



The Mayo Clinic Study of Aging

# MINDFUL MATTERS

Featuring Mayo Clinic Study of Aging  
Updates and Healthy Aging Information



# UPDATES ON MAYO CLINIC STUDY OF AGING

## The Mayo Clinic Study of Aging Director's Update

By Ronald Petersen, MD., PhD Director, Mayo Clinic Study of Aging



We at the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging (MCSA) are hoping that you and your families are safe and healthy during these very challenging times. Clearly, in the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are in uncharted waters.

Our first and foremost concern is the welfare of our research participants, their families and our staff. Mayo Clinic is determined to make important decisions pertaining to the welfare of all of us.

An unfortunate consequence of our current situation involves social isolation. Governor Walz has recommended that all of us engage in social distancing during the peak of the crisis and then be careful when the restrictions are lifted. While that may be very important and successful in limiting the spread of the pandemic, it does result in challenges for older individuals who need social stimulation and interaction. My colleagues will be addressing these issues in other contributions to this newsletter, but I wanted to express my concern about everyone's social welfare.

We remain very active on the research front. Our team is working to analyze data that you have provided for us and have made contributions to the field of aging and cognitive impairment from many perspectives. We are continually assessing the trajectories of cognitive function including memory and thinking over the age span and are also evaluating the role of various biomarkers, that is, markers in the brain, blood or spinal fluid, that give us signals about underlying biologic processes. Our ultimate goal, of course, is to develop a profile of cognitive aging and develop interventions where disease processes arise. We are perhaps the only study in this country that is able to do this because of your willingness to help us out, the Mayo Clinic medical record system, and our investigational staff.

While over the years we clearly have been focusing on the development of diseases of aging such as Alzheimer's disease, we have also been focusing on positive aspects of aging. We have been studying what has been termed cognitive resilience or cognitive reserve in individuals who maintain their intellectual, physical and social interactions at a high level throughout the aging spectrum. This is a challenging task, since it involves an assessment of people's underlying genetic tendencies, lifestyle and habits over the years, as well as their current activities. This is, in part, why social interactions are important in maintaining cognitive and physical functioning.

We look forward to visiting with you at the MCSA Study Appreciation Day on September 26, 2020. At that meeting, we will be highlighting many of your contributions to our research and will try to address questions that you have raised over the months. We will also be able to gauge the impact of the COVID-19 situation on our research and, perhaps, on you as individuals. This unexpected intrusion into our lives will no doubt leave a lasting impact, and we want to be able to assess that and inform you and others of its influence on our lives.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you, once again, for your generosity and willingness to continue to participate in the MCSA. This is a unique study worldwide and can only be conducted in Olmsted County, Minnesota, and it directly depends upon your generosity with your time and effort.

Please remain safe and healthy, we look forward to seeing you in the near future.

# ASK THE MAYO CLINIC EXPERTS: COVID-19

As this newsletter was on its way to proof and print, things changed drastically throughout our world. Now, more than ever, combating social isolation and finding new and creative ways to engage with each other is of utmost importance. With these changes and challenges, come many questions.

Dr. Rodolfo Savica and the Study of Aging team have some advice on how to stay healthy and connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are their recommendations:

**Stay home.** Avoid unnecessary trips, gatherings, and using public transportation. Maintain a physical distance of 6 feet between you and others if you have to be out in public.

**Chat with family and friends.** Use or learn to use technology to video chat with your family, especially younger children! Platforms like “Zoom” are easy and free to use. Good old fashioned phone calls and letter writing are also great ways to stay in touch. Remember: Children and adults visiting your home can be carriers of the virus and show no symptoms. It’s best for everyone not to gather in person.

**Wash your hands!** Wash your hands often during this time. Use soap and water and wash for at least 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday). Avoid touching your face as the virus enters through eyes, nose and mouth.

**Reschedule appointments.** All non-urgent appointments should be postponed. Ask your doctor about telephone or telemedicine if necessary. This limits your exposure and lessens impact on the health care system.

**Stay hydrated.** A good practice all the time, drinking plenty of fluids is even more important now.

**Exercise at home.** Exercise can help relieve anxiety and stress. If you are able to safely do so, go for a walk outside. Use online exercise programs, listen and move to the music, or sit in a chair and move your arms and legs if balance is an issue. A great resource is the “Go4Life” program, from the National Institute on Aging at National Institutes of Health, for exercising at home: <https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercise-type/strength/> This link provides examples, videos and free resources to help you with ideas on how to keep moving, as well as stay on track.



