

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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Hello, readers! This month's SAFE Aging newsletter theme is about general health and wellness. Living a healthy lifestyle is a matter of making daily choices. Today's newsletter is about health strategies you can choose for quality of life, health and wellness. Our topics include information about hearing, the senses of smell and taste; constipation, sleep and medications.

We will provide you with useful handouts on medication tips, do's and don'ts; a form you can use to record your medications; a personal story explaining why hearing loss is a big deal; the importance of the sense of smell and taste; some home strategies to promote restful sleeping; and a recommendation for a great book on health and aging.



Who's On First? You Are!

By Vanessa M Dazio, OTD, OTR/L

Your personal health and safety is your baby. The daily decisions you make about your health and safety will make the difference between illness and health, and personal longevity.

- Do I walk or ride?
- Do I eat one scoop or two?
- Do I choose fried or baked?
- Do I drink one or eight glasses of water a day?
- Do I watch TV or swim?
- Do I smoke or quit?

Every choice you make, makes a difference. You are in control.



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention



Hearing Loss: It's A Big Deal

by Dr. Vanessa

My grandmother's hearing was pretty limited. In fact, it was downright bad! She had hearing aids but hated wearing them. So she avoided wearing them at all costs. The costs were great, but only to the rest of the family, because **we adjusted to her loss.**

Nanny accused us all of whispering, or turning our faces away from her at a critical moment. She cranked the sound up so high on the TV, you could literally hear it next door! We all shouted so Nanny could hear us. As a result, we could barely stand being in the environment. It was nerve wracking and stressful!



Nanny's hearing loss affected our lives and health in many other ways. The telephone was never loud enough for Nanny to hear us, so our attempts at telephone conversations were pretty frustrating. She could not hear us when we tried to give her directions, or ask her if she wanted something to eat or needed something from the drug store or grocery store. We had to run over to the house to ask her if she was ready for church, or to tell her a delivery would be made.

Telephone conversations didn't make sense to Nan. I would call from another state, anxious to talk to her about the things grandmothers and granddaughters talk about, but the odds of communicating were pretty well non-existent. She just couldn't hear me, and most of the time I could not shout loud enough!

An amplified telephone finally made a tolerable difference, but it was a gadget for her that had to work perfectly the first try, or we had another cause for frustration. It saddened me greatly, because I wanted to talk like we used to talk to each other. It was a loss for both of us.

I relate this personal story because it demonstrates how communication and personal relationships are altered when such a vital sense is lost. All Nanny had to do was wear her hearing aids while around the family. Her discomfort became our family's pain and added to the stress of our caregiving.

Now, Nanny has passed on. I mourn for all the missed moments we could have shared talking to each other.

Our Recommendations

If you have hearing loss that has not been addressed by your doctor or specialist, we strongly recommend getting an appointment with your doctor or an audiologist. You must see a specialist to determine whether hearing assistive devices will help you, and what type would be appropriate.

There are many treatment options that could potentially improve your hearing. In some situations, surgical implants can dramatically improve hearing. It could change your life and the lives of those who care about you. In many cases, assistive devices can improve hearing.

“Communication and personal relationships are altered when such a vital sense is lost.”

Losing the Sense of Smell Stinks!

by Dr. Vanessa

In the last few months, while doing in home visits, I met four people who said they could not smell anything and lost their sense of taste. None were particularly concerned about it. Most said it was disappointing to eat food, because food had no taste. None of the four people knew why they lost their sense of smell, and none had spoken to their doctor about it. Two of the four people were losing weight, and all were struggling to force themselves to eat because food was not interesting.



Losing the desire to eat is a big concern, because healthy aging requires eating good foods loaded with vitamins and minerals and other nutrients that support our bones, muscles, blood circulation and vital organs. Losing the ability to smell is a threat to health and safety.

I was surprised to learn thirty percent of older Americans between the ages of 70 and 80 and two out of three older Americans over age 80 experience problems with the sense of smell. So, our message today is seek medical attention if you experience a sudden change in your sense of smell or taste.

Smell Enhances the Flavors of Life!

The sense of smell enhances the flavors of life. It gives us pleasure by reminding us about a hot apple pie cooking in the oven or a steaming bowl of spaghetti with garlic bread. It tells us about fresh air after a rainstorm, or about barbeque ribs on dancing on a patio grill. Smell reminds us of the special beauty of a rose or the skin of a newborn.

Smell is protective. It warns us about potential problems, hazards or emergencies. It tells us about fire, leaking gas, chemical spills or environmental problems such as mold or mildew. Failure to notice these warning signs increases the likelihood of experiencing certain types of accidents such as death due to fire or poisoning. This failure can lead to the development of chronic health conditions such as asthma or other respiratory diseases, or make those conditions worse.

Problems with smell or taste can cause a serious decrease in appetite or desire to eat food. Important vitamins, minerals and nutrients necessary for health may not be eaten because the appeal of food has gone away. Extra salt or sugar may be added to meals and snacks in an attempt to make food more appealing. This action can become a real problem for those who have heart disease, diabetes, stroke, or other illnesses that require sticking to a specific diet. Weight loss or weight gain can occur. Either weight result can cause serious health consequences. For helpful handouts that explain the causes for the loss of smell or taste and what you can do about it, click these handouts.

[Loss of Smell](#)

[Loss of Taste](#)



“Thirty percent of older Americans between the ages of 70 and 80 and two out of three older Americans over age 80 experience problems with the sense of smell.”



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention

Restful Sleep: Dream On

Are you one of the 50-70 million people in the US who have difficulty sleeping? If you are, your health and wellness is at risk. Sleep deprivation or lack of sleep affects personal abilities, physical and mental health. Poor sleep can cause reduced energy, greater difficulty concentrating, and a diminished or irritable mood. Pain may be intensified by the physical and mental consequences of lack of sleep.



