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More local seniors able to join adult day programs

EDMONTON – More than 500 additional seniors in the Edmonton and Calgary areas are now able to get out of their homes at least once a week for a day of socialization and recreation, providing respite for their caregivers, with the expansion of adult day programs offered by Alberta Health Services (AHS).

An investment of \$9 million over three years will be used to expand hours for existing adult day programs and to launch new adult day programs in both cities.

“Adult day programs are an integral part of our seniors strategy,” says Cheryl Knight, Executive Director of Seniors Health for AHS.

“They promote physical activity and socialization; prevent feelings of isolation; offer basic health care services; and give caregivers extra time to tend to their own needs. Making more space in adult day programs is good for Alberta seniors and good for their families.”

Approximately 3,000 seniors currently participate in 83 adult day programs across the province.

Both types of adult day programs – basic and comprehensive – typically provide programming once or twice a week, for about six hours per day.

Basic adult day programs provide basic health care, recreation and socialization to seniors who require support, and respite services for caregivers.

Seniors with complex health needs can be served in comprehensive adult day programs, which offer medical monitoring and treatment, medication assistance, rehabilitation, transportation and in-home personal home care.

Both basic and comprehensive adult day programs will be expanded.

“Many seniors who wish to remain in their home don’t have regular opportunities to get out of their home and enjoy the sort of activity and interaction needed to maintain one’s health and enjoy a good quality of life,” says Knight.

“As an added bonus, seniors in our adult day programs are monitored by health professionals who may be able to identify and treat medical issues before they become serious – potentially so serious that seniors would be unable to remain at home.

“By getting seniors out of their homes once or twice a week, we’re helping seniors stay in their homes longer and providing caregivers with a needed break to ensure they can stay well while continuing in their caregiving role.”

John Cowdell was in long-term care at St. Joseph’s Auxiliary Hospital in 2010 and, through his commitment to get better, he was able to return home in 2012.

Now the Edmonton senior attends an adult day program at St. Joseph's, offered by AHS and provided by Covenant Health, in order to meet people and get daily exercise.

"The day program has been wonderful. I meet people of all ages and abilities," says Cowdell. "Sometimes to get the exercise we need, someone else has to help with the motivation, so I come and I get started. It's important."

Cowdell's wife, Georgina, feels a sense of relief that her husband is getting the support he needs while she is at work.

"If he wasn't in the program, I would be constantly worrying about him," she says. "Without the day program, John would have probably gone back to long-term care. Here, he gets the exercise he needs and he gets out to socialize – he's a very social person. Without this program, he would not be where he is at today."

To see if you or a loved one could benefit from an Adult Day Program in your community, call our home care line in Edmonton Zone at 780-496-1300.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

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