**Get medications and groceries delivered.** Many pharmacies can deliver prescriptions. You can order groceries online from local stores or through an online service like [www.instantcart.com](http://www.instantcart.com) and have them delivered. If you are uncomfortable using a computer, ask a family member or friend to order for you.

**Emotional self-care.** Listening to music, meditation, mindfulness practices and conversations with family and friends can help put things into perspective and help to manage stress during feelings of uncertainty.

**Take a break from the news.** Limit the time you spend listening to, reading, or watching the news about the pandemic. It will only increase feelings of panic and anxiety.

*continued . . .*

## ASK THE MAYO CLINIC EXPERTS: COVID-19 continued

**Seek emotional support.** If you need someone to lean on for strength, call the Lifeline at 800-273-8255, or Disaster Distress helpline at 800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to speak to a skilled, trained crisis worker who can provide support and share helpful resources. These services are available to everyone and are free and confidential. You can also contact your local provider for an appointment.

**Ask for help.** Many health systems across the country and temporarily closing their outpatient clinics, but all are equipped to communicate with you, if needed, via telephone, video and messages sent through the electronic medical record or online portals. Please use them for any questions you may have.

**Stick to your routine.** Waking up at your usual time each morning, taking a shower and getting dressed will help you feel a sense of normalcy. Staying in bed in your pajamas increases the likelihood of inactivity, depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders.

**Be social.** During this time of social distancing, it's important to stay in touch with friends via the telephone or video chats. These difficult times can be a good opportunity to reconnect with family members and friends, far and near. Writing letters, making and sending cards to family and friends is another way to feel connected and be creative. Reach out to your spiritual community, if applicable, for support and connection.

**Order takeout.** Restaurants may be closed for dine-in seating, but you can call your favorite restaurant or use online tools to order food online. Many delivery services are waiving their fees and can leave the food at your doorstep or lobby to avoid direct contact. This is a great way to support local businesses. Wash your hands and surfaces well before eating.

**Beat boredom.** Watch that series you've never had time for. Read or re-read a great book, dust off a puzzle and get started. Call or video chat with family members, kids, grandkids and friends. Cuddle with your pets. Research a new hobby or interest area; try new cooking and baking recipes.

