

SENIOR LIVING:

5 Ways To Stay Active in Retirement



LEXINGTON | The Square
HEALTH NETWORK Senior Residence

(630) 297- 4944 • LexingtonSquares.com

*“Go oft to the house of thy friend, for weeds choke the unused path.”
- Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We are social creatures. Just about everyone craves being in the company of others on a regular basis. So when we lose the ability to interact with other people – due perhaps to the loss of a spouse or even the loss of driving privileges – it’s no surprise that feelings of isolation and loneliness may set in. Seniors in the Lombard and Elmhurst areas, like their peers across the country, deal with this issue every day. Some may have few family members or friends to encourage or help them enjoy a fulfilling, active lifestyle.

However, seniors who live alone don’t have to succumb to loneliness and isolation.

“We live in a society where we’re led to believe young people are happy, content, resilient, fun and cool, and once you reach 60, all of that evaporates and you become unhappy, sick,” Ken Dychtwald, gerontologist, author and CEO of Age Wave, said in a [USA Today interview](#). “That’s simply wrong. It’s a misperception, a misunderstanding and profound misrepresentation. ... Turns out, young people these days are the most anxious, most depressed, and the 60-76 (year olds) are the most resilient ...”

What research reveals about aging and isolation

Adults ages 65 to 74 are [most likely to live alone](#) and, given women’s greater life expectancy, more females live alone than males. Although many of these seniors are thriving, others are coping with major challenges.

According to a [2009 report by the National Institutes of Health](#), “The health risks posed by social isolation may be particularly severe for older adults. ... A large body of psychological research has demonstrated a robust association between loneliness and worst health, including cardiovascular disease ... and depression.”

Five ways to stay active

In spite of what many people may think, a legion of seniors across the country – including those who lack companionship at home or the ability to come and go with relative ease – refuse to become shut-ins. This generation of seniors is far more active than their predecessors. What, exactly, are they up to?

1. Run away from home (so to speak)

More and more seniors refuse to stay home alone. According to the [2009 National Household Travel Survey](#):

- Older adults comprise an increasing share of the nation's travel.
- Although individuals are traveling less, particularly in private vehicles, public transportation use is up.
- Older men are more mobile than older women; however, the gap has been narrowing.

Seniors are literally traveling near and far. Their itineraries range from trips to see friends and relatives close to home, to exotic, adventurous journeys in the United States and abroad. When it comes to the latter, seniors are taking advantage of companies such as [ElderTreks](#), which cater to mature travelers who want to visit the likes of Africa, China and the North Pole.

2. Stay on top of your game

Perhaps like never before, seniors are refusing to be sedentary. It's no longer uncommon to see people in their 70s and 80s participating in marathons, triathlons and long-distance cycling events nationwide. For other fitness enthusiasts, there are senior baseball leagues, senior softball leagues, senior swim teams and senior rodeo events.

According to the [“Today” morning-news program’s website](#), “more and more people are achieving stunning physical accomplishments well into their 80s, 90s and beyond”:

- Lew Hollander became the second 80-year-old to complete the grueling annual Ford Ironman World Championship in Kona, Hawaii. Three years ago, at age 81, the Oregon resident was planning take the record as the oldest person ever to complete the event, which includes a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and a 26.2-mile marathon run.
- Ninety-three-year-old Tao Porchon-Lynch and her 23-year-old dance partner were sweeping ballroom-dancing competitions in New York, New Jersey and Puerto Rico. She was also teaching at least 12 yoga classes a week.

3. Work just because you can

A [recent poll](#) conducted by USA Today, UnitedHealthcare and the National Council on Aging shows that staying active and engaged in the community is a top priority for seniors. Roughly 25 percent of them work full time or part time, and 76 percent of them say they work because they want to stay active and productive.

Take Brenda Farkas, for example. The 71-year-old has been working as a full-time skating coach since she was 18. She never considered quitting when she moved from New Jersey to Fort Mill, S.C., with her husband, Michael, 69.

