



ACTIVE AGING PROGRAMS
Catholic Charities of Southern MN

Jennifer Halberg, Active Aging Program Director

Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota announces expansion of health and wellness programs for older adults.

A grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services provides funding to support the expansion through the Active Aging Program.

The Active Aging Program will support older adults residing in twenty Minnesota counties by providing access to evidence-based self-management programs proven to positively influence healthy aging, provide support for caregivers, prevent falls, and improve self-management of chronic disease.

Provided by trained staff and volunteers, the programs are offered at no cost to participants. Together, this carefully selected portfolio of programs will support high-risk older adults to better manage their chronic conditions, improve their quality of life, lower health care costs, reduce the risk of falls and better manage caregiver challenges.

The programs include: The Aging Mastery Program, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Chronic Disease Self-Management, Chronic Pain Self-Management, Matter of Balance, Fit and Strong! and Stay Active and Independent for Life.

The Aging Mastery Program is a ten-week health and wellness program to those age 55 and better. The goal of this program is to empower older adults to make and maintain small but impactful changes. The classes will explore navigating longer lives, physical activity, sleep, healthy eating and hydration, financial fitness, medication management, advanced planning, healthy relationships, falls prevention, and community engagement. For each of these classes, we will provide basic educational materials developed from highly trusted sources, a checklist of potential next steps, and a system for tracking behaviors. Participants will earn points for positive actions and rewards. It is a great program to meet new friends, provide support and encouragement to your peers, and become more involved in your community.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a self-care educational program for friend or family caregivers. This program provides caregivers with tools and strategies to better handle the unique challenges that a caregiver may face. Powerful Tools helps caregivers develop skills and

confidence to better care for themselves while caring for others. It is a six-week series led by trained facilitators using a standardized curriculum. The weekly topics range from reducing your stress to communicating in challenging situation and mastering caregiving decisions. The curriculum in this program has shown to improve: self-care behaviors, management of emotions, self-efficacy, and the use of community resources.

Fit & Strong! is an evidence-based 12-week physical activity/self-management program that targets people with lower extremity osteoarthritis. It meets 2x per week for 90 minutes per session. The first hour is comprised of exercise incorporating stretching and flexibility, low-impact aerobics/fitness walking, strength training, and balance exercises, followed by health education/group problem solving for behavior change. Although the program lasts only 12 weeks, it has been shown to significantly increase engagement in physical activity out to 18 months, accompanied by significant improvements in lower extremity joint stiffness, pain and function; lower extremity strength, mobility, and anxiety/depression. Participants learn about the benefits of physical activity, how to manage arthritis, how to exercise safely, and how to develop and maintain a healthier, more active lifestyle – without pain.

Matter of Balance is designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults. MOB classes are held for 8 sessions, two-hours each. During these classes participants will learn to set realistic goals for increasing activity, discuss reducing fall risks in their home environment; learn exercises to increase strength and balance, and view falls as controllable. Workshops are interactive and focus on peer support, problem-solving, skill building, exercise training, videotapes, and sharing practical solutions.

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) is designed to prevent falls and includes exercise classes, educational materials and self-assessments. The classes are designed specifically for older adults and focus on strength, balance, flexibility and aerobics. All exercises and aerobics can be done sitting or standing and are very adaptive. Classes consist of a warm up, aerobics, balance, strength, stretching, and an educational component. Performing exercises that improve strength, balance and fitness are the single most important activity that adults can do to stay active and reduce their chance of falling.

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program is a six-week program that meets once a week for two hours. It is for anyone over the age of 18 that has a chronic condition and wants to take charge of their ongoing health problems and get relief from their pain, fatigue, and other symptoms. This program is for individuals with conditions such as: heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, asthma, chronic pain, high blood pressure, depression, anxiety or other health concerns.

Participants learn:

- Techniques to manage pain and fatigue
- Easy exercises to help improve or maintain strength and energy
- Proper use of medication

- Nutrition tips
- Methods to talk effectively with family, friends and health professionals
- How to evaluate new treatment options

The Chronic Pain Self-Management Program is a six-week program that meets once a week for two hours. It is for anyone over the age of 18 that has chronic pain and is looking to better manage their symptoms and their daily lives. The workshop provides information and teaches practical skills. It gives people the confidence and motivation they need to manage the challenges of living with chronic pain.

Participants learn:

- Techniques to deal with problems such as fatigue, isolation and poor sleep
- Exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility and endurance
- Proper use of medications
- Communication skills
- Healthy eating
- Pacing activity and rest
- Goal setting

To learn more or to register for a class near you visit the Catholic Charities websites at <https://www.ccsomn.org/active-aging-programs/wellness-programs/>. If you have questions, or to request a class in your community, please contact Jennifer Halberg, Active Aging Programs Director at 507.454.2270 or jhalberg@ccsomn.org.