

SmithLife[®]

H O M E C A R E

Bringing care home.



As we welcome 2025, it's the perfect time to reset, refocus, and recharge for the year ahead. At SmithLife Homecare, we're here to support you through the season with meaningful resources, practical advice, and updates to keep you informed and inspired.

This month, we're focusing on fresh beginnings and setting intentions for a brighter year ahead. From tips on staying active indoors to ways to foster meaningful connections in the winter months, we're here to inspire and support you. Whether you're a caregiver, client, or community partner, we're excited to continue building a community of care and compassion in 2025. Let's make this year one of growth and opportunity together!

Follow Us on Social Media!

Have you connected with us on social media yet? If not, we'd love to see you there! Dive deeper into our community—follow us for updates on events, useful resources, and community highlights.

Follow us and stay in the loop!



Tips from Your Home Care Agency: Staying Active Indoors

Welcome to the new year! Staying active during the colder months is crucial, especially indoors. This January, we're focusing on activities that keep you moving, engaged, and connected from the comfort of your home. Our tips this month are designed to cater to varying interests and mobility levels, ensuring there's something for everyone to enjoy.

Establish Routine Chair Exercises:

Chair exercises are excellent for maintaining mobility. Simple arm lifts, leg raises, or chair stands can significantly benefit cardiovascular health and muscle strength.

Engage in Mind-Stimulating Games:

Games like Scrabble, Chess, or card games like Bridge and Rummy are not only enjoyable but also great for keeping the mind sharp. They can be played alone or socially with friends and family.

Participate in Virtual Activities:

Explore virtual museum tours, online concerts, or participate in online classes tailored for seniors. These activities provide mental stimulation and a sense of connection with the wider world.

Creative and Craft Activities:

Crafting activities like knitting, painting, or scrapbooking can enhance fine motor skills and cognitive function, and they provide a satisfying, creative outlet.

Indoor Walking or Stretching:

Walking indoors, whether it's laps around the living room or stretching exercises, helps maintain flexibility and circulation. Use a stable chair or counter for support when needed.

Yoga or Tai Chi:

Participate in gentle yoga or Tai Chi, which are ideal for enhancing balance, flexibility, and mental well-being. Look for online sessions or DVDs specifically designed for seniors.

Organize and Declutter:

Turning organizing or decluttering into an activity can be surprisingly active. It's also rewarding and can lead to a more comfortable living environment.

Cooking and Baking Sessions:

Trying out new recipes or baking can be a delightful way to stay active and enjoy healthy meals. It's also a perfect activity for involving family members.

Read or Join a Book Club:

Reading stimulates the mind, and participating in a book club can provide social interaction and cognitive engagement.

Plan Future Activities:

Planning outings or future social events can provide positive anticipation and keep the mind actively engaged in forward-thinking.

Keeping active and engaged indoors plays a critical role in maintaining both physical and mental health throughout the winter. At SmithLife Homecare, we encourage you to try these activities to find what best suits your lifestyle and interests. Remember, every small step towards activity contributes to your overall well-being, and we are here to support you in staying active and fulfilled.

Caregivers of the Month

□ Congratulations □

Sara Balcha, Hanna Gabreegziabher, & Mariama Jarju!

At SmithLife Homecare, delivering exceptional care is at the core of what we do — made possible by the remarkable dedication and compassion of our caregivers. This month, we are excited to honor Sara Balcha, Hanna Gabreegziabher, and Mariama Jarju as our Caregivers of the Month! Their commitment to going above and beyond is reflected in the heartfelt appreciation shared by their clients and families, highlighting the meaningful difference they make every day.

Sara Balcha has earned high praise from her client's family, who shared: "We would like to express our highest compliment for Sara, the best caregiver that our mother has ever had. She is very kind, has strong initiative, is very reliable, and takes exceptional care of our mother. Sara takes the time to make sure that she completes her daily exercises and helps her do them correctly. She also ensures that my mother eats breakfast and prepares it for her too. Sara provides exceptional CNA duties and makes sure that she takes her daily medicine and vitamins. Sara also helps with household chores since our mother appreciates a tidy and nice home, as she is not able to do them herself."

Hanna Gabreegziabher has been recognized for her patience and commitment, even when faced with challenging situations. One client's family member shared: "I've been super happy with the care my father is receiving from his aide, Hanna. I know he's a handful, and she has gone above and beyond to try and help him."

Mariama Jarju has touched the lives of her clients with her dependable and caring approach. One client's spouse expressed deep gratitude, saying: "We are so grateful for SmithLife's service. Four days a week, a very caring and reliable Mariama helps my husband deal with stiffness and difficulties in getting going. By the time she leaves, he is ready for the day."

