



Surf's Up! Seniors on the Net *Seniors are the fastest growing group on the Internet*

Every morning in the panhandle of Florida, Betty Hardin, 70, starts her day by making a pot of coffee and turning on her computer. Most mornings, three or four emails have arrived during the night with the latest reports from her seven children scattered across the country. Daily updates about the weather and the latest antics of the grandkids keep her feeling connected to family members as if they lived down the street rather than 2500 miles away. "Getting online has been an absolute blessing for our family," exclaims Betty, who lives by herself and has several health problems. "My daughters and I check in with each other several times a day – they know if they don't hear from mom, to call or have a neighbor stop in to make sure I am ok."

All this and health benefits too

Betty is not alone. Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the population "surfing the net". Staying connected with family members is just one of the many benefits of this new technology. Seniors the world over are finding old friends, new flames and boundless opportunities a click away in cyberspace. Need a recipe for leftover chicken? Want to investigate stocks or mutual fund options? Interested in learning more about your family tree? All this and more can be readily found on the information superhighway.

And that's not all. Research indicates that older adults taking the cyber plunge are actually promoting good mental health by learning something new and communicating with others. Furthermore, seniors have available at their fingertips a virtual library of online resources to further promote good health –

from the latest ways to lower cholesterol, to online support groups, to the latest breakthroughs in cancer treatment.

Getting started

Even if you don't own a computer there are still many ways to get on the Internet. Public and university libraries, senior centers and community centers are just a few of the places you can get Internet access for free. Furthermore, many of these places offer seniors an opportunity to learn how to navigate for free or for a small fee. Jacob Stein, 73, for example, took advantage of a free Internet class at his local public library in Orlando, Florida. In addition to reading newspapers from overseas and checking his stock, he now communicates regularly with relatives in Israel and Poland -- without running up huge phone bills.

For those interested in buying a computer or arranging for personalized training, there are many new businesses specifically designed to help seniors find the best computer to fit their needs and to learn how to use it. Some communities have also started recycling computers to give to seniors who otherwise couldn't afford them. Check with your local Area Agency on Aging or senior center for more information of what is available in your area.

Where to go first

Just about any place you can imagine! Websites specifically designed for seniors, grandparents, caregivers and numerous other topics are plentiful – just type in the topic of interest in the search engine window and be amazed at how many Websites are listed! Below are some popular sites that many seniors find useful and interesting.

SeniorNet.com is a nonprofit membership organization of seniors 55 and older who share an interest in computers. SeniorNet specializes in seniors teaching seniors how to navigate the Internet. They have over 200 learning centers across

the nation as well as tutorials and software available from their site at <http://www.seniornet.org>

AARP has a comprehensive, senior-friendly site at <http://www.aarp.org> . Easy to read and to navigate, they offer seniors a variety of topics to explore. Beginner tips on how to use a computer and a list of frequently asked questions about computer technology are quite helpful for the novice. AARP also simplifies the overwhelming amount of information available on the Internet by providing links to other Websites and best-of lists, such as the 100 best health Websites.

For those who have a question regarding Social Security, Medicare or any other government program, check out FirstGov for Seniors at <http://www.seniors.gov> Part of the official U.S. gateway to all government information, this well-organized site provides one-stop shopping for information on senior services and agencies. It is designed to help you find out which government office can address your concerns and provide you with direct links to relevant information and services.

For ideas of what to do the next time the grandkids come to town, check out www.iGrandparents.com This site provides activities that you can print right off the computer as well as ideas of where to go or things to do in your area.

No matter what your hobbies, interests, or desires are – there is a good chance that you can learn more about it or meet others who are also interested in the subject on the Internet. So shake those new-technology jitters and get online. I guarantee you will be glad you did!

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