

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU...CARING FOR OTHERS”

Fight the Flu – 3 Easy Steps

Spread the Word, Not the Flu

It's flu season again and adults over 65 are particularly vulnerable to the flu and its complications. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), influenza is a major cause of hospitalization, disability and even death for older people. Every year in the U.S., about 9 out of 10 flu-related deaths occur in adults over 65. Because the immune system may decline with age, traditional flu vaccines sometimes don't work as well in elderly people. For these people, a *higher-dose* version is also available. The higher dose triggers the body to produce more antibodies against the flu virus. All flu shots for those 65 and older are covered by Medicare Part B with no copay.

Fight the flu with 3 simple steps:

1. Get flu shots. A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step to protecting not just yourself but those in your care against flu viruses. Both you and the person in your care should be vaccinated, ideally in later summer or fall, before the flu season starts. A *yearly* vaccine is needed because the flu virus changes year to year; each year's vaccine is made to protect against the three most common viruses for *that* year. The most serious complication of flu is pneumonia, so, in addition to age, people with chronic health conditions like asthma, COPD,

diabetes or heart disease are at especially high risk.

2. Stop the spread of germs.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue and toss it after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an *alcohol-based hand sanitizer*. **Hand washing is the NUMBER ONE way to reduce spreading germs.**
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid *close* contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone (*without* the use of fever-reducing meds) except to get medical care or for other necessities. While you are sick, it is important to limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.



3. Use flu antivirals if a doctor prescribes them. Prescription antivirals like Tamiflu and Flumadine do *not* prevent or cure the flu. They are sometimes given to make the flu milder and possibly



Continued from page 1

prevent serious complications. They work best if used within 48 hours of first symptoms (cough, sore throat, fever, aches and stuffy/runny nose), but may be given

later if the person is very sick or is at high-risk of complications. Antivirals are *no* substitute for the flu vaccine.

Source: National Council on Aging; CDC



Resource for You **Senior Centers Are for Life!**

September is National Senior Center Month and it's not just card tables and checker boards anymore! Most senior centers welcome anyone over 50 years as a member and offer these benefits:

- Work and volunteer opportunities, job training and placement services.
- Health and fitness centers that feature everything from aerobics to Zumba.
- Chronic disease self-management programs for those with diabetes, arthritis and more, plus—health screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose.
- Health screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose.

Source: National Institute of Senior Centers

At The Pharmacy

Always fill prescriptions at the same drugstore because they keep careful records and this can help prevent side effects and drug interactions. Choose a pharmacy that uses large, easy-to-open containers with large print labels. The pharmacist can also help you select over-the-counter products. Questions to ask:



- Will the insurance company pay for this drug? What is the highest amount they will pay?
- Is a generic drug available? Will the pharmacist call the doctor for approval?
- What side effects should you look for? When should you call the doctor?
- Can using more than one drug at the same time cause unsafe interactions?
- Will the pharmacy's computer alert the pharmacist about possible drug interactions or side effects before the prescription is filled?
- What are the risks of not taking the medicine? Are there risks in not finishing the entire prescription?
- How dangerous is an overdose?
- Is drinking alcohol or smoking allowed while taking the medication?
- Should it be taken with a meal, or with water or milk?
- Should any specific foods be avoided, such as grapefruit?

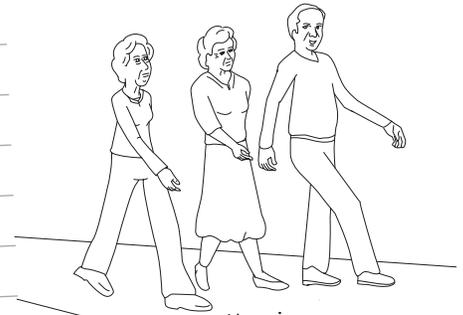
Taking Care of Yourself—Strength Training Builds Muscles and Bones

If you think strength training with weights or resistance bands/machines is only for body builders, think again. Weight training helps to build strong bones too!

