

Newsletter

Let Me Check My Schedule

Senior Choice at Home members were treated to a full calendar of events from January through March. These events are always well attended and provide great opportunities for lifetime learning as well as social enrichment.

The year kicked off with a lecture about tips and resources for avoiding identity theft and fraud, led by an AARP-trained representative. At the end of the month, a lively group braved the January weather to enjoy lunch at **Tengda Asian Bistro**, followed by a docent-led exhibit tour of the works of French Impressionist Alfred Sisley at the **Bruce Museum**.



In February, members gathered for lunch at the farm-to-table bistro **Bailey's Backyard** in Ridgefield, where all enjoyed creative, fresh and tasty New American fare. Following the meal, the chef mingled with the members who were able to ask questions and learn about what they had just devoured.

Later in the month, members gathered at the **Fairfield Theatre Company** for buffet lunch catered by one of our local gourmet restaurants followed by *Play With Your Food*, a unique program of clever, provocative one-act plays read by terrific professional actors. The event concluded with a discussion with the actors, director, and one of the playwrights.



During March, about 30 Senior Choice at Home members gathered for New American locavore fare at the **Saugatuck Rowing Club**, with its nautical feel and balcony river view. Later in the month, members gathered for a performance by the **New Haven Symphony Orchestra** of its first full-length musical, Lerner and Lowe's *My Fair Lady*. The concertized production included songs such as "Wouldn't It Be Lovely," "On the Street Where You Live" and "I'm Getting Married in the Morning." On a particularly stormy day in early April, close to 40 members gathered at **Artisan in the Delamar Southport** for casual-elegant dining...

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Upcoming Member Events

- Griswold Museum Tour May 2017
- Shell and Bones Bar and Grill June 2017

Senior Choice at Home, a program of Jewish Senior Services®, is a comprehensive program that provides, coordinates and pays for long term care for older adults. It is designed to provide protection for independent individuals who wish to remain in their homes, ensure their care is paid for, and protect their assets as their healthcare needs evolve. Should one need to live in an assisted living community or receive nursing home care, the program will provide for these too.

Office Phone: 203-365-6491 • Office Fax: 203-365-6461 • Care Coordinator Phone: 203-371-1405
 SeniorChoiceHome@jseiors.org • www.SeniorChoiceHome.org

Jewish Senior Services®

The Jewish Home • Goldstein Rehabilitation Center • Assisted Living Residences • Friedman Home Care Agency
 Chaifetz Family Hospice • Outpatient Therapy • Home Together™ • Institute on Aging • Private Physician Practice
 Senior Choice at Home® • The J Fitness Center • Grasmere by the Sea Adult Day Program

Aging Posture and Fall Prevention

**From the Desk of Crista Forstrom MSPT, MPS
Therapy Supervisor, Friedman Home Care,
Jewish Senior Services**



Throughout our lives, our posture is always challenged by the pull of gravity. While gravity keeps us “grounded”, it also requires us to use our joints and muscles to stay upright. Upright posture is possible through flexible joints and strong muscles. But as we grow older, we become less active. This inactivity leads to stiffer joints and muscle weakness. Diseases like osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, and spinal stenosis further contribute to the challenges of staying upright. The result is a forward leaning stance that is commonly seen in older adults. This forward lean affects balance and puts many at risk for falling.

The center of gravity for our body is defined as the point in which our weight is evenly distributed and the body is in balance. In good upright posture, our center of gravity should fall over the pelvis and evenly between the legs. With age and inactivity, postural changes occur and the center of gravity now shifts forward. Spinal problems like kyphosis (a curved upper back), forward head, rounded shoulders, and a flat lumbar spine (flat back) result. This forward shift of the body’s center of gravity puts many people at risk for falling. Without intervention or adding a device like a walker, the risk of someone losing their balance forward is high.

Fall prevention, as it relates to postural imbalance, can be addressed from two perspectives - (1) through improving the internal variables of range of motion, flexibility, strength, and balance or (2) through modifying external environmental variables. As a physical therapist, I believe the best practice is to treat both the internal and external variables that affect posture and balance.

Muscle imbalances can be addressed by stretching tight and shortened muscles and also by strengthening weak and lengthened muscles. Joint stiffness is improved through range of motion exercises. And reflexes are challenged through balance retraining. The goal is to move the body’s center of gravity back to where it was originally meant to be and as a result decrease fall risk.

External modifications that therapists also suggest include using adaptive equipment or assistive devices, changing the environment to decrease hazards, or suggesting the use of support braces to assist upright posture. For women who have always worn a medium to tall heeled shoe, a different shoe may be worn in order decrease forward lean. While some diseases make changes more difficult to address like arthritis or spinal stenosis, a physical therapist can modify specific recommendations for an exercise prescription to meet each patient’s needs.



