



Caring Times

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WATCH OUT FOR OSTEOPOROSIS



Osteoporosis affects more than 25 million Americans – mostly women past menopause. According to the *National Osteoporosis Foundation*, approximately 1.2 million bone fractures each year in the U.S. are related to osteoporosis, with one in two women experiencing an osteoporosis-related fracture sometime in her lifetime.

Symptoms of bone loss include back pain or tenderness, a loss of height, and a slight curvature or “hump” of the upper back.

Are you at risk? Here are common risk factors:

- Surgical menopause with the removal of the ovaries
- An inadequate intake of calcium throughout life
- An inactive lifestyle
- A slender build
- A history of eating disorders
- A family history of osteoporosis
- Frequent use of diuretics, steroids, and anticonvulsants
- Smoking or alcohol use

Prevention is key. Following an active and healthy lifestyle while you are still young reduces your risk of developing osteoporosis later in life. Exercise increases bone mass before menopause and helps to reduce bone loss after menopause.

An adequate calcium intake is essential in the prevention of osteoporosis. Good sources of calcium include dairy products, leafy green vegetables, nuts, and seafood. Most women get only about half of the calcium they need daily so taking a calcium supplement is often advisable. Vitamin D is necessary for the body to absorb calcium. Milk fortified with vitamin D is one of the best sources. Sunlight also is an excellent source of vitamin D – being in the sun for just 15 minutes a day helps the body produce and activate vitamin D.

If you feel that you are at risk for osteoporosis, talk with your physician. A bone density scan, which is a simple and painless tool that measures bone density, may be recommended. Women who do not take estrogen after menopause have other options for preventing osteoporosis including drugs such as calcitonin which slows bone loss.

CAN'T SLEEP? DON'T BE SO QUICK TO REACH FOR THE PILLS

For tens of thousands of Americans, the first option when they can't sleep at night is to reach for a sleeping pill.

Research shows that this may not be such a good idea.

According to a review of clinical studies reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (or CBT) is far superior in helping people sleep than any of the commercially sold sleeping medications that



promise to remedy one's insomnia. While CBT works on one's behavior, making sleep a more positive experience, drugs simply treat an insomniac's symptoms without addressing the underlying cause.

Insomnia has been linked to a number of physical and mental health disorders as well as substance abuse. An ongoing lack of sleep increases one's risk of illness and infection, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and chronic pain.

CBT helps patients develop good sleeping habits and avoid those behaviors that keep them from sleeping well. It typically includes the following:

- ***Stimulus control therapy.*** This helps remove factors that condition the mind to resist sleep. This could include maintaining a consistent bedtime routine, including wakeup times and avoiding naps; leaving the bedroom when unable to sleep for 20 minutes; and staying away from coffee, alcohol or heavy exercise prior to bedtime.
- ***Bedtime restriction.*** This is intended to break the patient's habit of lying in bed without being able to fall asleep. This treatment decreases the time spent in bed, causing partial sleep deprivation, which makes one more tired the next night.
- ***Improving the sleep environment.*** This may include such changes as keeping the bedroom quiet, dark and cool, hiding a clock from view, and removing the TV.
- ***Paradoxical intention.*** Paradoxically, worrying over not being able to sleep can actually keep you awake. This therapy involves getting the patient to avoid any effort to fall asleep. By letting go of this worry, you relax, which makes it easier to sleep.

DOES YOUR PET MAKE YOU SNEEZE?

Here are some things to consider:

- ***There is no such thing as a hypoallergenic dog or cat.*** The allergic reaction is triggered by the proteins in the animal's saliva and skin, which of course all dogs and cats have. However, some breeds that shed less – think terriers or poodles – may be less likely to trigger reactions.
- ***Every dog or cat is different.*** Just because your neighbor's Persian or Pug makes your eyes tear doesn't mean you're going to have the same reaction to all cats or dogs of that breed. It's very individual which dogs or cats will

set off your allergies. The best way to find out is to spend some time at a shelter or breeder with a dog or cat you're interested in, rather than ruling out a particular type or latching onto a breed you think will be ok.



Everyone agrees that pets are great for older people. They provide love, companionship, routine, protection and, in the case of most dogs, exercise and a reason for getting out of the house.

Yet, what if you're allergic to pets? About an equal number – one in eight Americans – are allergic to either cats or dogs (or both), according to *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*

If you are, does that mean you can't have a fluffy friend? Not necessarily, unless you have severe allergies.

- ***It may not be a pet allergy.*** You may think you have a pet allergy if you start sneezing or wheezing, but an outdoor dog or cat might just be bringing into the house pollens or mold spores, which are causing your flare-ups. That's why visiting an allergist and getting tested will answer your questions.
 - ***Make some changes around the house.*** If you've got mild allergies and think you can manage, you need to be proactive about scrubbing your house down. Invest in a HEPA air purifier, which will help trap dander, as well as a HEPA vacuum (the regular kind often just blows allergens back out). Make bedrooms a pet-free zone to minimize your exposure to dander. Avoid heavy drapes and carpets, which trap allergens. Instead, opt for blinds and hardwood floors you can easily wipe down.
 - ***Less fur can make a difference.*** The dog hair itself doesn't cause a reaction. It's the skin cells that trigger allergies, also known as dander, that bind to the hair. So having less fur around can make a difference. In addition, washing and brushing your pet regularly can help dogs and cats lose some of the allergen-containing dander that builds up in the fur.
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OLDER CANCER PATIENTS NEED TO DISCLOSE ANY ALTERNATIVE DRUGS

Many older cancer patients use alternative medicines, including some that could interfere with their treatment.

