IN-HOME SENIOR CARE ASSESSMENT GUIDE
Comfort Keepers®, a leader in the in-home care industry, has created this In-Home Senior Care Assessment Guide to help you better evaluate the care needs of your loved ones. With informational articles, lists of probing questions and easy-to-use checklists, Comfort Keepers has provided a simple system to help you determine the types and amount of care that a senior may need. If you feel your family member or a loved one may need additional care,

Should you decide that a Comfort Keeper would be the right choice for your family, please visit www.comfortkeepers.ca to find out more about the services we offer and to locate an office near your loved one.

Many of us are faced with the difficult decision of when to provide additional care for senior loved ones. Knowing how to assess potential care needs and the types of care available can provide peace of mind during the decision process.
USING YOUR FIVE SENSES TO ASSESS YOUR LOVED ONE'S CARE NEEDS

It is possible to use your five senses to evaluate the status of elderly family members. Families often overlook a variety of warning signs such as forgetfulness, lack of house cleaning or a decrease in physical appearance by writing them off to “old age”. Below is a checklist using each of your five senses that provide key indicators or warning signs to help determine if your family members are in need of additional care or assistance.

SIGHT – Looking at the senior’s appearance can be a sign that they are being limited either physically or mentally from completing otherwise normal daily tasks.

- Are they getting out of their night clothes for the day?
- Are they wearing clothing with food stains?
- Is their hair completely combed?
- Is he normally clean shaven but now is not?
- Do their teeth appear clean?
- Does she continue to wear makeup?
- How do their shoes look?
- Is the house orderly and clean?

SOUND – Listening to what seniors say and how they speak can tell you a lot about their current mental status. Don’t assume that “old age” is causing these problems; doing so can delay uncovering the real cause.

- Do they call you by name?
- Are they speaking normally?
- Are they up on the news?
- Have they continued their outside activities?
- Do they have future plans or goals?
- If not, could they be depressed?

SMELL – Using your nose as an indicator can help you determine if your family member is bathing properly, participating in otherwise normal activities (cleaning their house), or whether or not they are eating regularly (if they have spoiled food in their kitchen).

- Does their living environment possess any unpleasant odors?
- Do the refrigerator or cupboards smell?
- Is there an unusual amount of mail, garbage, clutter, dust, or dirt?
TASTE – Tasting their food and sorting through their medications can help you determine if they are eating healthy or even worse, taking expired medicine.

- Do they have fresh and stocked pantry items?
- Look at the expiration dates. How does the food taste?
- Does the person appear to move around the kitchen safely?
- Are there many different prescriptions?
- Do the medications come from different doctors or pharmacies?
- What about the expiration dates on the medications?

TOUCH – A simple hug could tell you that your family member is fragile, losing weight and putting himself or herself in jeopardy of injury or even malnourishment from not eating properly.

- Do they appear healthy?
- Touch their skin – is it soft, supple and is the color normal?
- Do they have unusual tearing or bruising of the skin?
- Are they losing weight?

If you sense a problem based on the above indictors, you and other family members should waste no time in taking the appropriate next steps. As difficult as the process might be, keep reminding yourself that by being proactive, as a result of your observations, you will not only provide safety for your family member, but will also keep them happy and healthy.

REVIEW STATUS BY PHONE

With families spread out across the county, many of us may not be able to be together with our loved ones as often as we would like. But that should not keep you from taking the time to assess your loved one’s care needs.

In telephone conversations, gently probe for information about the person’s health and well-being. Below is a list of sample questions that are key indicators or warning signs to help determine if your family members are in need of additional care or assistance:

- What was eaten for breakfast? If your loved one cannot remember what he/she ate for breakfast that morning, forgot to eat breakfast or the meal appears to lack nutritious value, a problem could be setting in.
- Did you go to the beauty salon to get your hair cut? Did you use the new shower gel I bought you? These are good “backdoor” questions to finding out whether or not your loved one is remembering to take care of his/her hygiene. A lack of personal hygiene is often an early sign that your loved one may need a caregiver to aid in these tasks.
- Did you give any thought to the conversation we had last night about Debbie coming to visit you? If your loved one cannot remember the last conversation you had or is repeating stories, he/she may also be having difficulty when communicating with strangers (i.e. telephone repair man, bank teller, etc...).
- Did you make it to your weekly bridge club game with the girls last week? An early sign of depression is withdrawal from social activities. A caregiver may provide the comfort that your loved one craves or encourage involvement in activities outside the home.
- Did you get the oil changed in your car? Seniors often do not realize when their driving skills may be impaired. Finding out if he/she is keeping up with maintenance on the vehicle is a great way to find out if he/she may need a caregiver to start running errands and personally drive the senior to his/her appointments.
- Is your loved one speaking normally? Differences in speech patterns are warning signs for medical problems that should be looked into immediately.