You are at greater risk for accidents, including fall-asleep automobile crashes, and accidents caused by inattention, weakness, drowsiness, impaired coordination, etc. Work performance and relationships can suffer too. In short, good restful sleep is essential for health, wellness and personal safety.

What is "Problem Sleeping"?

Sleeping problems are called insomnia. A person who has sleeping problems may have difficulty getting to sleep, sleeping through the night or waking up feeling rested or refreshed. Insomnia becomes a problem when it affects day to day living.

Symptoms of Problem Sleeping

- Combination of early morning or frequent night awakenings
- Confusion differentiating between day and night
- Difficulty falling or remaining asleep
- Early morning awakening
- Frequent night awakenings
- Periods of sleeplessness, alternating with periods of excessive sleep
- Restlessness when trying to fall asleep
- Sleepiness at inconvenient times

Sleeping Risk Factors

Some causes of and contributors to sleep disturbances include the following:

- Alzheimer's disease
- Chronic diseases such as congestive heart failure or lung disease
- Chronic pain caused by diseases such as arthritis
- Depression
- Erratic work hours
- Frequent night time urination
- Life crisis
- Lifestyle change
- Neurological conditions
- Noisy environment such as snoring sleep partner
- Obesity
- Organic brain syndrome
- Prescription drugs, recreational drugs, or alcohol
- Psychological problems or concerns
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Smoking
- Stimulants such as caffeine, tea or colas
- Stress
- Urinary or gastrointestinal conditions

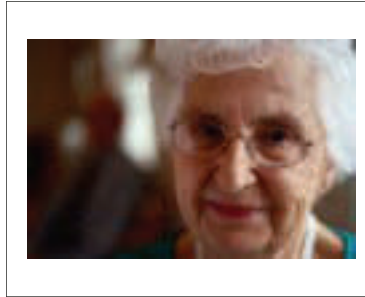
For more information, read [Home Strategies to Improve Sleeping Habits.](#)

"Sleep deprivation or lack of sleep affects personal abilities, physical and mental health."

Constipation

Do you suffer from constipation? It sounds like a silly question, but it really isn't. If you suffer from constipation, you can count yourself as one of the 40% of all seniors with this uncomfortable problem. In fact, constipation can be a sign of something unhealthy happening in your life.

Constipation is a decrease in the number of bowel movements, along with prolonged or difficult passage of stools. This can make life pretty miserable.



Problems Associated With Constipation

- Becoming pre-occupied because it's your problem
- Discomfort
- Impaction, which could lead to urinary tract infections or urinary incontinence
- Predisposes one to hemorrhoids and aggravates existing ones

Causes

- Immobility; decreased activity
- Not enough water
- Not enough fiber in diet
- Changes in personal habits (Being forced to use bedpan or toilet without privacy)
- Use of certain medications such as anticholinergics, chronic laxative use, aspirin, narcotics

Treatment

Try some personal home strategies to make those bowels work on a regular basis:

- Drink lots of liquids (unless the doctor say's no due to a medical reason)
- Increase personal activity levels.
- Do abdominal exercises
- Increase fiber content of diet, only after increasing fluid intake.
- Eat foods high in both fiber and water, such as prune juice, citrus fruits, and raw vegetables (1/3 cup bran cereal, 1/2 cup applesauce, etc.)

Modified Internet Resource <http://health.nih.gov/search.asp/6>

<http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov>

<http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov>

http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/thebasics_speechandlanguage.asp

http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/balance/balance_disorders.asp



“If you suffer from constipation, you can count yourself as one of the 40% of all seniors with this uncomfortable problem.”

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Medication Tips

For the older adult, taking medication requires skill, knowledge, and active personal oversight. Medication usefulness depends on many factors. It is helpful to keep an updated record of all medications, including type, purposes, dosage and frequency, as well as a record of all over the counter products. Drug interactions and side effects can affect health and safety at home, and on the highway, and must be considered as variables that could influence health as well as cause injuries or further illness. Continual oversight is important. Regular consultation with the doctor and pharmacist is imperative for preventive health.

[How to Reduce Your Medication Risk](#)

Read this article to for various suggestions on how to reduce your medication risks.

[Medicine Record](#)

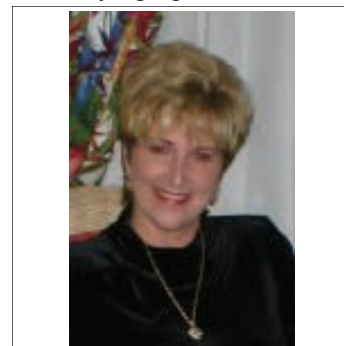
Our form designed to help you keep an up-to-date, written list of all of the medicines (prescription and over-the-counter) and dietary supplements, including vitamins and herbals, that you use.

Ask Dr. Vanessa

Question: What is a really good book I can read to learn about my aging health?

Answer: I just finished reading an absolutely wonderful book written by Dr Michael F. Roisen and Dr. Mehmet C. Oz called ***YOU: THE OWNERS MANUAL: An Insider's Guide to the Body That Will Make You Healthier and Younger.*** The publisher is Harper Collins.

This book was terrific. It is easy and fun to read. It describes the different systems of the body easily making complex concepts surprisingly simple.. It is great for anyone who is aging!!!! You will get facts about your body and health, information you can use to keep your body running long and strong, exercise tips, nutritional guidelines, lifestyle ideas and alternative approaches to reduce the effects of aging. I just loved the book. I highly recommend it. Vanessa M. Dazio, OTD, OTR/L Editor of SAFE Aging NEWSLETTER.



Dr. Vanessa M. Dazio, OTD

If you have a question for Dr. Vanessa, feel free to email her at vmd@safeaging.com.