A recent study in the *Journal of Geriatric Oncology* has shown that even though alternative medicines are marketed as “natural,” many contain active ingredients that can react with other therapies. In addition, many patients never tell their doctors they are using complementary or alternative medicines.

The study found that many don’t disclose this information because either they think they are safe, natural, non-toxic and not relevant to their cancer care; believe their doctor will disapprove; or because the doctor doesn’t specifically ask.

It also found that 26 percent of cancer patients surveyed took alternative medicines at some point in their cancer treatment. Sixty-eight percent of those who used alternative medicines were older than 80.

Commonly used alternative medicines included products for the eye disease macular degeneration and joint health, as well as stomach probiotics and mega-dose vitamins and minerals.

A number of alternative medicines are known to interfere with cancer treatments. For example, St. John’s wort can reduce the effectiveness of some cancer therapies, and other alternative medicines can interfere with anesthesia during cancer surgery



IT MAY BE TIME TO SEE A GERIATRICIAN

Geriatricians are primary care doctors who have had additional training in the health care needs of older people.

So, why should you consider seeing one? In many cases, people over 65 – especially those over 80 – have special medical needs. Geriatricians have a deeper understanding of how these issues might affect a senior's ability to function day-to-day and how the conditions should be treated.

Here's a look at how geriatricians approach five of the more serious senior health issues:

1. **Frailty.** Frailty is an inevitable part of aging, but it may affect an elderly person's ability to function independently at different times and in different ways (e.g. making them more susceptible to falls and needing more supervision and assistance). A geriatrician can help anticipate problems and put a care plan in place.
2. **Multiple medical problems.** Many seniors manage multiple medical conditions, such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, and neurological conditions. A geriatrician has special training in how these conditions interact in seniors.
3. **Multiple medications.** Multiple medical conditions often require taking multiple prescription drugs. An older body breaks down medications differently than a younger one. Geriatricians are trained to recognize side effects and drug interactions in seniors.
4. **Mental decline.** Some loss of cognitive ability is an inevitable part of aging, but certain symptoms may indicate such common conditions such as depression or dementia. Geriatricians are trained to know the difference between the signs of normal aging and those of more serious illness and provide the appropriate treatment.
5. **Caregiving advice.** Being a caregiver for someone with senior health issues can be confusing, stressful, and exhausting. A geriatrician can help with finding the right outside assistance and support from professionals such as a care manager or a home aide.

HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Eating nutritionally grows ever more important for seniors. Here are some healthy eating habits to adopt:



- **Reduce your sodium** (salt). This will help prevent water retention and high blood pressure. Look for the “low sodium” label and season meals with garlic, herbs, and spices – instead of salt.

- **Stock up on “good fats.”** Opt for olive oil, avocados, salmon, walnuts, flaxseed, and other monounsaturated fats that can help protect your body against heart disease by controlling “bad” LDL cholesterol levels and raising “good” HDL cholesterol levels.

- **Avoid “bad” carbs.** Stay away from white flour, refined sugar, and white rice. They digest quickly and cause spikes in blood sugar levels and shortlived energy. Chose instead complex carbs from whole grains, beans, fruits, and vegetables.
- **Look for hidden sugar.** Added sugar is found in such foods as bread, canned soups and vegetables, pasta sauce, instant mashed potatoes, frozen dinners, fast food, and ketchup. Check food labels for other terms for sugar like corn syrup, molasses, brown rice syrup, cane juice, fructose, sucrose, dextrose, or maltose. Replace these foods with fresh or frozen vegetables, and choose low-carb or sugar-free versions of such foods as tortillas, bread, pasta, and ice cream. Try to avoid artificial sweeteners as well; it’s healthier to drink sweeten drinks with honey or use whole fruit or fruit juice to sweeten dishes.
- **Cook smart.** For example, when it comes to preparing veggies you should consider steaming or sautéing them in olive oil to preserve nutrients.
- **Paint your plate with different colors.** Fruits and veggies rich in color correspond to rich nutrients (e.g. blackberries, melons, yams, spinach, tomatoes, zucchini).

QUIZ TIME!



FICTIONAL BEST FRIENDS

Match the best friends in literature

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Harry Potter | 1. Huck Finn |
| B. Tom Sawyer | 2. John Watson |
| C. Frodo Baggins | 3. Nick Carraway |
| D. Mowgli | 4. Baloo |
| E. Sherlock Holmes | 5. Little John |
| F. Jay Gatsby | 6. Horatio |
| G. Robin Hood | 7. Sancho Panza |
| H. Peter Pan | 8. Samwise Gamgee |
| I. Hamlet | 9. Tinker Bell |
| J. Don Quixote | 10. Ron Weasley |

Answer Key

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1-B | 6-I |
| 2-E | 7-J |
| 3-F | 8-C |
| 4-D | 9-H |
| 5-G | 10-A |



We hope you enjoyed this edition of our newsletter!

To find out how Living Well Senior Care can help you and your loved ones, visit us online at www.livingwellseniorcaretx.com, call us at 888.507.6232 or email us: info@livingwellseniorcaretx.com