These are just a sampling of the questions that could help you assess your loved one’s needs. Once you have determined that there is a need for more care, you can refer to page 5 to find more information about the types of care available both by family caregivers and in-home services.
ASSESSING YOUR HOME-CARE NEEDS
There are a number of options available for finding help at home. The best way to start is to assess the needs of the person you are caring for. In order to help you evaluate what type and how much help you need, consider the following areas of care:

- **Personal Care:** bathing, eating, dressing, toileting
- **Household Care:** cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping
- **Health Care:** medication management, physician’s appointments, physical therapy appointments
- **Emotional Care:** companionship, meaningful activities, conversation

While considering all of the options, it is also important to evaluate the values and preferences of the person receiving care. Your loved one may be more comfortable with a caregiver who shares their cultural background and/or language. Also determine if they have a preference between male or female caregivers, particularly if personal care will be provided.

The following Needs Assessment Checklist from Family Care America will provide an easy way to evaluate the care status of your loved ones.

**ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (ADLS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishes alone</th>
<th>Needs some help</th>
<th>Needs much help</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bathing</td>
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<td>Dressing</td>
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<td>Grooming</td>
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<td>Toileting</td>
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<td>Eating a nutritious diet</td>
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<td>Getting out of bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting out of chair</td>
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<td>Walking</td>
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</table>

**INSTRUMENTAL ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING (IADLS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishes alone</th>
<th>Needs some help</th>
<th>Needs much help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the telephone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shopping for personal items</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
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<td>Managing money</td>
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<td>Doing laundry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doing light housework</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparing meals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CONDITIONS/FUNCTIONAL STATUS

How do the following affect the person’s ability to function?

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<tr>
<th>Limitation</th>
<th>No affect</th>
<th>Some affect</th>
<th>Major affect</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Hearing</td>
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<td>Vision</td>
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<td>Perception</td>
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<td>Orientation</td>
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<td>Thinking</td>
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<td>Memory-Making/Judgment</td>
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<td>Physical Dexterity</td>
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<td>Balance</td>
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<td>Strength</td>
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<td>Energy</td>
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<td>Bowel Control, Impairment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Impairment</td>
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<td>Depression</td>
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<td>Arthritis</td>
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<td>Hypertension</td>
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<td>Heart Disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Providing Support To Family Caregivers

For many family caregivers, there comes a point in time where they become overwhelmed with caregiving tasks. Unsure how to ask for help, many family care providers miss opportunities to seek better communication, connection and support from family and friends.

The following are some suggested ways to open the lines of communication between caregivers, friends and family who can help out with the responsibilities of caring for a loved one.

An opportunity for communication – Although it is understandable to have reservations about discussing a loved one’s impairments, honest communication about the realities of the caregiving situation offers others the opportunity to respond with assistance. A family meeting is often a perfect way to address a loved one’s circumstances and care needs. During this meeting, it is important to include the loved one as well as everyone who is affected by the loved one’s situation. Continue to include those members who feel uncomfortable or do not want to take part in the discussion without forcing the issue. Family members don’t often realize the amount of time and energy it takes to be a caregiver. Ask for help and communicate with them so they realize the amount of support and assistance you need.
Be clear about your energy level — Let other family members know that your caregiving duties are keeping you very busy and that you only have so much energy for other activities.

Treat yourself well — One of the best things to do as a caregiver is to take care of yourself. When others depend on you, it is important that you continue treating yourself well. Exercise can often help decrease stress and depression, lower blood pressure and provide you with more energy. You can’t fully assist anyone else if you are personally struggling. Focus on your needs as well as the needs of the loved one you care for.

Accept the need to adapt — You may find it easier to allow other family members to host more time-intensive family gatherings. You may also have to choose which events to attend based on which would be the simplest, least exhausting and most enjoyable for the person for whom you provide care — and for you.

A little help goes a long way — Accept the gift of respite. When someone offers to stay with the care recipient for a few hours, accept the invitation to take a break. This time may encourage them to visit again or be more supportive of your efforts.

