



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

Volume 15, Issue 1

The Healthy Journey

handls.nih.gov
877-677-9538

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

Let's talk about technology

Technology and health

According to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey, 61% of adults over age 65 own a smartphone, 45% use social media, 44% own tablets, and 75% use the internet. Despite these statistics, there is a digital divide. Many adults want to adopt new technologies but lack information on how to get started.

Using technology requires instruction and support, and many adults do not know where to find it. Cost and privacy concerns are other common barriers to using technology. According to AARP, 68% of seniors in the U.S. believe technology is not designed with them in mind.

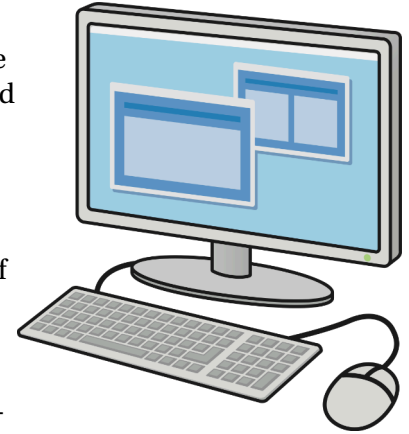
Technology is often used for health purposes. Many adults use the internet to access their medical records, request medication refills, make appointments, attend telehealth visits, and apply for health insurance. People also use their personal devices to learn about health conditions and symptoms, set reminders for appointments or when to take medications, or track sleep or physical activity.

During COVID-19, many people relied on technology for social connection. Video chats, phone calls, and social media allowed many people to interact while social distancing. Technology continues to provide ways for people to connect and prevent loneliness. Loneliness has become a growing public health concern in the United States, where 1 in 4 people over age 65 feel socially isolated. Loneliness is a risk factor for many health problems such as depression, anxiety, diabetes, heart disease, dementia, and chronic pain.

Technology is a tool that can help many adults age in place. Medical alert devices, home security systems, wearable health trackers, and service-related apps for groceries or food delivery are all examples of technologies that help people maintain safety, convenience, and independence.

Telehealth

Telehealth services are provided through phone calls, text messaging, and video conferencing. For example, your medical provider can meet with you from their office while you are at home. If you have a phone or internet access, you likely have everything you need for a telehealth appointment.



Medical professionals use telehealth to deliver various types of care, including:

- General health and wellness visits
- Prescriptions and refill requests
- Mental health counseling
- Nutrition counseling
- Urgent care visits for conditions such as cold or flu, sore throat, allergies, rashes, and sinus infections

Please read *The Healthy Journey, Vol. 12, Issue 3* at <http://handls.nih.gov/news/2021-3.pdf> for more information on telehealth.

Technology access & training

Many free programs and resources are available to help Marylanders learn how to use the computer and internet. If you would like to learn digital skills, these resources may interest you.

Contents

Let's talk about technology	1
Happy New Year!	3
Contacting HANDLS	3

The **Enoch Pratt Free Library** offers various technology resources at no cost to Baltimore residents.

Computer training. Classes on basic computer skills, job-related computer skills, Microsoft Office, and Google are offered. To register, visit the class calendar <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/computer-training>, call the Registration Hotline at (443) 984-4944, or email computer.class@prattlibrary.org. The library's website also shares links to tutorials for new computer users.

Computer & internet access. Computer and internet access is available for free inside each library branch. To learn more, visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/computer-internet-access>.

Computer & internet devices. Anyone age 13 and older can borrow a mobile hotspot or Chromebook from the library. To learn more, visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/books-and-more/library-of-things/computer-internet-devices>.

Outdoor Wi-Fi. Free Wi-Fi is available outside several library branches. You are welcome to sit in your car or walk up to use the free Wi-Fi. To learn more, visit <https://www.prattlibrary.org/services/outdoor-wi-fi>.

The **Baltimore County Public Library** offers various technology resources at no cost to Baltimore County residents.

Computer training. BCPL provides free access to the Northstar Digital Library, a self-directed learning tool. Northstar teaches digital literacy skills such as basic computer skills and software skills. It also teaches skills to help you use technology in daily life, such as how to do an online career search or how to use social media. To learn more, and for instructions on setting up a free account, visit <https://bcpl.info/services/digital-literacy.html>.

Computer & internet access. Computer and internet access is available for free inside each library branch. To learn more, visit <https://bcpl.info/services/public-computers-wifi.html>.

The **Baltimore City Office of Information & Technology** compiled a list of free technology training resources. These resources are self-paced. Topics include computer basics, internet basics, email basics, cell phone basics, digital skills for job seekers, and software skills. To access the full list of resources, visit <https://>



technology.baltimorecity.gov/virtual-skills-training-online-resources.

