

# The Time To Talk Is Now

## Why And How To Talk To Your Loved Ones About Aging Issues

(NAPSA)—The U.S. senior population is growing and expected to double over the next 25 years. Currently, over 12 percent of Americans are senior citizens and, by the year 2011, the first wave of the baby boomer generation will begin turning 65. As America ages, increasing numbers of seniors and their adult children will face critical decisions about life, health and aging.

A new nationwide survey, commissioned by WellPoint and conducted by the Roper Public Affairs and Media Group, found a notable disconnect between seniors and their adult children on critical health and aging issues such as losing independence, long-term care options and being alone. The survey found that:

- Adult children believe their senior parents worry more about aging issues than they actually do;
- Seniors are comfortable talking about important aging issues but don't do so often;
- Each generation is waiting for the other to start the conversation; and
- Medicare is a big area of confusion for adult children of senior parents.

To meet the needs of the growing and diverse senior population, WellPoint, the nation's largest health benefits company, has launched a new long-term educational initiative—Connecting the Generations—to help seniors and their families facilitate conversations about important health and aging issues and proactively plan for the future. Connecting the Generations is designed to provide valuable education and support to help fill the “gaps” in information between seniors and other generations—to ultimately create a community at large that is more



**Seniors and their adult children should have regular conversations about key life and aging issues, including health and finances.**

informed, engaged and equipped to address important aging issues.

### Starting The Conversation

According to the Roper Survey, 60 percent of adult children say they talk regularly to their senior parents about health matters—yet only 32 percent of seniors report discussing health topics regularly with their kids.

“Talking regularly about important issues related to aging, health, living independently and financial security can be a positive experience,” said Dr. Edward Schneider, Dean Emeritus of the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology at the University of Southern California. “For seniors, engaging in these conversations helps assure them that they have a proactive plan for the future. For adult children, discussing important life issues can offer peace of mind, knowing they have the necessary information to help their parents as needed.”

### The Time Is Now

The 2006 Medicare enrollment period provides an excellent opportunity to broaden the conversation about aging. WellPoint's Connecting the Generations program recommends the following tips to help you start the conversation:

- Get the ball rolling by sending

a quick note or e-mail, making a phone call or just mentioning that there are issues that you've been thinking about.

- Next, arrange to meet in person, if you can. Choose a time and place where everyone can focus on the conversation.

- Before meeting, make a checklist of the topics you'd like to discuss and, if appropriate, share it with the other person as the conversation starter—or use the Connecting the Generations checklist as a starting point.

- Prior to the meeting, siblings should reach a consensus on goals. Don't feel the need to cover all the topics in one discussion; it may take a few conversations.

Ideally, families want to have a health plan in place before health problems arise. For seniors, this means talking to your loved ones about your current health situation and providing them with the important information they will need to help you in the future.

How active and engaged you are in life can make a tremendous difference in how you age and your overall quality of life. For seniors, it's important to make sure you're keeping both physically and mentally fit. For adult children, you can do a lot to help and encourage your parents to live well.

### Helpful Information

Connecting the Generations includes tools and resources for seniors and their families, including the “Connecting the Generations Conversation Guide”—a 24-page booklet with tips and information for initiating conversations on critical health and aging issues, with practical checklists for future planning. To learn more or to receive a free copy of the booklet, call (866) 406-0984 or visit the Web site at [www.ConnectingtheGenerations.org](http://www.ConnectingtheGenerations.org).