



The Great Outdoors: Outdoor Activities for Seniors

By Leslie Knopp
Comfort Keepers® Franchise Owner of Northern Lower Michigan

Last month's introduction article to "The Great Outdoor" series discussed the benefits that a breath of fresh air and physical activity can have on health. Spending time outdoors exercising or just enjoying the scenery can bring about sharper mental states and happier moods, along with improved physical health and sense of wellbeing. For these reasons, spending time outdoors may be crucial for seniors who want to live alone in their own homes well into their golden years.

"Seniors living alone are prone to outdoor isolation, especially after the loss of a spouse or friends. This sense of isolation can increase if seniors rarely leave home," says Leslie Knopp of Comfort Keepers of Northern Lower Michigan. Many seniors take advantage of group activities such as book clubs or volunteering to maintain social interaction, but spending time with nature, even alone, has the potential to battle loneliness and foster a happier state of mind.

While some seniors are able to perform physical activities outdoors, such as riding bikes or playing tennis, others may be restricted due to physical limitations. However, there are a myriad of outdoor activities that can be enjoyed and adapted to all levels of physical ability:

- Paint a picture -- Take an easel with paints, canvas and chair to the back yard or park and paint a picture of the scenery.
- Garden -- Container gardens are best for those with limited physical abilities. Full-scale gardens can be added to back yards for those able to be more active.
- Take pictures -- Easy-to-use digital cameras do not cost much for the fun they inspire. Sunrises, sunsets, beaches, parks, people, flowers in the neighborhood...the sky is the limit when becoming a photography buff. Arranging pictures in albums later can become a fun activity, sparking interesting conversations and memories.
- Go fish -- Fishing is a treasured pastime for many men and women. Local beaches, lakes and some ponds are available to the public.
- Build something -- Build birdhouses or simple water features in the back yard, which can offer a fun activity with benefits to be enjoyed long after the building is complete.
- Play games -- Easy-to use-outdoor games include croquet, horseshoes of the plastic variety and corn hole (bean bag toss).

All of these activities can be, and should be, performed with friends, family and/or caregivers. "Participating in any activity with others fosters closeness, a greater sense of self and something to look forward to for all involved," says Knopp. The memories created when spending time together can make all the difference in the world, not just in the life of a senior, but for friends and family of all ages.

About Comfort Keepers

With over 560 independently owned and operated locations, Comfort Keepers is a leader in in-home senior care to promote independent living. Services include companionship, meal preparation, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, incidental transportation, laundry, recreational activities, personal care and technology products. To locate a Comfort Keepers in your area go to www.comfortkeepers.com.