“I probably never thought I’d retire,” she said. “I worked six days a week from six in the morning. To me, who likes to work, I was so bored (without it). Incredibly bored.” She’s teaching young and old alike at the Pineville Ice House, just across the state line in North Carolina, for a few hours a couple of days a week. “You know what?” Farkas told USA Today. “It’s my identity.” And when this septuagenarian wasn’t teaching, she was jogging — 3.4 miles a day, six days a week.

4. Be a goodwill ambassador in your community

Resourceful seniors who want to maintain a link to others are putting their energy into volunteering. Across the country, many are lending their expertise and experience to programs operated by churches, community centers, schools and the like. They're also participating in large-scale programs such as the Salute to Senior Service program, whose benefits are just as beneficial for the volunteers as the people they assist.

In fact, according to [Home Instead Senior Care network research](#), the following are among the personal benefits that inspire seniors to volunteer:

- I gain a sense of purpose (98 percent)
- I stay active and feel better physically (98 percent)
- I feel better mentally and emotionally (98 percent)
- I am able to overcome feeling isolated (74 percent)
- I am able to overcome feeling depressed (70 percent)

For a better perspective of what those numbers really mean, consider Michigan resident [Pauline](#). During a 15-year span, she has assisted her local seniors' group, Services for Older Citizens. Pauline reported performing a variety of clerical duties, calling bingo games, delivering bread to seniors, and helping to organize teas and parties. She not only gained a sense of fulfillment, but she was also convinced that volunteering helped her manage the chronic pain of fibromyalgia.

"When I am active, I forget about it," Pauline said. "Often when I get home, I think, 'Oh, my gosh, I got through the whole day without feeling the pain.' ... I think volunteering helps me with it."

5. Log on to stay plugged in

Connectivity – whether with family and friends or strangers – is something that we all seek. Now, it’s even easier to stay engaged with others – even from home.

According to Forbes.com, seniors are the fastest-growing users of social media. “These days, they don’t just have an email account, but they are searching on Google, browsing Facebook newsfeeds, and watching YouTube. According to the Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, ‘the 74-plus demographic is the fastest growing demographic among social networks.’ There are currently 39 million people aged 65 and older using Facebook, Twitter and Skype, making them the fastest growing age demographic on these sites.”

Another organization, Forrester Research, reported in 2012 that 49 percent of people ages 65 and older had Facebook accounts. Among the seniors who logged on to the social media site:

- 40 percent connect with family and friends.
- 30 percent share photos.
- 20 percent participate in social gaming.
- 10 percent participate in contests and games.

Or, as The Washington Post reported in December 2013: “This is not your father’s Facebook. It’s your grandfather’s.” Facebook’s strongest growth from 2012 to 2013, said The Post, “came from users over age 65.”

“I’ve connected with friends and acquaintances that I have lost contact with through the years — people I’ve graduated high school with and people from my hometown,” Claire LeSage, 63, said in an [interview with NPR](#).

Lots of seniors skip Facebook. Instead, they prefer to communicate directly with friends and family via social media tools such as Skype. This computer software application (www.skype.com) enables users to:

- See family members during a free group video call.
- Reach friends with free video calls.
- Make affordable phone calls and send text messages to mobile phones and landlines.
- Chat daily with free instant messages.
- Send messages that can be seen, heard and felt with video messaging.

For some, it's still hard to stay engaged

In spite of the many opportunities for seniors to maintain a sense of purpose and fulfillment, a significant portion of the older population is lonely and isolated. For this group, senior health issues are not uncommon. In a report titled “[Old Age and Loneliness](#),” loneliness is “associated with depression, poor health status, decreased mobility and cognitive decline.”

