



# Newsletter



Safety, Health, Injury Prevention

Volume 2, Issue 2 July 2005

SAFE Aging, Inc. provides consulting services that support successful aging in place and educational programs that promote health, safety and injury prevention.

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This month's SAFE Aging Newsletter theme is **Home Living Strategies That Support Safety and Independence**. Dr. Dazio describes shared living strategies that maximize health and minimize the risk of home injuries. There is information on how to find your personal comfort zone; how to work in the comfort zone; and how to make your home comfort zone friendly. Dr. Dazio provides some safe lifting strategies and provides tips to cope with life threatening extreme heat.

## Strategies to Maximize Health and Independence

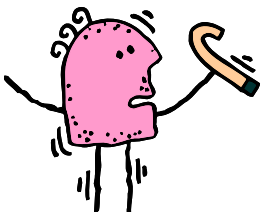


How many thousands of hours a year do you spend doing physically demanding activities? The answer is a lot! Physically demanding actions are activities that are done every day. These activities make it possible to get things, move things and put things wherever they need to be. In short, these common actions make "doing" possible and are a universal human need.

- |                |                 |                  |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>Bending</b> | <b>Carrying</b> | <b>Climbing</b>  |
| <b>Holding</b> | <b>Kneeling</b> | <b>Lifting</b>   |
| <b>Moving</b>  | <b>Reaching</b> | <b>Squatting</b> |

If any of these actions are done in excess or beyond the ability of the person, the muscular aches, strains, pains or other injuries can occur. When this happens, basic survival activities such as bathing, dressing, eating and hygiene become difficult or impossible to do. Quality of life can rapidly deteriorate when the ability to perform these basic actions is compromised.

To do these actions without strain or injury, the body has to work together. The lungs and heart and other vital organs have to work efficiently and effectively. Blood circulation has to flow properly. Oxygen has to get to the brain and cell tissues. Bones have to be strong. The body has to be fit and well nourished. Muscles and joints have to work at their full potential to maximize function.



Problems will occur when the system fails in some way. For instance, when joint range of motion, muscle strength, coordination and balance decline, the basic "doing" actions become harder and harder. It is at this point that the potential for injuries increase and the threat of losing independence and self control can become a reality.

Other contributing factors, such as a home that is not matched to the person living in it, can prevent safe activity, or entirely disable people with marginal loss of abilities. Here are a number of health and safety strategies that work for everyone!

**Continued**



## Strategies to Maximize Health and Independence *continued*

### Home Living Strategies to Maximize Health and Independence

- Eat a healthy well balanced diet.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Work in the comfort zone.
- Match the home to fit to the person living in it.
- Anticipate, Recognize, Evaluate and Plan.
- Get fit. Be fit. Stay fit!
- Start and end the day with a smile, fill the day with laughter.

### Eat a Healthy Well Balanced Diet

Adults need over 40 different nutrients each day to stay healthy and to be able to care for themselves. Aging adults need fewer calories, but the same amount (or more) of protein, vitamins, and minerals are still required for health.

Eating the right foods and the right amounts of foods can help you live a longer, healthier life. Research has proven that many illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure can be prevented or controlled by eating right.

Getting the needed nutrients, such as calcium and iron, and keeping weight under control can help. Drink plenty of water. Try to balance the calories you get from food with the calories you use through physical activity. It is never too late to start eating right. Here are some helpful tips.



### Healthy Eating Tips

**Eat breakfast every day.** People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day. Breakfast also gives you energy and helps you think and learn.

**Choose whole grains more often.** Try whole wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, or brown rice.  
**Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day.** Different colored vegetables provide different nutrients. Choose dark, leafy greens such as kale, collards, and mustard greens, and reds and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes.

**Choose fresh or canned fruit more often than fruit juice.** Fruit juice has little or no fiber.

**Use fats and oils sparingly.** Olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocados, nuts and nut butters, olives, and fish provide heart-healthy fat as well as vitamins and minerals.

**Eat sweets sparingly.** Limit foods and beverages that are high in added sugars.

**Eat three meals every day** instead of skipping meals or eating a snack instead of a meal.

**Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand** to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

**CAUTION:**  
Special diets have different requirements. Certain medications are affected by foods. Follow your doctor's instructions for healthy living.

