

## **2021 Trends in Senior Living by Shannon Lynch**

As we ring out the old and ring in the new in just a few days, it's an opportune time to share a few of the trends we've noted that will influence senior living in 2021 and beyond. Without a doubt, COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on our lives. A couple of trends, such as telehealth, really took root during the months of mask-wearing and social distancing, and telehealth seems destined to remain an easy and convenient way to deliver some modes of health care.

Some of the trends in health and well-being can make a difference in seniors' quality of life in the coming year include:

- **Staying Connected:** Our relationships with friends and family have always been a top priority and that won't change. As the pandemic has shown, when it's not possible to meet face-to-face we can still stay in touch and see our loved ones via FaceTime, Zoom and Skype. It's not as ideal as in-person meet-ups, but virtual gatherings help answer a basic human need for personal connections. Now that we are accustomed to this method of communication, it will likely remain a part of our lives in certain situations even after social restrictions are lifted as the virus is brought under control.
- **Voice Assistants:** More and more seniors are turning to voice assistants like Alexa for assistance with daily tasks. Voice assistants can remind you to take your medication, alert you that it's time to take your cookies out of the oven, dial you into your favorite radio station, give you the current outdoor temperature, and tell you the capital of Ecuador!
- **Map or GPS?:** While many seniors still love reading and using maps (although not refolding them!), where would we be without our vehicle's GPS to quickly help us find the doctor's office in an unfamiliar town or our best friend's new address? Many new vehicles are equipped with sophisticated navigation devices. Still, driving an older model car? The tried-and-true portable GPS units work just fine in directing you where you need to go (at least most of the time!).
- **Wearable Technology:** Smart Watches at every price level and with varying features can help you track your fitness level and monitor your health. Some can even send an alert to emergency services and pre-arranged contacts in the event of an incident such as a fall.
- **Telehealth:** Covid-19 has prompted many seniors to schedule doctor visits remotely over video chat. Telehealth visits keep you safely distanced while allowing you to stay on track with scheduled visits and other health concerns. *Bonus:* with no need to bundle up and drive to your health care provider's office, you can keep your appointments even during tricky winter weather.
- **Alternative Wellness:** Seniors are adding holistic practices to their overall healthy lifestyle plans, along with diet, exercise, regular doctor visits, and medication

management. Meditation and mindfulness, for example, have many health benefits, such as reducing stress and anxiety and have been shown to have a positive effect on conditions ranging from heart disease and high blood pressure to alleviating chronic pain. Other practices like yoga and tai chi help with balance, strength, and flexibility.

• **Lifelong Learning:** Use it or lose it, say the experts, and seniors are embracing this challenge. Just as physical exercise is critical to maintaining a healthy body, learning a new skill, taking a class and even something as simple as varying your route to the grocery store keep our minds supple and nimble and help ward off cognitive decline. Exercising our minds also helps lessen depression and increases our self-esteem.

Whatever trends you choose to embrace, we wish each of you a happy, healthy, and safe New Year!

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