All too often, families find themselves dealing with elder/parent care issues and facing new life challenges. The challenges of this new responsibility cannot be simply identified nor are they easy to fulfill. Becoming a parent to a parent is not an easy role to fill and emotions, because they can’t be “seen” or “felt” by anyone else, are

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Useful Tips TO HELP PROTECT SENIORS DURING COLD WEATHER MONTHS

When winter temperatures drop significantly below normal, staying warm and safe can become a challenge, especially for elderly. There are several factors that can put the elderly at risk during winter storms and lengthy sub-zero periods such as unexpected power or heating system failure.

Exposure to cold temperatures, whether indoors or outdoors, can cause serious or life-threatening health problems. The Canadian Government Senior Services division and Comfort Keepers have provided these tips for seniors to remain safe during the cold weather season. Other dangers to consider are icy sidewalks and cold and flu viruses.

Through the proper precautions, winter doesn’t have to enjoy these months care and caution. Follow these tips her potential

- Do not place a space heater hing that may catch on fire, such as drapes, furniture, or bedding, and never cover your space heater. In addition to being a fire hazard, space heaters may also increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Consistently check the temperature — Older adults often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. When over 65 years of age, it is important to check home temperatures often especially during severely cold weather. The thermostat should be set to 65 degrees to prevent hypothermia. This will also prevent freezing pipes. Often times, seniors will turn the heat down to save money on their monthly bill. Caulking or plastic sheets can be used to protect windows and keep the warm air inside the house and bring peace of mind to seniors worried about their energy bills.

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors — CO can be a very dangerous gas emitted by fuel-burning heaters and appliances. Seniors’ bodies can’t dispose of carbon monoxide as quickly as younger adults. Check to make sure all smoke and carbon monoxide detectors work within the home.

- Eat nutritiously — Eating well-balanced meals will help seniors stay warmer. Also, alcoholic or caffeinated beverages can cause body temperatures to drop more rapidly (regardless of age). Even though the heat may be gone, it is still important to drink at least six to eight glasses of water a day. This can help prevent dry skin problems as well as dehydration. A senior’s body isn’t as tough as it once was. It is more important for a 70-year-old to stay hydrated than a 30-year-old.

continued on page 11
the most difficult elements in elder care situations. Because they are so elusive, yet have such a tremendous impact, they must be fully understood and dealt with appropriately in order to achieve win-win situations.

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THE FAMILY CAREGIVER
Many times a family caregiver may feel more comfortable with a trained caregiver in their home when they are unable to be there. There are several resources available to family caregivers starting with the information provided on the Caregiver Network website - www.caregiver.ca and the NFCA website – www.thefamilycaregiver.org. Caregivers will find useful tips, information, and can sign up to receive a quarterly newsletter written specifically for the family caregiver.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES INCLUDE:
Seniors Canada – www.seniors.gc.ca/hom.2@.jsp – The Canadian Government website has information on a wide variety of topics of interest to seniors.
Seniors Health – www.publichealth.gc.ca – The Public Health Agency of Canada has information on health issues that can affect seniors.
Comfort Keepers® – www.comfortkeepers.ca – Comfort Keepers provides in-home care to seniors, new mothers, and those recovering from illness or injury.

Without question, the topic of caring for a family member or a friend affects every American directly or indirectly.

COMFORT KEEPERS’ TIPS TO PREVENT SENIOR SCAMS
Many seniors grew up in a time when business was based on a handshake and trust. According to the Federal Trade Commission, nearly 25 million Americans were victims of fraud in 2004, making it very difficult to trust any stranger. Seniors are one of the top targets for a wide variety of scams. In fact, seniors make up 11 percent of the U.S. population, but constitute 30 percent of consumer fraud and 50 percent of all phone scam victims.
Why are seniors so heavily targeted by scam artists? Generational and economic factors contribute. According to a study done by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP), older people are quicker to believe promises and slower to take action to protect legal rights. Plus, many seniors live alone and are susceptible to “friendly” callers, whoever they may be. Add this to the fact that older people own more than half of all financial assets in Canada and it becomes clear why scam artists choose to target them.

Below is a list of some of the most common acts of fraud targeted toward seniors and steps on how seniors can protect themselves from these scams:

**SCAM 1 – TELEMARKETING FRAUD**

While telemarketers call people of all ages, backgrounds and incomes, they often make up to 80 percent of their calls to older consumers (according to the CARP). These telemarketers often prey upon older people who are well educated, have above average incomes and are socially active in their community. Their sales pitches are sophisticated and include phony prizes, illegitimate sweepstakes and fake charities.