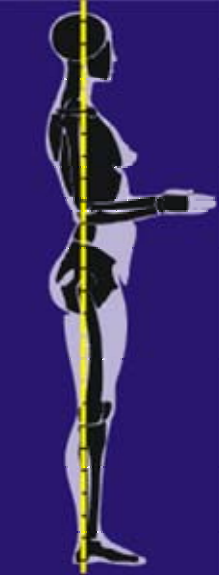
**TIP:** A person's minimal water requirement is half their body weight in ounces. For instance, a 200 pound person should drink at least 100 ounces per day

### Drink Plenty of Water

Water works to keep muscles and skin toned. It transports oxygen and nutrients to the cells. It eliminates toxins and wastes from the body, and regulates body temperature. It even assists in weight loss!

Did you know the biggest trigger of day time fatigue is lack of water? Preliminary research indicates that 8-10 glasses of water a day could significantly ease back and joint pain for about 80% of sufferers. A mere 2% drop in body water can trigger short term memory, trouble with basic math, and difficulty focusing on a computer page or printed page.

## Work in the Comfort Zone



The key to safely doing physically demanding activities every day is to work in the “Comfort Zone”. The comfort zone is the area in which your body is physically using the least amount of effort when working. In this zone, the muscles are relaxed. Blood circulation is at its best. There is no excess pressure on the nerves. The muscles are not straining to get the job done. The body is in “neutral alignment.”

The comfort zone is in front of the body between the shoulders and knees. The neck is straight and looking forward. Shoulders, hips and feet are stacked one above the other.

### How to Find Your Comfort Zone: 3 Easy Steps

**Step ONE:** Start by standing up. Get relaxed. Let the shoulders relax and arms hang down naturally. Once the arms are completely relaxed, bend the elbows to a 90 degree angle. The palms of the hands should be facing down, above and parallel to the feet.

**Step TWO:** The elbows should be touching the sides of the trunk. Keeping the elbows against the body, comfortably swing the left arm out as far to the side as possible, without causing any strain. Do the same thing with the right arm.

**Step THREE:** Return to the same position as step ONE. With the elbow tucked into the side, bring both hands up to touch the shoulders. Now, lower both hands, and touch as far down as comfortably possible without any bending at all. Observe how far the reach is from every possible angle, up, down and side to side. This is a safe reaching and lifting comfort zone. Caution should be used whenever something has to be moved or lifted above or below these areas.

### CAUTION:

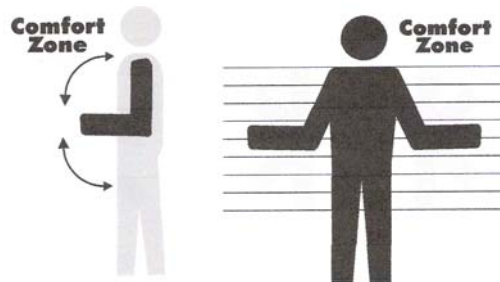
For health, the body requires movement and activity.

There is no one perfect posture that can be maintained all day long.

Any of the postures listed above can be used throughout the day, if done on occasion and if the body is given adequate time to rest.

When exertion is added, the above postures should be avoided.

The KEY is to use these actions within personal abilities, never beyond.



### Working in the Comfort Zone

- Keep wrists straight when working
- Keep elbows close to 90 degrees (close to body)
- Keep shoulders relaxed when working
- Keep reach between shoulders and
- Keep the S curve in your back at all times
- Keep objects you lift, move or hold, close to the stomach area
- Keep your nose even with your toes!
- Avoid twisting your back
- Avoid reaching behind your back
- Avoid bending your neck forward, backward or sideways
- Avoid working over your head
- Avoid lifting anything that cause strain

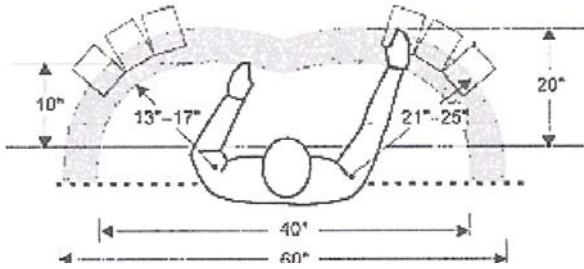
### Avoid “OUT OF THE ZONE” POSTURES When Working Hard

Here are postures that are out of the zone!

