As seniors age, family members often face difficult decisions – about everything from who should help with meals to making end-of-life choices. When there is just one adult child, decisions tend to be easier to make, although they may still be tough to put into practice. When there is more than one sibling, however, caregiving decisions can get complicated in a hurry.

We all carry childhood memories into our adulthood. If you were the oldest child, your experiences in the family were likely different than those of the youngest child. Boys’ experiences are different than girls’. Many families have a “favorite” child, although most families avoid discussing that openly. Some children were always more needy; others were always more independent. Family was very important to some and much less important to others.

Many of these childhood relationships continue to play a role in adult decision-making and communication about senior caregiving. For example, if the oldest child was used to ordering around the younger sibs, that approach will backfire when making caregiving decisions as adults. In the best circumstances, adult sibs will
work as a team to reach agreement on what’s best for Mom. That does not necessarily mean that every sib will play an equal caregiving role, but that there at least will be basic agreement on how decisions will be made. Some sibs may choose to opt out of the whole process, especially if they feel that their preferences are not respected – or if they simply are not in a position (financially, geographically, time limits, etc.) to contribute to caregiving.

Adult siblings sometimes overlook the parent’s wishes in all this. Most parents will have a preference for which child is at least the primary point of contact for caregiving decisions. Sometimes that child is well-positioned to play that role, but other times that is simply impractical. These hard choices often result in simmering resentment and resistance.

How can you help shape the sibling relationships that are needed for effective caregiving? Your goal should be to establish communication patterns that, if not perfect, are at least sufficient to navigate the important decisions that lie ahead. One first step could be to convene a family meeting of the siblings. This works best face-to-face, but distant siblings could join in electronically. Some families ask a trusted outside person such as a pastor to help facilitate this discussion. Create a list of what needs to be decided now and in the near future. Share information such as financial resources that are important to these decisions. If relationships are stressed, expect comments about old grudges and slights, but try to stay calm and on topic. Focus everyone on what Mom needs and how you can each divide up tasks and play a role. Take notes and share them afterwards with everyone involved so there is a written record. Set up a schedule to meet again to address progress and new decisions.

It is sometimes hard to move past old feelings of anger and resentment, but focusing on today’s needs may help siblings find an acceptable working relationship that can move the family forward.

Resources
Tips for Disposing Hazardous Waste
Your home is filled with potentially harmful household products like bleach, oven cleaner, drain cleaner, pesticides, mothballs, and aerosols. Do you know what to do with the
empty containers or partially used products? Several of the products you use in and around your home do not need any special treatment and may be picked up by the local waste management company that services your home. However, some of these products are toxic and should be treated like hazardous waste. A product that is considered hazardous is one that is poisonous or toxic, flammable, corrosive or reactive with other chemicals. The best way to figure out if a product is hazardous is to read the packaging labels.

If a product is hazardous, then it needs to be disposed of properly. If tossed into a trash bin with other chemicals, there could a reaction between the chemicals forming a deadly gas or even an explosion. You want to keep yourself safe, as well as the people who pick up the trash and recycling at your home.

Follow the guidelines below for disposing of hazardous products.

1. Do not pour hazardous products down the sink or toilet.
2. Do not dispose of hazardous products on the grass, soil or in a stream. Do not toss hazardous products into the recycle bin or trash.
3. Do read the product label for disposal advice. If the label doesn’t provide information then check with your local waste hauler, the Georgia Recycling Coalition or Earth 911 for information, on proper disposal.
4. Do leave all products in the original containers.
5. Do organize a community swap of products. For example, your neighbor or a friend may be able to use the extra paint or varnish that you don’t need.
6. Do help organize a hazardous waste collection day in your community. This will help provide you and your neighbors a way to dispose of items like hazardous household cleaners, batteries, antifreeze, and paint. Other household products such as laundry detergent can be safely poured down the drain with water; however, it would be better to use them up or give unused products to others to use. If you have a septic system, avoid pouring large amounts of bleach down the drain because it could negatively impact your septic system.

When possible, always recycle. Most plastic product containers can be recycled and some waste disposal companies take aerosol cans.
should also “precycle.” This means selecting products that are in recycled packaging, come in concentrated form, or use less hazardous ingredients.

Remember, it may be illegal to dispose of hazardous waste with the trash. Check with your waste management company before disposing of hazardous products. More information on a healthy house at www.georgiahealthyhousing.org or read the Extension publication “Hazardous Household Products.”

**Nutrition**

**Staying on Track While Traveling**

The summer and fall often mean vacations and family reunions. Some of us find that traveling can be a big challenge to our healthy eating plans. The good news is that a few tips can help you stay on track while traveling.

For road trips, consider packing a cooler with ice so you can bring healthy snacks and meals. This usually will save you time and money in addition to calories. Alternatively, fast food restaurants and gas stations are carrying more healthy choices than ever before. Gas stations now carry yogurt, string cheese, fresh fruit, and sandwiches that can all be good choices. Use the nutrition label to make good decisions. Snacks should be 200 calories or less.

Fast food restaurants with at least 20 locations must provide nutrition information for all menu items to customers. Use this information to see the calorie counts of your favorite foods. Try to find meals that are about 300–600 calories. Consider a meal that includes a basic sandwich (e.g., plain hamburger or grilled chicken) and substitute a salad for the fries or chips.

Even if you don’t pack a cooler, a few snacks will hold in the car. Consider some fresh fruit like apples, pears, bananas, or peaches. These can be washed and dried before you leave. Bring 100-calorie packs of nuts to have with your fruit. The fat and protein from the nuts and fiber and carbohydrates from the fruit will help your hunger stay put. Pop popcorn and place in plastic bags. Did you know that 3 cups of air-popped popcorn (unsalted, no butter added) is only about 100 calories and a good source of fiber?

Stay hydrated. Many of us choose not to drink as much to avoid unnecessary trips to the bathroom. However, dehydration can make you feel bad and this can lead to poor food choices. Always keep a bottle of water handy.
When you get to your destination and you’re enjoying family, restaurant or catered meals, try filling half your plate with non-starchy vegetables like salads, green beans, broccoli, peppers, and carrots. That way, your starchy foods (e.g., potatoes, breads, corn, pasta) and meat portions will stay reasonable. Use a salad plate in the buffet line to help you keep portions small.

Take a half portion of desserts, so you don’t have to make the choice to leave some on your plate.

Overall, remember, that vacations and family reunions are meant to enjoy the people you love. Nutritious choices will help you feel at your best to savor the time with your friends and family.

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**Tasty Travel Snack Mix**

Makes about 8 servings

- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 bag 94% fat-free popcorn, popped
- 2 cups, toasted oats cereal (like Cheerios)
- 1/4 cup, raisins
- 3 ounces (about 3/4 cup) lightly salted peanuts

**Directions**

Pop popcorn per package instructions. In a large bowl, combine cereal, raisins, and peanuts. Stir to combine. Add popcorn. Use hands to toss. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Toss again. Using a measuring cup, place 1 cup snack mix into zippered plastic bags for proportioned servings to enjoy on the road.

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**Nutrition Analysis:**

- Calories: 150
- Fat: 6 gm
- Saturated Fat: 1 gm
- Sodium: 131 mg
- Carbohydrates: 21 gm
- Fiber: 3.5 gm
- Protein: 4.5 gm
Contributors to this issue:

Don Bower, PhD, CFCS, Extension Human Development Specialist
Pamela Turner PhD, Extension Housing and Environment Specialist
Alison Berg, PhD, RDN, LD, Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist

Past editions of Senior Sense are available at:
http://www.fcs.uga.edu/news/tag/senior+sense

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