmacist, who can review all their medications, can prevent potential falls from happening.

"Even if we could prevent 10 per cent of falls in the North East, think about what a difference it would make to the lives of those seniors and their families," added Louise. "This holiday, give a senior in your life the best gift of all – a safer living environment and a connection to care they need in their community."

To Find Services in Your Community:

- Ontario Community Support Association has a care guide search engine which you can use to find out what support services are available in a given area. Go to:
<http://www.homeandcommunitysupport.ca/>
- Also try 310-CCAC to find out more about potential services delivered by the CCAC. This resource will also be able to connect callers to other community support services in their area.

Some Falls Prevention Tips:

- Remove boxes, newspapers, electrical cords and phone cords from walkways.
- Move coffee tables, magazine racks and plant stands from high-traffic areas.
- Remove loose rugs
- Repair loose, wooden floorboards and carpeting
- Prevent unnecessary trips to the basement by storing clothing, dishes, food and other necessities within easy reach.
- Make sure there is a nonslip mat in their bathtub or shower
- Place night lights in bedroom, bathroom and hallways.
- Place a lamp within reach of their bed for middle-of-the-night needs.
- Hand rails should be on both sides of stairways
- Add nonslip treads for bare-wood steps
- Consider raised toilet seat or one with armrests
- Install grab bars for the shower or tub
- Make sure footwear fits and has good grips.

For more information

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