We are beyond grateful for Sara, Hanna, and Mariama. Their dedication to providing exceptional care reflects the very heart of SmithLife Homecare. Thank you for everything you do — your hard work, compassion, and professionalism make a lasting impact on the lives of your clients and their families. You inspire us all to uphold the highest standards of care.

Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition!



SmithLife®
HOMECARE
Bringing care home.

Nurse's Corner

The Butterfly Effect

By: Essy Gurevich, DON, BSN, RN

The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland located in the front of the neck. Despite its small size, it plays a big role in regulating vital body functions. The thyroid produces hormones which influence your metabolism, heart rate, body temperature, and energy levels. According to American Thyroid Association, more than 12 percent of the country's population will develop a thyroid condition during their lifetime. Hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroid can lead to symptoms like fatigue, weight gain, sensitivity to cold, and dry skin. Hyperthyroidism, or overactive thyroid, on the other hand occurs when the thyroid makes too much hormone, causing symptoms like weight loss, rapid heartbeat, irritability, and sensitivity to heat. The downstream effect of an issue with the thyroid can lead to dysfunction of every organ system.

Thyroid disorders can happen because of autoimmune diseases, nutrient deficiencies, exposure to environmental toxins, nodules on the gland, etc. Standard thyroid testing during annual wellness checkups usually only measures thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) levels. High TSH indicates hypothyroidism - when the thyroid isn't producing enough hormones (T4 and T3), the pituitary gland increases TSH to stimulate the thyroid to work harder. On the other hand, low TSH indicates hyperthyroidism - when the thyroid produces too much hormone, and the pituitary reduces TSH production since the thyroid doesn't need extra stimulation. This feedback loop helps keep hormone levels balanced, much like how a thermostat controls the temperature in a room. One can see how simply measuring the TSH

levels may not be sufficient to see the full picture. Research on the necessity of additional testing is somewhat mixed; however, I think it is important to have a conversation with your doctor whether you should be tested for free T3, free T4 and the thyroid antibodies to determine an underlying condition and to potentially save your thyroid from further damage.

References:

American Thyroid Association. (2024). *General information/Press Room*. Retrieved from <https://www.thyroid.org/media-main/press-room/>

Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.). *Thyroid*. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/body/23188-thyroid>

Gottwald-Hostalek, U., & Schulte, B. (2021). Low awareness and under-diagnosis of hypothyroidism. *Current Medical Research and Opinion*, 38(1), 59–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007995.2021.1997258>

Latest Blog



As family members look for ways to help their aging loved ones live comfortably at home, it's common to encounter complications with senior care. Adjusting to a loved one's evolving needs is a steep learning curve. [\[Read More\]](#)

Press Release

SmithLife Homecare Celebrates Kathleen McGuinness's Prestigious Award

We are thrilled to announce that Kathleen McGuinness, former Director of Community Relations at SmithLife Homecare, has been honored with the 2024 Debra Levy Humanitarian Award, presented by [GROWS](#). This distinguished award recognizes Kathleen's lifelong dedication to improving senior care and advocating for families navigating aging challenges.

Read more about Kathleen's inspiring journey and how her work continues to impact our community in the full press release here: [\[Read More\]](#)

Ask the Expert

This month, instead of our usual "Ask the Expert" feature, we're proud to highlight a significant achievement within our SmithLife Homecare family. Kathleen McGuinness, our former Director of Community Relations, has been awarded the 2024 Debra Levy Humanitarian Award by GROWS. This prestigious honor recognizes Kathleen's exceptional contributions to senior care and advocacy in our community. Her dedication, both during her time with SmithLife Homecare and in her ongoing volunteer efforts, has positively impacted countless lives. Join us in celebrating Kathleen's inspiring commitment to improving the lives of seniors and their families!

Please don't forget to like, subscribe, and turn on notifications to stay updated with our latest content! [Watch below!](#)



Highlights from Recent Events



What's Happening Soon

Shape Up for the Upcoming Legislative Session!

Thursday, January 9, 8:30am-10:30am, In-person

Join GROWS for an insightful pre-legislative session event featuring Montgomery County Council President Kate Stewart and Caitlin Houck, RN, MS, Executive Director of MNCHA. Gain a behind-the-scenes look at key issues impacting seniors and learn strategies to make a difference in the upcoming legislative session.

- Get the Inside Scoop: Understand key legislative issues affecting senior care.
- Meet the Expert: Learn from a leading advocate for senior care.
- Shape the Future: Network with colleagues and develop impactful strategies.