As we age, hormonal changes, inactivity and poor nutrition can lead to weak bones, a condition known as osteoporosis. These changes can start as early as 40, but are most serious in the elderly. The most devastating result of weak bones is fractures—more than 2 million every year in the U.S. For the elderly, hip fractures are the worst: 6 out of 10 people with hip fractures will never fully regain their independence.

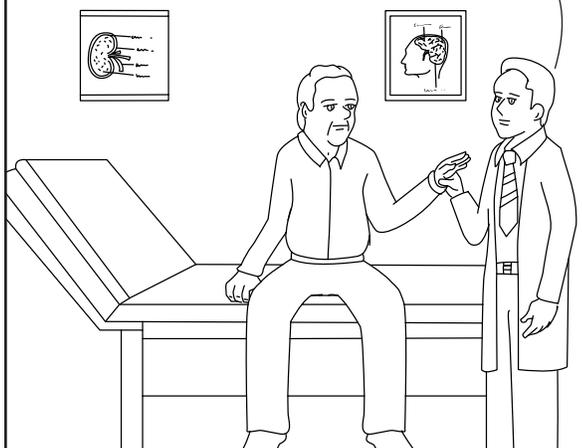
Exercises and activities that put stress on muscles—and then on bones—trigger the body to pump more calcium into bones, slowing and sometimes even reversing osteoporosis. Weight-bearing aerobic activities, like walking, are a great way to build stronger, healthier bones. Strength training targets bones of the hips, spine, wrists and ribs, which are most vulnerable to fractures. Plus, resistance-type workouts increase strength and stability, which can boost confidence, keep people active and reduce the chance of falls.

Source: *Strength and Power Training by Harvard Medical School*



Live Life Laughing!

It looks like a paper cut, but just to be sure let's do lots of tests.



Inspiration

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

~ Albert Einstein

Don't Fall—Be Safe

Taking any medication may increase your risk of falling. Medications can make you dizzy or sleepy. Be careful when starting a new medication. Talk to your health care provider about potential side effects or interactions of your medications.

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SAFETY TIPS Medication Safety Tips

Medical errors *hurt* 1.5 million people in the U.S. per year. The average hospital patient is subject to at least one medication error per day, furthermore, drug errors are responsible for *killing* more than 7,000 hospitalized patients a year. Poor communication as patients move through the hospital system is responsible for 50% of all medication errors.

- **Refill prescriptions early** so you won't run out.
- If someone will be taking several medications on his own, **find a pharmacy that will do simplified packaging.**
- **Take medication in adequate light with eyeglasses on.**
- **Check expiration dates** frequently and discard any medicines that are out-of-date.
- **Keep all medicines out of sight and away from Alzheimer patients, children, and pets.** Keep the phone number of the closest poison control center near the phone just in case there is a problem.
- **Wear a medical alert bracelet or carry a card** that lists the medications the person is currently taking. This can save their life in an emergency situation.

NEXT ISSUE... FIRE SAFETY

Caregiver Assistance News

“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Hand washing is the number one way to reduce spreading germs.
T F
2. Adults over 65 are particularly vulnerable to the flu and its complications.
T F
3. Because the immune system may decline with age, traditional flu vaccines sometimes don't work as well in elderly people, so a higher dose version is available.
T F
4. The most serious complication of flu is fatigue.
T F
5. While you are sick, it is important to limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.
T F
6. The pharmacist should be asked any specific foods be avoided, such as grapefruit, with a new medication.
T F
7. To avoid medication errors, take medication in adequate light with eyeglasses on.
T F
8. A medical alert bracelet or card that lists the medications the person is currently taking can save their life in an emergency.
T F
9. Both you, and the person in your care, should be vaccinated, ideally in late summer or fall, before the flu season starts.
T F
10. Prescription antivirals such as Tamiflu and Flumadine prevent or cure the flu.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____