



# Aged To Perfection

...sharing the latest on caring for seniors

## TOP 10 THROWBACK SUMMER FUN ACTIVITIES FOR SENIORS

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It's a beautiful summer day, and you want to enjoy the gorgeous weather with your elderly parent or grandparent...the big question is, what can you do together? While the heat and sunshine sometimes send the elderly indoors, there are safe ways to enjoy the summer weather (in small doses!). Be sure to select days that are not too hot or humid, and remain in the shade as much as possible. Drink lots of water, and ensure your loved one is wearing a hat and loose-fitting clothing. Once all the precautions are in place, you can enjoy some summer fun outdoors!

Here is a top 10 list of activities that will appeal to older generations and that will spark reminiscing of summers gone by.

1. **Watch the Sunset at the Beach**—regardless of age, watching the sunset



shimmering over the water can be relaxing. If your loved one is up for a challenge, go for a walk along the beach and collect seashells, or build a sandcastle. If the beach is too far away, watch the sunset over the Grand River, or the ponds in

Waterloo Park or Victoria Park.

2. **Play Miniature Golf**—for avid golfers who can no longer handle the demands of an 18-hole golf course, mini-golf is a way to enjoy putting, without the twisting action of driving the ball. Be sure to ask: did they play mini-golf with friends or while out on a date in their younger years?

3. **Make Lemonade From Scratch**—this would have been the only way to have lemonade 70 or 80 years ago! Your elderly loved ones may even remember a favourite family recipe. Modification: the recipe can



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be adjusted to accommodate diabetic needs by reducing sugar or replacing sugar with artificial sweeteners.

4. **Be a Tourist**—sometimes, we overlook some of the greatest local attractions, simply because they are right in our own backyard! Pretend to be a tourist in your own community. Take a trolley tour or boat tour for a way to see the city from a different angle without being required to walk far distances. You might be surprised what you can learn about your own hometown!



5. **Win a Prize at the Fair**—who says that fairs are just for children? Appeal to the inner sense of fun by trying a few midway games. Tip: if your loved one's gait is unsteady, it might be wise to use a wheelchair throughout the fair as the pushing and shoving of the crowd could pose a safety threat.

6. **Attend a Live Sports Game**—the energy of a live sports game can be contagious and exciting! There is accessible seating at all major sports centres, so your loved one can use whatever assistive devices are necessary for safety. If a major-league game is too long or intense, attending a grandchild's (or even a great-grandchild!) team sport might be a good compromise.

7. **Go Fishing**—many a grandfather has taken his children and grandchildren on fishing expeditions. Now, it might be your turn to take your grandfather out fishing. Tip: fishing off a pier or stable dock might be more accessible (ie: able to use a walker or wheelchair) than fishing from a boat or riverside.

8. **Have a Picnic at the Park**—a good old fashioned picnic basket filled with favourite treats will always bring a smile! You can be sure to accommodate special dietary requirements when packing the picnic basket. Be sure to look for a picnic table or bring along a lawn chair (sitting directly on the ground might be difficult; getting up from the ground could be even harder!).

9. **Pick Wildflowers**—who doesn't love a vase full of fresh flowers? It's even better when you pick the flowers yourself and create the arrangement! Best of all, this fun summer activity doesn't cost a penny.

10. **See a Movie at the Drive-In Theatre**—this will feel like a flash from the past! Drive-In theatres still operate and often feature classic movies from varying eras. The drive-in has many benefits for the elderly—they can remain in a comfortable seat in the car, they don't have to fight any crowds on foot, and the volume can be set to the level that suits their hearing. Of course, it does mean a late night out, but that's all part of the fun!

Hopefully you now have an idea or two of a fun, lighthearted way to spend time with elderly relatives while enjoying all that Canadian summer has to offer!







# LIVING WITH MACULAR DEGENERATION



Did you know that vision loss is not a part of normal aging? Normal aging might include changes in your vision, but loss of vision altogether is not a normal part of aging. Normal aging includes changes to the body that all people will experience, provided they live long enough. Changes to hair—such as hair loss, or hair turning white/gray—is a normal part of aging. Everyone’s hair will eventually turn colour and become thinner, if they live long enough. Macular degeneration, by contrast, is not a normal part of aging because it is not inevitable that someone will eventually experience macular degeneration.

Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of vision loss for people over age 50. It affects 15% of people over age 50; it affects 30% of those over age 75. AMD is a serious condition because it can severely impair someone’s sight as it progresses.

The macula is an area of the eye that is responsible for detail vision. It is the bulls-eye of the retina, and it is what allows people to read. The macula is essential for the detail vision necessary for reading; the rest of the retina cannot read; only the macula can read. If the macula is severely impaired, the ability to read will disappear; larger or stronger glasses won’t solve the problem as only the macula can provide the detail necessary for reading.

There are two types of macular degeneration—dry and wet. Dry AMD is much more common, accounting for 85% of all AMD

cases. It’s impact is less severe because those with dry AMD typically only lose 10-20% of their vision.

Wet AMD is less common, but it’s impacts are more severe. Only 15% of those with AMD experience the wet version, but they will typically lose 80-90% of their vision and become legally blind.

Dry AMD always precedes wet AMD. Sometimes people ignore symptoms and by the time they see an ophthalmologist, the dry AMD has become wet and is much more severe.

With dry AMD, the peripheral vision is maintained and will not be lost. The visual detail provided by the macula is what may be affected. Reading will become difficult, but most people will not become blind as a result of dry AMD alone. In fact, only 5% of people with dry AMD will progress to vision that measures as legally blind, and that typically requires 10 years of progression. Dry AMD typically progresses quite slowly.

What are the risk factors for AMD?

**Heredity**—almost half of all AMD cases are genetic. It isn’t as simple as having a specific gene; it is a series of genes that are responsible for AMD.

**Smoking**—increases risk by 3-4 times the rate of a non-smoker. Smoking also increases the risk of wet AMD. Combine the hereditary risk with smoking, and the risk rises to 34%!

**Age**—while you cannot control the risk factor of age, you can control sun exposure. AMD is the wearing out of the macula. Over-exposure to the sun can expedite this process.

**Nutrition**—maintaining excellent nutrition is important for eye health. Once diagnosed with AMD, patients are advised to eat a nutrient-rich diet that is high in vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants (or supplement as



NORMAL VIEW



VIEW WITH MACULAR DEGENERATION

needed). When patients follow this regimen, there is a 25% reduction in vision loss.

**Wet AMD**—if someone has wet AMD in one eye, they have a 50% risk of also developing AMD in the other eye.



...a mother & her daughters providing meaningful assistance to seniors

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Warm Embrace Elder Care is owned and operated by a mother-daughter team, Brenda Hamilton and her daughters, Chloe and Avery Hamilton. Their goal is to assist seniors to remain independent for as long as possible through offering various services such as homecare, memory therapy, and one-on-one home exercise for seniors.

...MACULAR DEGENERATION (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)



Older adults with vision loss have:

- Twice as much difficulty with day-to-day living compared to their peers
• Twice the risk of falling
• Three times the risk of depression (often linked to the loss of reading ability, a key enjoyment activity for many people)

Those with AMD are well aware of vision changes and how that impacts detail activities such as reading or needlework. What people underestimate is how AMD can impact practical elements of day-to-day living and increase risk in other areas of life.

- Four times the risk of a hip fracture
Vision loss affects more than just vision! With increased risk of falls, fractures, depression, and difficulty with daily living, someone's life could be severely impacted.

Regular eye exams are crucial to ensure that AMD or any other vision

concerns are detected early and treated in the most effective ways possible. Of Canadians who do not wear glasses, 50% have not had their eyes checked in the past 5 years, if ever! Even if someone does not wear glasses, they should still visit an optometrist occasionally to check eye health.

If you know a senior with vision loss who is at risk of falls, fractures, depression or having trouble with daily tasks, call Warm Embrace for additional support (519-954-2480).

With information provided by Dr. Tom Sheidow, (Ophthalmologist, Ivey Eye Institute, London) at "Living with Age-Related Macular Degeneration" hosted by the School of Optometry, University of Waterloo, June 11, 2016.