Technology assistance & digital inclusion

Many programs are available to make technology more affordable. Some programs offer assistance for internet access, while others offer assistance so people can access a device (e.g., computer or tablet).

If you are struggling to pay for phone or internet services, you may qualify for federal support through the **Lifeline Program**. Please visit <https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>, call 1-800-234-9473, or email LifelineSupport@usac.org to see if you qualify for the Lifeline Program.

The **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)** is a federal program that helps low-income households access the internet. Eligible households may receive up to \$30/month discount on broadband internet, and a one-time discount of up to \$100 toward a computer or tablet. To learn more about this program, visit <https://technology.baltimorecity.gov/affordable-connectivity-program>. To apply for the ACP, visit <https://getinternet.gov/apply?ln=R-W5nbGlzaA%3D%3D> or call (877) 384-2575.

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development offers the **Maryland Emergency Broadband Benefit Program**. This program provides up to \$15/month discount on internet services. You must be enrolled in the Affordable Connectivity Program to receive this benefit. To learn more, visit <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Broadband/Pages/Individual-Resources.aspx>.

The **Maryland Connected Devices Program (MD-CDP)** is a grant program that provides new, internet-enabled devices to low-income households. For information on eligibility and how to apply, visit <https://marylandersonline.umd.edu/md-connected-devices>, email marylandersonline@umd.edu, or call (301) 405-9810. You may also apply for Chromebook distribution by visiting <https://prattgetadevice.as.me/schedule.php>.

Troubleshooting

Even the most tech-savvy people experience problems with their devices. Free help is available for troubleshooting when problems arise.



The **NPower Community Helpdesk** offers free technology support for residents of the Baltimore area. For help, you can chat online, call (410) 724-1101, or submit a

ticket by emailing support@npowerchd.zendesk.com. The help desk operates from 10am-6pm Monday through Friday. To learn more about the NPower Community Helpdesk, visit <https://www.npower.org/community-helpdesk-baltimore/>.

University of Maryland Extension offers the **Marylanders Online** program. Marylanders Online offers free tech and internet support to Maryland residents. Digital navigators are trained support staff who can assist you if you are having technical difficulties. Navigators can help with hardware and software issues, applying for the Affordable Connectivity Program, connecting you with organizations that teach digital skills classes, and more.

To contact a digital navigator through Marylanders Online, email marylandersonline@umd.edu or call 301-405-9810 or 1-866-206-8467 (toll free). Help is available Monday through Friday, 10am-8pm, or Saturday from 10am-5pm. To learn more about Marylanders Online, visit <https://marylandersonline.umd.edu/get-help/guided-learning/contact-navigator>.

Beware of scams

Every year, millions of Americans are affected by scams. A scam is dishonest activity that takes money or goods from another person. Scammers use computers, phones, or mail to commit fraud. Seniors are often targeted by scammers.

Being the victim of a scam comes with health effects. Scams impact the mental health of many people. Feelings of sadness, uncertainty, shame, regret, and worry often arise when people are victims of a scam. People may have changes in health such as stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.

For information about common scams, visit <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/safety-resources/scams-and-safety/common-scams-and-crimes/elder-fraud>.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) **Money Smart for Older Adults** program helps seniors and caregivers prevent and report scams. Resource guides are free and can be downloaded from the website. Printed copies can also be ordered for free mail delivery by visiting <https://pueblo.gpo.gov/CFPBPubs/CFPBPubs.php?PubID=13039>. This program offers information on phone scams, scam debt collection, identity theft, and financial preparation. Visit <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools/resources-for-older-adults/money-smart-for-older-adults/> for more information.

Tax season is a popular time for scams. The **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)** offers tips on avoiding and reporting tax scams. If you suspect you are the victim of tax fraud, call 800-366-4484 or email phishing@irs.gov. Visit <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-scams-consumer-alerts> or <https://www.irs.gov/privacy-disclosure/report-phishing> to learn more.

There are many more resources to help you avoid scams. Please read *The Healthy Journey, Vol. 14, Issue 1* at <https://handls.nih.gov/news/2023-1.pdf> for more information on how to protect yourself from scams.

Happy New Year!



HANDLS staff wish you a happy and healthy New Year! We are so grateful to have you in our HANDLS community. We look forward to staying in touch with you in 2024.



Contacting HANDLS

If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at handls@mail.nih.gov.

*HANDLS
National Institute on Aging
Biomedical Research Center
251 Bayview Blvd
Baltimore MD 21224-2816*



U.S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH • NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON AGING

Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.