**STEPS TO TAKE:**

- Never send money or give out personal information such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, dates of birth, or social security numbers to unfamiliar companies or unknown persons.
- If you have doubts about a telemarketer’s legitimacy, be sure to ask for their company’s name and address, along with a phone number where they can be reached at a later time.
- For elderly widows, if a caller asks for the man of the house, be sure not to say there isn’t one or indicate you live alone.
- Talk to family and friends or call your lawyer, accountant or banker and get their advice prior to making any large purchase or investment over the phone with a stranger.
- Look into unfamiliar companies with your local consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, National Fraud Information Center or other watchdog groups.
- Be sure to sign up for the National Do Not Call List. Telemarketers who continue to call after you have registered are subject to penalties. You can call the National DNCL service line toll-free at 1-866-580-DNCL (1-866-580-3625) or sign up at www.lntte-dncl.gc.ca
- Always remember the power to simply hang up the phone when a stranger calls to try and sell you something you aren’t interested in.

**Useful Tips TO EVALUATE YOUR LOVED ONE’S DRIVING ABILITIES**

Elderly drivers have become a growing concern in society. With life expectancy increasing throughout the U.S., the number of older drivers continues to rise as well. As people age, the operation of a motor vehicle can become difficult due to poor eyesight and slow reflexes.

This discussion is often very difficult and emotional for the adult child as well as the parent. It is crucial to consider the impact this will have on your parent and how you can make the transition easier on them.

Below are six tips you can use to help your loved one understand why it is time to find alternative transportation methods without them resenting having their independence taken away.

- **Build a case** – If you feel safe doing so and haven’t done so in a long while, take a drive with your parent, where you’re the passenger, and get a sense for whether your intuition is right or not. It may turn out that your parent is a safer driver than you suspected; but if your hunch bears out, you’ll have at least one reference point to go to, when you have your discussion. If driving with a parent isn’t feasible, talk to like-minded relatives, who may have anecdotes of near misses and fender-benders that shouldn’t have happened.
- **Steer the conversation towards recent headlines** – National or local, that involve an elderly driver as the cause of the accident. Get a sense of what your parent thinks. You might want to ask when they plan on giving up driving. You may get an answer like, “Oh, in 5 or 10 years,” which will help you know what you’re up against. Or your shrewd parent might know exactly what you’re up to. Either way, the conversation has been started.
- **Be gentle but firm** – Try not to be insulting or confrontational. If you make your parents angry or hurt, which may be impossible to avoid, they’re more likely to stubbornly cling to the idea that they should be on the road.
- **Rely on experts** – Realize that it may be difficult for your parents to agree with you. Suggest that they visit their doctor or ophthalmologist to get an assessment on their reflexes or eyesight. Consulting a doctor regarding a check-up will determine whether or not there is a treatable medical problem causing any driving difficulties. If the problem is not treatable, the doctor can recommend directly to the parent that it is time to stop driving. It is often easier for an authority to deliver this message to your parent rather than hearing it from you. If their doctor can not assess driving ability, you can look for a geriatric assessment program at the hospital.
SCAM 2 – HOME IMPROVEMENT FRAUD
Home improvement contractors use several methods of targeting seniors: high pressure phone calls, flyers, advertisements and door-to-door sales. While most contracted home repairs are completed satisfactorily, fraudulent contractors can be very effective in making people think their services are needed, and then defrauding their victims.

STEPS TO TAKE:
- Use a local, well-established contractor. Ask for references and check with customers to find out if they were satisfied.
- Get competitive bids on all work and be wary of any bids that seem too good to be true. Don’t accept high-pressure offers or offers that force you to make a quick decision.
- Determine exactly what work you want done. Make sure the project is explicitly described in your contract, including materials and labor specifics and dates for estimated start and completion.
- Never say yes to someone who wants money up front before the job is done or wants you to withdraw a large amount of money from your bank.
- Check to see that the work is complete and done correctly before paying.
- Find out when and how payment and/or billing will take place before the work begins.

SCAM 3 – DOOR-TO-DOOR SALES
Seniors are frequent victims of door-to-door scams and high-pressure sales tactics.

While some door-to-door salespeople are honest, the chances are likely that whoever answers the door is about to be swindled. Con-artists often try to coax seniors into buying unnecessary products or services ranging from living trusts to encyclopedias to household cleaning supplies. They usually appear friendly and appear sincere in their desire to help. In fact, they are successful because they seem so honest.