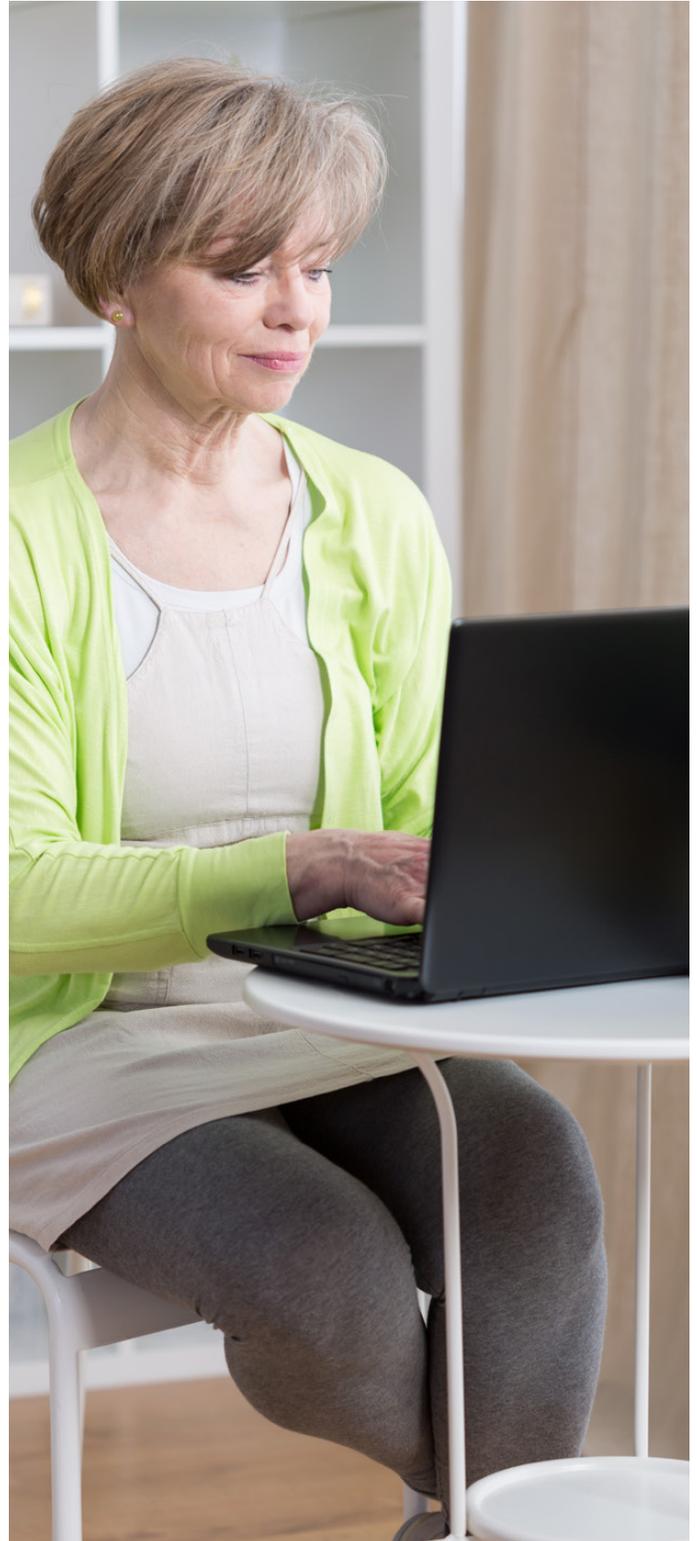


# THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL COMPANIONSHIP AS WE AGE

Studies continue to show links between feelings of loneliness and other physical and mental health concerns. There is an increasing need for new ideas and initiatives to help reduce loneliness and isolation and increase social connectedness, especially in older adults.

According to the book *Mayo Clinic on Healthy Aging*, your relationships play a vital role in your health and sense of well-being. Evidence shows that social isolation is linked to increased illness and poor health. Staying connected with family and friends has more physical and mental health benefits than you may realize.

- **Boosts recovery:** People with social support may be better motivated to recover and adhere to treatment regimens.
- **Extends life:** A study of over 7,000 California residents over 17 years found that those lacking social connections are 2 to 3 times more likely to die younger than those who are more socially active.
- **Bolsters immunity:** Stress can suppress your immunity; love and friendship help to reduce your stress.
- **Improves mental health:** Having a diverse social network can help increase your sense of belonging and self-worth and can help ease stress and depression, especially during difficult times.
- **Reduces anxiety:** People with strong social connections are less prone to anxiety overall. Studies on hospitalization and social connectedness show that those with strong social ties are generally less anxious about upcoming appointments or procedures.
- **Protects against mental decline:** One mind can sharpen another. Studies show that those individuals that frequently interact with larger networks of people maintained better mental acuity over time.



# HOW DO YOU STAY CONNECTED DURING A TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING?

## A local choir is trying out new ideas!

Resounding Voices is a professionally directed chorus in Rochester, MN for those experiencing mild cognitive impairment or dementia, participating with their support partners. Their mission: “We celebrate the full potential of people living with dementia.” Members of the Resounding Voices Chorus performed at the 2019 Mayo Clinic Study of Aging Appreciation Event last fall.

Resounding Voices creates a unique opportunity for people to connect, learn, grow, and most importantly improve their quality of life. The chorus invites those experiencing memory changes due Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia, as well as their support partner to join. In addition, the chorus seeks volunteers to support the weekly rehearsals and share the mission with the community.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Resounding Voices had to cancel their last semester of rehearsals, as well as their final concert of the season. The vision of Resounding Voices is: “Through music and fellowship, we support a dementia friendly community.” With the current situation, realizing the vision was going to be a challenge.

The leadership and volunteers stepped up immediately with many ideas; they created their own YouTube channel, and through that platform music videos were recorded and sent out via email to all singers each week. Volunteers jumped on the opportunity to make personal phone calls, to check in and stay connected with one another. The chorus leadership used a videoconferencing platform and was able to connect with 25 members of the chorus, using their smart phones, computers and tablets. The ability to speak to each other and see faces was a huge gift! Resounding Voices also uses two social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) to share information, inspiration, the newly created videos, as well as sharing what other choirs are doing to keep people engaged.

This is an example of how technology and social media are being used in our community to keep people of all ages connected in unique ways, during times of isolation. Trying new things can open up big opportunities!

For more information on Resounding Voices, check out their website: [www.resoundingvoices.org/](http://www.resoundingvoices.org/)



Click on the QR code above for a link to a short promo video about the chorus.

# GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Connecting online is easier than it has ever been. Not only can we connect with friends and family via email, we now have a plethora of social media platforms we can utilize to connect in new and exciting ways.

According to a 2017 article published by the Pew Research Center 34% of Americans age 65 and up say they have used social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter. While this has likely increased in the past 3 years, it still indicates that a large portion of this population is perhaps missing out on potential connections.

Learning to utilize new technologies can be intimidating and frustrating, but as we move further into the digital age, learning some basic skills to help improve your online connections will become increasingly important.