- Bending over at the waist
- Bending the wrists up, down or side to side
- Bending the trunk forward, back or side to side

continued

## Work in the Comfort Zone continued



- Lifting elbows above mid chest height
- Reaching behind the neck or the back
- Reaching above the shoulders
- Reaching below the knees
- Squatting or kneeling
- Twisting the back or neck
- Finger tip pinching

**Strategies to Make the Home “Comfort Zone Friendly”** To be safe at home, the home should comfortably support the abilities of the person or people living in it. The home should be designed so that getting, moving or putting things is easy and comfortable to do. It should be comfort zone friendly!

### Here is how to make your home *Comfort Zone Friendly*.

Observe home and its surrounding, including the neighborhood and the community.

Observe daily life activities as if a bystander.

Observe how you get, move or put things.

Look to see if awkward postures (postures out of the comfort zone) are being used, (awkward postures make it harder for the muscles to work efficiently).

Rearrange equipment, storage areas or furniture to reduce awkward postures.

If re-arranging is not possible, look at how the action is being done.

- Can the action be changed to eliminate the awkward posture?
- Can the sequence be changed to eliminate exertion?
- Can the duration of the activity be changed to reduce effort?
- Can the frequency of the effort be changed to reduce exertion?
- Can the position be changed?
- Can rest times be added?
- Can other activities be alternated to reduce stress or fatigue?

If the actions can't be changed, determine if there are devices that can reduce the risk of injury when it is necessary to exert muscular effort. Can tools or materials be changed or added?

#### Examples:

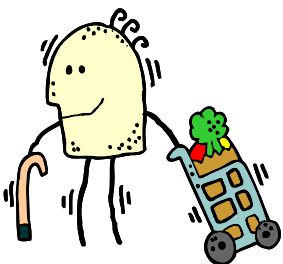
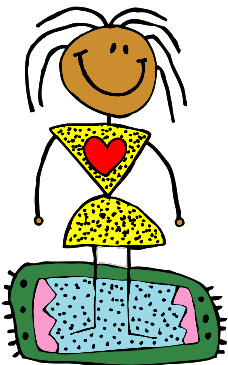
- Wheels
- Carts
- Enlarged Grips
- Non Slip Surfaces
- Texture Added or Eliminated
- Sharper Tools, Etc.

### Match The Home to the Person Living In It!

An environment that does not fit the person living in it is an unsupportive and unhealthy environment. An environment that doesn't match the person living in it can make a healthy person at risk for injury. It can make a disabled person completely *unable*.

continued

Hmm, are throw  
rugs safe?



## Work in the Comfort Zone *continued*



The home should be made to fit and support every person living in it. This becomes especially important as one ages, and as functional abilities decline. Adjusting the home to match abilities can make the home enabling, rather than disabling. Often, very simple changes or adjustments can be made to make the home more user friendly.

To make the home match the person living in it, start by looking at the person. What can the person comfortably do? What needs to be accomplished? How is the person doing things? Where is the comfort zone? Then study the home, and look at the following:

**Accessibility:** Heights should be right for your personal needs. Placement of fixtures, furniture, equipment, tools should be within the easiest reach (below the shoulders and above the knees). Placement of useful daily life things should be within the easiest reach.

### Accessibility TIPS

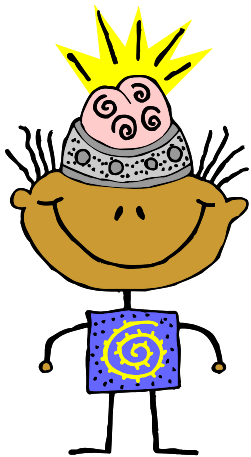
- Arrange work in the direct field of vision
- Arrange work by frequency of use
- Arrange work by sequence of use
- Arrange work by function
- Arrange work by importance

**Design Ideas:** The home design should look good, be safe, comfortable, convenient, and functional. Adjustability gives the greatest options, particularly if the desire is to age in place. Adjustability gives the home occupants the ability to easily modify the home should physical abilities decline.

**Ease of circulation:** Space and traffic patterns are important for comfort and convenience. A home should not have barriers or obstacles that prevent safely getting around the home, or that can increase the risk of falls or injuries.

### THIS IS IMPORTANT!

A home should not have barriers or obstacles that prevent safely getting around the home, or that can increase the risk of falls or injuries.



## Anticipate, Recognize, Evaluate and Plan

Learn to anticipate and recognize factors and conditions that could be a threat to health and welfare. Once unsafe factors are recognized, they can be eliminated. Continually evaluate and re-evaluate conditions that are causing difficulty or unsafe actions. Once an unsafe factor is identified, make a plan and eliminate it! Avoid unsafe actions by working in your comfort zone. Eliminate unsafe conditions by adjusting the home environment to fit the person.