From a physical standpoint, loneliness and isolation manifest themselves in various forms, including high blood pressure and high cortisol (stress) levels. Being lonely and isolated also means that seniors face a greater chance of dying than their more socially connected peers. “Virtually all studies find that people who are socially isolated have between two and five times the risk of dying of all causes compared with those who maintain strong ties to family, friends and community,” said [Orsolya Leikes](#), deputy director of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

How seniors can rectify the situation

As noted above, there are numerous ways to combat loneliness and isolation. Travel, physical activity, volunteerism and working can make a senior's life far more enjoyable. Engaging in an old or new hobby, or adopting a pet, can also enhance a senior's well-being. Though all of these are great ways to stave off loneliness and depression, they may not be feasible solutions for seniors dealing with physical and mental impairments. The same goes for seniors with financial challenges.

Seniors can also turn to family members and friends for companionship. The benefits of staying connected to family and friends include a shared history, shared interests, an established level of comfort and trust, and little to no cost for the senior. However, this option for connectivity is not without its faults. The main one is whether friends and family members can meet a senior's needs on his or her schedule. In a lot of cases, this kind of social connectivity occurs only when a caregiver or companion has time to interact with the senior.

Venturing outside the circle for help

Those who lack a network of family and friends can contact a local agency on aging or their place of worship to ask about home-visitation services and community transportation. A shared history, shared interests, little to no cost for the senior, and an established level of comfort and trust may also apply to this arrangement. As with family and friends, however, this kind of social connectivity occurs only when a caregiver or companion has time to interact with the senior.

All of the options discussed above are certainly worthy of consideration. Many require contacting an organization to learn more about its offerings, sorting through such factors as type of activities, costs, locations and testimonials, then choosing the option that best fits the senior's needs and preferences.

Lexington Square: A full-service solution

A quality senior living community, such as Lexington Square, can provide a wealth of services and amenities to address nearly every senior's needs. As a full-spectrum provider, Lexington Square can accommodate seniors at any state or age – from independent seniors seeking an active, stress-free lifestyle – to those who need special attention and skilled nursing services. Our primary services are Independent Living, Assisted Living and Memory Care.

For independent living, consider Lexington Square in Elmhurst or Lexington Square in Lombard. There are [308 senior living apartments at Lexington Square in Elmhurst](#), and [185 at Lexington Square in Lombard](#).

If a resident's care needs change, he or she is free to transition to our Assisted Living program or remain in his or her apartment, thanks to our Personal Care program.

Lexington Square is licensed to provide Assisted Living to those who shouldn't – or prefer not to – live by themselves. Our competent, compassionate and dedicated health care professionals are committed to customizing each resident's care program. Our staff members don't just learn your name; they develop full-fledged relationships with residents, which allow them to provide a complete level of care.

Residents in our community share in many of the benefits at Lexington Square, including the:

- [Beauty salon and barbershop](#)
- [Full-service bank](#)
- [Game room with billiard tables](#)
- [Library and computer workstations with Internet access](#)

- Lounge and card rooms
- Moving Station, a collection of relocation specialists focused on making your transition as effortless as possible
- Snowbird program, which – after a 60-day absence – provides 25 percent off a resident’s monthly bill for the next 120 days of absence
- Outings to places in and around Chicago
- Pharmacy delivery service
- Transportation to appointments
- Woodworking shop

At Lexington Square, every resident has the opportunity to spend retirement in a community that prides itself on being both nurturing and stimulating. To find out more about Lexington Square, please visit www.lexingtonsquares.com, where you can download our free guide titled “[You’ll Love What You Discover at Lexington Square.](#)”

You'll Love What You Discover at *Lexington Square*

You may be surprised what a Senior Community has to offer.

Discover:

- » Benefits and Amenities provided to residents
- » Care options available for different needs
- » Floor Plan Options and much more

Find out how we can enhance your senior lifestyle and level of care.

Download Now



Lexington Square at Elmhurst
 400 W. Butterfield Road
 Elmhurst, IL 60126
 (630) 832-9922



Lexington Square at Lombard
 555 Foxworth Blvd.
 Lombard, IL 60148
 (630) 620-0099