



Fighting Online Misinformation: Seniors Can Make a Difference!

The family helped Uncle Chuck set up a Facebook account so he could take part in family video chats during social distancing. But now he won't go out in the yard, because he saw a news story claiming that mosquitoes can spread the coronavirus. For good measure, he sent the article to everyone one in the family. Time to have the "fake news" talk!

Social distancing has motivated more older adults than ever to take the plunge and go online. This has been such a precious resource during these days when it's not safe to meet in person.

If you or older loved ones are new to the internet, enjoy! There is so much to see and do and learn. But a lot of misinformation lurks on the internet, as well. "Fake news" comes in all types: stories designed to sway our vote or get us to donate money to political campaigns...phony health news to convince us to purchase useless products... "clickbait" articles that make the creator money for every share... conspiracy theories that can spread like wildfire...and just plain trolling that provides certain denizens of the internet with a warped sense of power.

This misinformation can be relatively harmless—oh look, an elephant carrying a lion cub! But it can also be harmful. It affects our health, our money, and even our democracy. Right now the spotlight is on social media platforms that allow misinformation to spread like never before.

People of every age help misinformation go viral.



But according to a 2019 study from the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, people older than 65 are the most likely to share links to fake news on Facebook and other platforms. And before you point a finger at people whose politics are different from yours, note that the study authors said, "The association with age appears to be independent of respondents' ideological or partisan affiliations."

"As a member of the over-60 crowd myself, I believe we must teach older people to be smarter online, and soon," said Susan Nash, Visiting Scholar at the Stanford Center on Longevity. "Media literacy efforts mainly focus on training the teachers of our middle school, high school and college students. This is important work but won't help people who graduated decades ago."

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Are You Slowing Down Without Noticing?

A sudden health crisis or injury—perhaps a stroke, a broken ankle or a serious case of COVID-19—can cause us to dramatically curtail our exercise regimen. One day we’re taking part in our usual vigorous workout, the next day we might be in bed all day. But according to a study from Finland, people with more slowly progressing health conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease or arthritis, may slow down so gradually that they don’t realize they’re getting less and less exercise.

Prof. Urho Kujala of the University of Jyväskylä says that a customized exercise plan can keep these patients active. “Exercise therapies tailored to the type of disease can

significantly improve individuals’ physical functioning, mobility and possibilities for independent living,” said Kujala. “It is important that those with long-term illnesses are able to move, taking into account the safety issues related to the illness, of course. More attention should be paid to the use of exercise therapy in healthcare.”

Is Your Disinfectant Doing the Job?

If you’re like most people these days, you’ve got a spray bottle of germ killer at hand to sanitize surfaces in your home. But experts from the American Chemical Society say a lot of us are using that spray like we would a cleanser—and that won’t kill the coronavirus. We might not even be using a real disinfectant! And improper use could put us at risk of poisoning. Watch an entertaining video at <https://youtu.be/kbScdUwo7K4> to learn what you might be doing wrong. As the narrator says, “Go forth and disinfect!” (Photo: The American Chemical Society)



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OCTOBER IS NATIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY MONTH

20 words all about these awesome professionals are hidden in this puzzle.

I	N	D	E	P	E	N	D	E	N	C	E	P	B	O
A	T	X	E	S	E	N	E	R	G	Y	J	A	V	B
J	E	C	Y	B	N	E	T	I	R	O	F	I	M	O
Z	O	X	D	R	A	N	X	E	E	U	P	N	O	D
E	A	I	E	F	M	L	V	G	Y	T	R	M	B	Y
F	D	M	N	R	S	O	A	E	R	C	E	A	I	M
P	A	U	X	T	C	S	B	N	N	O	V	N	L	E
J	P	S	C	E	S	I	O	O	C	M	E	A	I	C
T	T	C	R	A	Y	I	S	T	R	E	N	G	T	H
B	I	L	M	T	T	D	I	E	C	H	T	E	Y	A
N	V	E	T	C	N	I	I	H	U	E	I	M	B	N
C	E	S	N	A	H	K	O	N	Z	X	O	E	M	I
E	G	U	H	V	B	C	O	N	F	A	N	N	A	C
T	F	X	B	P	M	O	V	E	M	E	N	T	T	S
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ADAPTIVE
BALANCE
BODY MECHANICS
EDUCATION
ENERGY
EXERCISE
FUNCTION
HANDS ON
INDEPENDENCE
JOINTS
MASSAGE
MOBILITY
MOVEMENT
MUSCLES
OUTCOME
PAIN MANAGEMENT
PREVENTION
RECOVERY
REHABILITATION
STRENGTH

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Online Misinformation (cont.)

Why would older adults be more vulnerable to misinformation online?

Age-related memory changes are a factor, and a percentage of older adults have cognitive impairment that would make them less able to identify false information.

But experience is the more important factor. “Of course, there are millions of sophisticated internet users over 60 who would never forward a ‘news’ story without checking its accuracy,” the Stanford team notes. “But many people in the older generations have either never developed the necessary skills to make that call or, without office IT departments or ongoing training after retirement to keep them up to date, have fallen behind.”

However, plenty of seniors these days are educating themselves. Seniors are rich in that quality we call wisdom. With their years of experience and consumer know-how, they’re very capable of discerning and evaluating information—if they have the training they need to do so. You may have read about programs in which seniors help other seniors spot and avoid fraud. Says Nash, “Once older Americans understand that fake news is just another kind of fraud—on their attention, their health and their country—they can bring that same common sense to their online experience.”

Learning to navigate this vast new source of information is empowering! Many experts believe that if seniors were to take on the misinformation problem in force, it would make a real difference. And isn’t there enough to worry about these days without falling for scare stories?