

Elders On Facebook?

Q: Are seniors texting, blogging and tweeting?

A: Yes. According to one recent study, older adults have been the fastest growing segment of the online internet population. People over the age of 60 are using Facebook, Google, Yahoo and YouTube. Seniors are emailing, texting and blogging, says the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

According to a report published by eMarketer, nearly half of Baby Boomers actively maintained a profile of themselves on the social web in 2009. That's a 15% increase from the year before. More than one-third of individuals age 63 to 75 are also networking on the internet. The Pew Research Center's *Internet & American Life* report says that social networking has nearly doubled for people ages 50 and older---growing from 22% to 42% over the past year. The image of the computer illiterate senior is a thing of the past.

All this social networking is having a positive impact on seniors' lives: they are able to communicate more often with family, keep aware of events in the community and the latest news, and even check on their health records.

Elder advocates want seniors to "stay connected" to the internet, and an information clearinghouse called The ElderCare Locator has put out a series of tips to help older people understand how to use technology tools that have become available in the past few years.

The Eldercare Locator's "*Staying Connected: Technology Options for Older Adults*" guide takes

users through the basic facts about how to use tools like Facebook, email and texting---including privacy and safety information. The guide also explains YouTube, Twitter, Skype, Instant Messaging and blogging – all tools that older adults can use to stay connected. "In a matter of seconds you can send a message to your son, receive a photo from your granddaughter or email an invitation to a family gathering," the *Staying Connected* guide says. "While younger people are typically the 'experts' on these new resources, many older adults also utilize the internet, social media and cell phones to communicate receive information."

The guide tells seniors how to send a **text message** from a cell phone, and renders some tips about privacy and safety. The guide has a page on **emailing**, including tips like: "When sending an email, ALL CAPS is considered yelling or shouting."

How and when to use **Facebook** is also explained, including the difference between email messages and "wall posts."

The guide also briefly clarifies how to call people on your computer with **skype**, how to upload videos from **You Tube**, and sending **tweets** of 140 characters or less using Twitter.

For older adults, these kinds of internet and phone connectivity results in a better quality of life. To download a free copy of the *Staying Connected* technology guide, go to www.n4a.org and click on 'Home For the Holidays.'