**ANTICIPATE:** Think ahead

**RECOGNIZE:** Look for potential problem areas

**EVALUATE:** See what you can do to eliminate your problem area

**PREVENT:** Take action! Get rid of the problem

## Get Fit: Be Fit: Stay Fit!

Regular physical activity is good a thing! Even modest amounts can improve health. Exercise can decrease pain, increase strength, balance and coordination. It can reduce the risk of falls and fall-related injuries. Physical activity decreases the risk for colon cancer, diabetes, and high blood pressure. Regular physical activity substantially delays the onset of functional limitations and loss of independence

It can reduce or delay many chronic diseases (e.g., coronary heart disease, non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, obesity), and disabling conditions such as osteoporosis, arthritis. It can reduce risk factors such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol).

Physical activity also helps to control weight, contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints;

You do not have to be an athlete to benefit from regular physical activity. Start with small, specific goals such as walking 10 minutes a day, 3 days a week and slowly build up from there. Keep an activity log to track your progress.

### FITNESS TIPS

#### **Try these activities to add more physical activities to your daily life:**

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Make sure the stairs are well lit.
- Get off the bus one stop early if you are in an area safe for walking.
- Park the car farther away from entrances to stores, movie theatres, or your home.
- Take a short walk around the block with family, friends, or coworkers.
- In bad weather, walk around a mall, increase repetitions as able.
- Rake the leaves or wash the car.
- Visit museums, the zoo, or an aquarium. (You can walk for hours and not realize it).
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- Tai chi (join a class - a really pleasant way to improve balance, coordination, range of motion)
- Fold sheets and towels.



**To build endurance, it is important to find activities that make the lungs and heart work more vigorously, but in a controlled manner that does not strain the body. This is called “aerobic exercise.”**

Regular aerobic activity has many advantages, some are as follows:

- control weight by burning calories
- reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke by strengthening heart muscle and lowering blood pressure
- help lower cholesterol, a type of fat in your blood
- maintain strong bones
- relieve tension

#### **Start and end the day with a smile, fill the day with laughter!**

It takes 43 muscles to frown but only 17 muscles to smile. It is 2.5 times easier to smile than frown. Smiling costs nothing, and you need no special skills. It takes very little time. Smiling is infectious and makes everybody feel good, especially you. Make laughter a vital part of your day, because laughter

- Improves breathing
- Improves circulation
- Can stimulate the immune system
- Fosters healing
- Unleashes natural pain killers (endorphins)
- Eases pain
- Changes your focus
- Boosts the cardiovascular system by decreasing blood pressure and heart rate



## Ask Dr. Vanessa - Do you have any tips on safe lifting?

Yes. This one action produces more injuries and aggravations than any other physical demand. Back injuries account for 80% of all traumatic injuries. 8 out of 10 people suffer from low back pain, at least once in their life. Back injuries are easily preventable. Here are a few tips:



- Remember to use the whole body when lifting anything that is placed lower than your waist.
  - Use the legs, more than the back to lift.
  - Bend the knees, not the back.
  - Keep the S curve in your lower back when lifting.
  - **Never** twist the back or neck when lifting!
  - Restrict lifting to between the knees and chest.
  - Make sure you have a firm proper grip before lifting.
  - Make sure the object you are lifting is well balanced.
- Check the surface of the floor to make sure it is clean, clear and even before lifting an object.
  - Get help if you have the slightest concern!

**Stay SAFE!**

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### Resources for this newsletter:

The Center For Disease Control has an excellent web site that thoroughly details information about extreme heat. For more detailed information refer to [http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat\\_guide.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.asp)

<http://www.fda.gov/opacom/lowlit/eatage.html>

[www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)

[www.aota.org](http://www.aota.org)

[www.safeaging.com](http://www.safeaging.com)

[http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/better\\_health.htm#whatis](http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/better_health.htm#whatis)

Excerpts from

<http://www.safeaging.com/consumer/Jan05newsletter.pdf>

[http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/better\\_health.htm](http://win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/better_health.htm)

### Newsletter Archives

- [Volume 1, Issue 1 June 2004](#)
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- [Volume 1, Issue 3 August 2004](#)
- [Volume 1, Issue 4 September 2004](#)
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