Ultimately, improved posture will help reduce falls. Falls are the leading cause of accidental death in the older population. It is important for everyone, both therapist and older adult, to be proactive with posture and fall prevention throughout our lives. So hands up!

Did You Know?

Did you know that our “Healthy Hips and Knees” exercise classes take place twice each week at Jewish Senior Services and are **FREE for Senior Choice at Home members?** These classes are designed for older adults and are a great way to retain and build strength.

If you would like to attend, please contact the Senior Choice at Home office at 203-365-6491.

Timing it Right

When is the best time to Join Senior Choice at Home?

This is a question that we are asked frequently in some form or another and one that is difficult to answer. Most often it's asked in those words or a similar statement such as "I'm not ready yet", "I feel great, so why should I join now?" or "It won't happen to me." As the expression goes, timing is everything.

The truth is, once someone becomes age-eligible to join Senior Choice at Home (one can join as young as 62 years of age), they should consider doing so. Here's why:

- **While you are waiting, you are not protected.**

Prior to joining Senior Choice at Home, if one's health changes due to an accident, illness or general decline, and as a result they are no longer able to live independently, then they would not be medically eligible to join our program. Someone in this situation would then likely need to pay full rate for their care; services that would have been covered by their Senior Choice at Home benefits. A diagnosis of dementia (i.e., Alzheimer's Disease) or another progressive neurological disease (i.e., Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis) would also disqualify someone from joining Senior Choice at Home.

- **As we age, our health changes.**

Studies have shown that physical decline begins in the decade of the 50s and worsens as we age, especially for those who don't exercise*. A recent study also showed that more than half of all Americans take at least one prescription medication and nearly 40 percent of adults age 65 and older use five or more medications**. Such medications may help people live a long life, however

that may also bring with it the challenge of living independently. Once an individual is no longer able to live independently, they no longer health qualify for Senior Choice at Home.

- **It is less expensive to join Senior Choice at Home when you are younger.**

Each year that one waits, the one-time fee to join Senior Choice at Home increases. Since full benefits and services begin immediately upon joining, based on the membership level that they choose, our members are fully protected from day one.

In essence, the longer you wait to join Senior Choice at Home, the greater the risk that you will need to spend more of your assets on your long term care than you need to, while also increasing the likelihood that you will not be medically (or health) eligible to join. Today, people are living longer than ever, and with that comes the likelihood that one will need long term care, which often starts with care at home. Add to this the unknown that each of us faces each day – that life, as we know it, can change in an instant – and we "roll the dice" each day that we are not protected with a plan.

If you've been to one of our educational presentations, you may have heard us say that one of the goals of our discussion is to help people develop a plan – to jumpstart or continue that process, with the ultimate goal of helping them develop a plan that makes sense for them. That plan may be with Senior Choice at Home or it may be along another path. However, not having a plan can be risky, both emotionally and financially.

* <http://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-2016/fitness-aging-physical-decline-cs.html>

** <http://www.newsweek.com/prescription-drugs-rise-new-estimates-suggest-60-americans-take-least-one-390354>



Let Me Check My Schedule (continued)

and great company. Despite the heavy rain, Senior Choice at Home members took comfort in the classic yet contemporary setting as all enjoyed a satisfying lunch while conversing about a delightful range of topics.

There is something for everyone on our upcoming schedule as well. We were recently treated to a full **English Tea at the Dere Street Restaurant** in Newtown, and are planning a trip to the **Griswold Museum** in Old Lyme, an evening Happy Hour on the rooftop bar at the Jewish Senior Services Campus, and a luncheon at **Shell & Bones Restaurant** in New Haven. In addition, we have a monthly women's group lunch discussion at The Inwood in Bridgeport, and members can attend the bi-weekly "Healthy Hips and Knees" exercise classes at The J, our beautiful, state-of-the-art fitness center. Senior Choice at Home members also attended the Women's Auxiliary Annual Spring Luncheon & Boutique event in Monroe, and plan to

attend the Men's Club George Lipton Golf & Tennis Invitational in Stamford as well as the annual Coleman Lecture here at Jewish Senior Services in Bridgeport.

Friendships have been formed and strengthened among members, and as the membership grows, they have gotten to know more and more people from extremely interesting backgrounds and diverse life experiences. While the programs, lectures and tours are great fun, it is truly special when members become acquainted with each other over lunch and tell their stories of achievements and milestones, discuss current events or share family histories with humorous anecdotes just for smiles and laughter. In addition to covering one's long term care needs and protecting assets, strong friendships and good times are just another reason why Senior Choice at Home may be the right choice for your future too if you are not a member already.