Free to attend! Lite bites, coffee, and plenty of networking opportunities provided. Renan Augusto, a SmithLife Homecare team member and GROWS Board of Directors member, invites you to join this empowering event. Don't miss it!

Five Little Known Secrets to Make Dementia Caregiving Easier

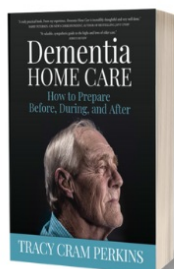
Wednesday, January 29, 3:00pm-4:00pm, Virtual

Join our friends at Positive Aging Community and RAZ Mobility for a live and interactive session with Tracy Cram Perkins, author of *Dementia Home Care: How to Prepare Before, During, and After*.

Tracy will share practical tips and strategies from her 16+ years of caregiving experience to help alleviate the challenges of dementia care. Discover ways to reduce stress, embrace humor, and prioritize self-care on your caregiving journey.

This is a valuable opportunity for caregivers to gain insights and connect with others in the community. Don't miss it!

Join us for a live & interactive discussion with the author of
Dementia Home Care, How to Prepare Before, During, and After



2022 Chanticleer International Book Awards, First Place, Instructional and Insightful Nonfiction How-To Manuals.



Five Little Known Secrets to Make Dementia Caregiving Easier

This engaging session will share practical tips and strategies designed to alleviate the stress of dementia caregiving, drawing from Perkins' extensive experience as a caregiver and author.



Tracy Cram Perkins

Wed., Jan. 29 @ 3 PM Eastern Time

(3 PM Eastern, 2 PM Central, 1 PM Mountain, 12 PM Pacific)



Register here

Want Your Event Featured in Our Newsletter?

Do you have an upcoming event that you'd like to share with our community? We'd love to help spread the word! If you'd like your event to be featured in an upcoming edition of our newsletter, please send us an email to info@smithlifehomecare.com with all the details. This is a great opportunity to connect with our audience and highlight the amazing work you're doing to support the community.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Mark Your Calendars

[Weeks](#)



Jan. 12-18 - Healthy Weight Week
Jan. 19-25 - Activity Professionals Week

Dates

Jan. 1 - New Year's Day
Jan. 12 - National Pharmacist Day
Jan. 20 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan. 24 - Activity Professionals Day
Jan. 25 - National IV Nurses Day

This month is:

- Glaucoma Awareness Month
- Thyroid Awareness Month
- Blood Donor Month

Our Featured Resource

Looking for a Great Doctor?

The Harold & Jane Hirsh Health Center at [Charles E. Smith Life Communities](#) offers exceptional geriatric care with a personal touch. Now accepting new patients, they provide same-day or next-day appointments, 24/7 physician coverage, and coordinated services under one roof. Experience healthcare designed for your well-being and independence.

Call [301-816-5004](tel:301-816-5004) to schedule your appointment today!

Hirsh Health Center

A traditional geriatric practice rooted in
the bond between patient and clinician.



LOOKING FOR A GREAT DOCTOR?

At the Harold & Jane Hirsh Health Center, relationships matter.

Here, your calls are answered by familiar faces dedicated to prioritizing your comfort and ensuring continuity of care. Appointments are available when you need them most, often within 24 hours. Plus, our patients benefit from care coordinated with specialists in radiology, laboratory services, wound care and more—all conveniently located under one roof.

CARE DESIGNED WITH YOU IN MIND:

Conveniently located at
Ring House

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Our Trusted Resources

We understand the importance of having access to reliable and informative resources for caregivers, patients, and their families. That's why we've curated an extensive list of resources, designed to support you through every step of your caregiving journey. Click below to learn more about our suggested resources.

[View Resources List](#)



SmithLife Homecare is a leading provider of in-home care services in Maryland and Washington, D.C., specializing in senior care, dementia and Alzheimer's care, companion services, support for aging-in-place and support for complex medical recovery.

We are also the premier agency for nurse staffing, serving hospitals, rehabilitation centers, memory care facilities, and assisted living communities.

Contact us today to learn how we can help you or your loved ones.

Rockville, MD: **(301) 816-5020**

Chevy Chase, MD: **(301) 615-0506**

Washington, D.C.: **(202) 221-7503**

Website: smithlifehomecare.com

Email: info@smithlifehomecare.com



SmithLife Homecare is a joint venture of Charles E. Smith Life Communities and Augustine Home Health Care. SmithLife Homecare combines the services and capabilities of these two respected providers.

Licensed as a residential service agency by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Health Care Quality and Washington DC Department of Health as a Home Support Agency.
MD #RSA-01265 | DC #HSA-0014



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