## Getting Started

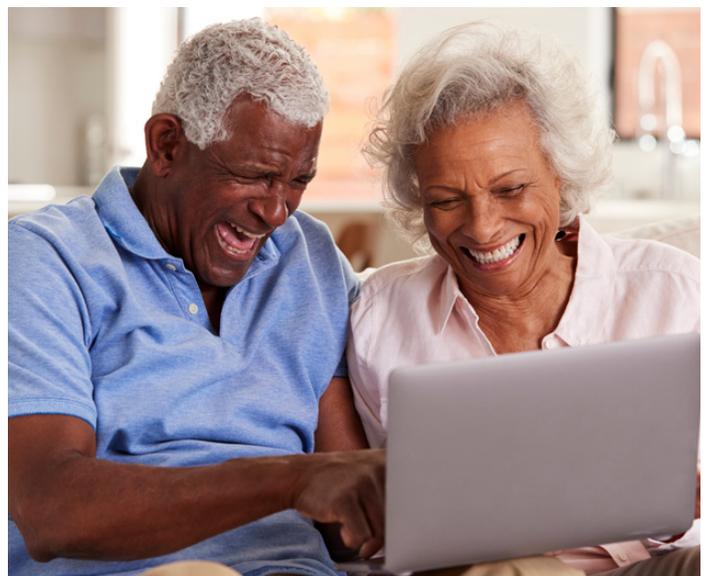
- Ask for help– find someone familiar with social media -a friend, family member, coworker, or take a community education class online or in person when available.
- Be sure you have a strong and secure password. (Search “How to choose a strong password” online for tips)
- Make sure to review your settings and adjust them to fit your desired privacy level.

## Online Etiquette

- Avoid oversharing– be considerate and deliberate with what you share online, taking care to consider the privacy of yourself and of others.
- Be careful with your comments– when you are commenting on posts or pictures, these comments can typically be seen by all, not just you and the person posting.
- When sharing pictures, be extra considerate of the privacy of others. It’s always best to get consent before sharing pictures of others online.

## Be Cautious

- Never post private information, such as your phone number, address, or even your email address online publically. (Emails may be required for some sites, but can be hidden from public view by adjusting your privacy settings)
- Limit your social media connections to those closest to you. This will help further protect your privacy and can make your social media experiences more meaningful than following a larger group of people you don’t know.



## Brain Health to Promote Meaningful Social Engagement

*These recommendations were made prior to our current environment of social distancing. They are still relevant, but considerations must be made in how to use this information in the safest way, as we move through this COVID-19 pandemic.*

- Focus on the relationships or social activities you enjoy the most.
- If you have no one around who can help you engage socially, turn to professionals who can assist. Examples: telephone hotlines, drop-in centers, a chat with a local religious leader, etc.
- If there are barriers to interacting with people (e.g., difficulty getting around etc. identify someone you could ask for help, and let someone assist you in making connections.
- Try to keep a circle of friends, family or neighbors with whom you can exchange ideas, thoughts, concerns, and who can also help or encourage you. It does not need to be a large group of people as long as those in it are important to you and you are important to them.
- Try to have at least one confidante to communicate with routinely, someone you feel you can trust and you can count on.
- Help others, whether informally or through organizations or volunteer opportunities. For example, visit a lonely neighbor or friend, shop for/with them, or try cooking together.
- Maintain social connections with people of different ages, including younger people. Keep in touch with grandchildren or volunteer to help people at a local school or community center. Think about the skills you have and that you use routinely that might be valuable to pass on to others.
- Offer to help teach a younger person skills you may already have, such as cooking, assembling furniture, investing in the stock market, etc.
- Add a new relationship or social activity you didn't try before. Place yourself in everyday contexts where you can meet and interact with others (e.g., stores or parks).
- Be active and challenge yourself to try out organized clubs, courses, interest groups, political organizations, religious gatherings, or cooking classes.



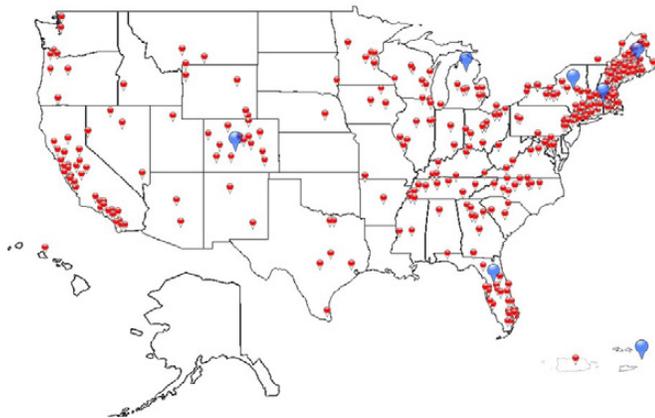
# OLMSTED COUNTY JOINS THE AARP NETWORK

## Age-Friendly States and Communities

- The population of the United States is rapidly aging.
- By 2030, one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older.
- By 2035, the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18.

