

SENIOR LIVING SOLUTIONS

Senior Living Solutions is published the first Thursday each month in Local Living, providing resources and solutions for seniors, caregivers and families.

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Technology Can Help Keep You Healthier and Happier

If the last couple of years have taught us anything, they've brought home the importance of technology in our everyday lives, from the ability to order groceries online to working and visiting—albeit virtually—with colleagues, family and friends.

Indeed, a 2021 survey by Pew Research found that among those 65 and older, 20 percent had participated in a virtual “party” or social gathering with friends or family, and 19 percent had ordered groceries or takeout from a restaurant using online technology.

Nevertheless, says Dr. Tara McMullan, adjunct faculty member in Georgetown University's Aging & Health Program, technology and aging are not discussed enough.

Barbara Morris, who is 93 and publishes the online journal “Put Old on Hold,” says technology can benefit us as we age in more ways than we realize. “It keeps us in touch with reality,” she says, adding that becoming tech-proficient also enables older adults to continue to contribute to society. “Older people have a wealth of knowledge and wisdom that goes to waste because there are so few ways to share it,” she says. “Being able to use technology can be life-changing for many.”

Clinical psychologist Dr. Sabrina Romanoff likewise suggests that technology has many benefits, from making social connections to providing mental stimulation, increasing our safety, improving our health, and simply giving us opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment.

“Technology can help older adults connect with family, friends and people with shared interests,” says Romanoff, observing that this is especially helpful for those who have limited mobility. For Dr. Robert Friedland, associate professor in Georgetown's Aging & Health Program and the Department of Health Systems Administration, FaceTiming with his mother, whose dementia has taken away her speech,

has been a real blessing. “It is not very different than visiting with her in person, but saves me the travel time and, of course, has eliminated both the mask covering my face and the risk of getting her sick,” says Friedland.

Colin Milner, CEO of the International Council on Active Aging, believes that social media serves a broader purpose as well. “When you see older adults singing and dancing on YouTube, for example, it dispels the myth of what aging is,” he says. “It shows all of us that you can experience life to the fullest, no matter what your age, and it opens your eyes to other experiences.”

Technology that challenges your brain, such as Wordle, can also keep you sharp, while fitness apps and health trackers can make it easier to be more conscious and deliberate about the amount of physical activity you complete each day.

“These advances in technology can literally be lifesaving,” says Case Western Reserve law professor Sharona Hoffman, JD, author of “Aging with a Plan: How a Little Thought Today Can Vastly Improve Your Tomorrow.”

Whether you're a tech newbie or looking for more apps of interest, here are some suggestions:

Video conferencing tools such as **Skype**, **Zoom** and **Apple's FaceTime** allow you to keep up with your family and friends even if you can't meet with them in person.

Streaming media services like **Netflix**, **Hulu** and **Apple TV** have expanded our entertainment options, while the app **Spotify** contains music from different genres and decades.

Social media platforms such as **Facebook**, **Pinterest** and **Instagram** allow you to keep in touch with loved ones, reconnect with former classmates and work colleagues, and meet new people through shared interests, whether that's traveling, reading, quilting...you name it, there's



an online group for it. And if you're looking to make new friends “in real life,” try **Meetup** or the soon-to-be-launched **Hank**, both of which can help you find in-person activities. Hank is specifically for those over 55.

Online classes have been especially popular during the pandemic. Many museums—like the **Smithsonian**—have virtual lectures or virtual tours of current exhibits. In fact, says Dr. Gay Hanna, adjunct faculty in Georgetown University's Aging & Health program, according to a study conducted by The National Endowment for the Arts, young people and older people are the greatest users of technology to enjoy the arts, especially music.

Health apps, such as those included on smartphones, or wearable technology like the **Apple Watch** or the **Fitbit**, can keep track of valuable information such as your medical records, as well as vitals like your heart rate, blood pressure, and glucose levels which can even be transmitted electronically to your healthcare provider. **Medisafe** can remind you to take your medications on time, while **Radius Care**, a free, healthcare technology app approved by Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, can monitor

Medicare patients' health data and, using artificial or machine intelligence, reviews historical healthcare data and transaction details to deliver customized recommendations based on each patient's unique needs and location.

Feeling tense? Headspace and **Calm** are popular apps to improve your mental health through meditation, visualization and relaxation.

Ride service apps such as **Uber**, **Lyft** and **Wingz** can get you where you're going, and **GoGoGrandparent** can access services from partners like **Uber**, **Doordash** and **Instacart**—with or without a smartphone—with just a phone call (1-855-464-6872).

Share your memories with your loved ones with the new app **Capsll**, where you can collect scattered records of memorable moments—including audio, video, photos and text—into digital time capsules that can be shared privately or on an optional public feed to inspire others.

Want to become even more tech-savvy? Visit your local library or senior center for in-person classes, check out AARP's Learning Center (learn.aarp.org), or grab your nearest grandkid!



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