STEPS TO TAKE:
- Never allow anyone you don’t know into your home. It is easier to close the door on them before they get in than to get them out once they are inside.
- Don’t buy on impulse. Tell the salesperson you will get back in touch with them after you have had a chance to carefully read all the materials given to you.
- Ask to see the salesperson’s credentials and identification and request their business card. Many communities require door-to-door salespersons to have a permit.
- Never give cash up front to a salesperson or rely on verbal promises for delivered goods.
- If you sign a contract, make sure that it is complete, signed and dated. Get all terms in writing, including the total price, warranties, return policy and all conditions of sale.
- Know that you can get out of a door-to-door sales contract within three business days. According to the FTC’s Cooling Off Rule, you have the right to cancel your contract for a full refund until midnight of the third business day after the sale, provided that you have a signed contract and the sale was over $25. You do not have to have any reason for canceling.

FRAUD VICTIM RESOURCES:
If you know a senior that has been a victim of fraud, be sure to report the act immediately. Contact the following agencies for more information:

Industry Canada’s Consumer Information Department – http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ic1.nsf/eng/h_00071.html – This department contains services, tools and resources available for consumers related to fraud, telephone scams, debt problems, product and food recalls.


The National Fraud Information Center – www.fraud.org or (800) 876-7060 – The NFIC is a project of the National Consumers League and was designed to help people learn about fraud and file complaints. Additional information about how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud is listed on their Web site.

Canadian Association of Retired Persons – www.carp.ca – CARP provides seniors with information on financial planning, using home equity, avoiding fraud, and consumer rights.
Useful Tips

continued from page 7

TO HELP PROTECT SENIORS DURING COLD WEATHER MONTHS

• Safety precautions – If a cane is used to assist in walking, be sure to replace the rubber tip to prevent falls. When driving in the winter be sure to get the car tuned up, keep the gas tank near full and check to make sure the car has good tires.

• Dress appropriately – Be sure the outer layer of clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind. Using wool, silk or polypropylene as the inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton. Mittens are warmer than gloves because your fingers produce heat when they are touching. Wear a hat to protect against heat loss through the head.

• Take breaks during outdoor winter tasks – Many forget how much energy it takes to shovel snow in the driveway or walkway. The cold weather during the winter months can put added strain on the heart. It is important to warm up the body prior to these chores and take frequent breaks to prevent any problems or injuries.

• Keep a water supply – Have an extra supply of water stored in clean containers, or purchase bottled water (up to five gallons per person) in case water pipes freeze and rupture.

By preparing a senior’s home for the winter months and taking the necessary safety precautions, you can reduce the risk of weather-related health problems. If you know elderly persons who are unable, for any reason, to prepare for extreme cold-weather conditions, they should stay with family members or go to available shelter facilities.

continued from page 8

TO HELP PROTECT SENIORS DURING WARM WEATHER MONTHS

• Drink plenty of replenishing fluids – Alcoholic beverages and caffeine should be avoided since they can cause dehydration. Water is a great option, but does not effectively replace the potassium and sodium (electrolytes) that are lost during perspiration. Popular sports drinks such as Gatorade and Powerade are great choices for rehydrating the body. Always be on guard for symptoms of heat exhaustion, which include pale, cold or clammy skin, extreme thirst, light-headedness, fainting, mild nausea, vomiting, and excessive sweating. Signs of heat stroke include hot, dry skin, a fast, strong pulse, confusion, and a body temperature of 104 degrees or higher. If a person exhibits signs of heat stroke, this is a serious medical emergency and 911 or your local emergency medical team should be contacted.

The good news is heat-related illnesses and injuries are preventable. If seniors understand the signs and are aware of the symptoms, they can beat the heat this summer season.

continued from page 9

TO EVALUATE YOUR LOVED ONE’S DRIVING ABILITIES

• Most importantly, offer solutions – To giving up the car, like volunteering to take your parent to church every Sunday or to the bookstore on Saturday mornings. It is important to offer alternatives in order to help them continue to get where they need to be. And since you can’t always be there, consider turning to a professional caregiver and companion service. Your parent might not be that depressed about relinquishing the car keys, and might even be relieved, to know that when you’re not available, around the clock, there are companies like Comfort Keepers, which specialize in providing in-home care for the elderly and provide incidental transportation services.

Although the conversation can often be a difficult one, it is especially imperative for a professional to be involved. If the doctor is in agreement that a parent or loved one shouldn’t be behind the wheel, it is important for them to follow orders. In many states, the doctor is required to report impaired drivers to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

The more assistance you can give them during this time, the less difficult the transition will be for your loved one and everyone involved.