This is why AARP staff and volunteers are working throughout the nation to engage and mobilize communities, share expertise, and deliver technical assistance to the towns, cities, counties and states in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities. This initiative plans to provide cities, towns, counties and states with the resources to become more age-friendly by tapping into national and global research, planning models and best practices.

Olmsted County officially joined the AARP Age-Friendly initiative in January of 2020. Staff from the Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (also representing the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging) will be part of the initial planning group alongside other organizations and invested stakeholders from our county. This group will be assessing and planning around the unique needs of our county, as it relates to the eight domains of livability.



Courtesy AARP Livable Communities (AARP.org/Livable)

The eight domains of livability, as identified by this initiative are:

- 1 Outdoor Spaces and Public Places
- 2 Transportation
- 3 Housing
- 4 Social Participation
- 5 Respect and Social Inclusion
- 6 Work and Civic Engagement
- 7 Communication and Information
- 8 Community and Health Services

To subscribe to AARP's Livable Communities Newsletter, click this link: [https://cp.email.aarp.org/lc\\_signup\\_form](https://cp.email.aarp.org/lc_signup_form)

Membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities means that a community's elected leadership has made a commitment to actively work with residents and local advocates to make their town, city, county or state an age-friendly place to live.

(Taken from <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>)

## SAVE THE DATE

2020 Mayo Clinic Study  
of Aging Appreciation

**Saturday, September 26, 2020**

Mayo Civic Center

Dave Beal, Family Services Rochester and lead organizer of Olmsted County's AARP Age-Friendly Communities work group, will be the featured speaker.

# YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED!



**Q:**

How does data gathered through the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging compare to that gathered in other institutions like Johns Hopkins?

**A:**

“The Mayo Clinic Study of Aging is really unique. We are the only study in the world that meets high standards as an epidemiologically valid study that is also able to do large volumes of MR and PET scans. No other epidemiological study in the US or Canada does anything with brain scanning in normal elders. Johns Hopkins, Harvard, and UC San Francisco that are the other places in the US that do PET imaging do it on a very much smaller scale in only select individuals. So for many reasons the MCSA is unique.”

*Answered by David Knopman, M.D.*



# EDUCATION AND PUBLICATIONS

## New Educational Opportunity!

### Living with Memory and Thinking Changes

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Earth Room, Assisi Heights

1001 14th St. NW, Rochester, MN

Some forgetfulness or memory loss is a normal part of the aging process. This 90 minute session will include educational information on understanding normal age related memory changes, as well as possible warning signs for dementia. The session will also provide those newly diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia with strategies on how to live well with memory loss or as a care partner. Community resources will be in attendance to explain the many opportunities available for engagement and support. There will also be time to meet and connect with others if desired.

Register by calling: 507-284-1324

There is no fee for this session.

### MCSA Recent Publications

Below are a few recent research publications that were made possible due to the participation of those enrolled in the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging.

- *Better stress coping associated with lower tau in amyloid-positive cognitively unimpaired older adults.* – Neurology. 2020 Jan 21.
- *Amyloid, Vascular, and Resilience Pathways Associated with Cognitive Aging.* – Ann Neurol. 2019 Dec
- *Prostate Cancer, Use of Androgen Deprivation Therapy, and Cognitive Impairment: A Population-based Study.* – Alzheimer Dis Assoc Disord. 2019 Dec 9.
- *Neuropsychological subtypes of incident mild cognitive impairment in the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging.* – Alzheimers Dementia. 2019 Jul

- *Entorhinal cortex tau, amyloid- $\beta$ , cortical thickness and memory performance in non-demented subjects.* – Brain. 2019 Apr
- *Predicting Progression to Mild Cognitive Impairment.* – Annals Neurology. 2019 Jan

The Mayo Clinic Study of Aging has enrolled more than 5,000 residents of Olmsted County, Minnesota, without a previous diagnosis of dementia in their medical record who were 30 to 89 years old at the time of enrollment. About 3,100 people are active participants in the study.

### The broad long-term goals of the Mayo Clinic Study of Aging are to:

- Develop tools to predict and prevent cognitive decline and dementia
- Develop risk-prediction models for cognitive impairment
- Conduct aging-related research to promote successful aging



**On behalf of all of us at the  
Mayo Clinic ADRC,  
we want to express our continued thanks  
to all of our MCSA participants!**

