

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



SEPTEMBER 2015

Fainting, Falls and High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure (140/90 mmHg or higher) is one of the three leading causes of heart failure. It is referred to as “the silent killer” because it usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs. Both you and the senior in your care should have your blood pressure checked regularly.

In addition, having high blood pressure (hypertension) increases someone’s chances of having a heart attack or stroke. Medicines, called anti-hypertensives that lower blood pressure, can help prevent these from happening. But these drugs can cause balance problems and dizziness, leading to falls and injuries. High blood pressure affects many older people, whose bones tend to be weaker, and for whom a fall injury, such as a broken bone, can have serious health consequences.



Researchers studied whether there was any link between the number of people taking blood pressure drugs and the number of people who had serious falls. Compared with people not taking blood pressure drugs, those taking the drugs were more likely to have a serious fall.

Monitor blood pressure readings if the person in your care is on medications to lower his/her blood pressure. A simple-to-use blood pressure cuff reading at home gives a much better picture than the readings taken at trips to the doctor’s office. Remember to keep a record of the readings to take to the doctor for review. If systolic blood pressure (the top number) is lower than 85, contact the doctor. He or she may want to lower the dose of certain medications to prevent low blood pressure readings. By doing this, the person’s “dizziness” may improve. But remember, you or the person in your care should NEVER change medications without the doctor’s advice.

Severe chest pain is not always present with a heart attack, especially for older adults, people with diabetes, and women. They may experience sudden shortness of breath, coughing, dizziness, fatigue or weakness. Don’t take a chance. Call 9-1-1.

Facts About Fainting

Fainting can be caused by:

- A heart attack
- Medications
- Low blood sugar
- Standing up quickly
- Straining to have a bowel movement
- Dehydration
- A change in blood pressure

Sometimes, fainting can be prevented:

- Ask the doctor if medications that do not cause fainting can be prescribed.
- Monitor blood sugar levels.
- Monitor blood pressure.
- Avoid constipation.
- Do not let the person stand up or sit up too rapidly.

If a fainting spell occurs:

1. Do not try to place the person in a sitting position. Instead, immediately lay them down flat.
2. Check the person's airway, breathing and pulse.
3. Turn the person on his or her side.
4. Elevate the legs.
5. Cover them with a blanket if the room or floor is cold.
6. Do not give fluids.
7. Call 911 if the person is having difficulty breathing, or is not breathing or not responding to your voice and touch.
8. If not breathing, be prepared to give Rescue Breathing and start CPR as instructed in CPR class.

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure: A Guide for Caregivers*



Fast Fact

More than 15 million Americans suffer from coronary artery disease - the Number One killer of both men and women in the United States. Some 525,000 Americans suffer a first heart attack each year. More men than women have heart attacks, and they have them at a younger age. But after menopause, rates of heart disease in women increase two to three times - and their risk of a heart attack rises dramatically.

Source: *Berkeley Wellness Alerts*

Alzheimer's/Dementia Lunch and Learn for Families

October 13th - Scioto County (Best Care Nursing and Rehab Center in Wheelersburg) 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm
"Understanding Behavior"

November 19th - Jackson County (Jenkins Care Community in Wellston) 12 Noon - 1:30 pm
"Open Discussion" (Group will choose topic)

December 15th - Highland County (Highland County Senior Center in Hillsboro) 11:30 am - 1:00 pm
"Dealing with the Holidays"

For more information or to register, call Melissa Dever with the Alzheimer's Association at (740) 710-1821.

"Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else." - Margaret Mead

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

A Bad Marriage Can Lead to a Broken Heart

A study of married couples in their 70s and 80s shows that older couples in an unhappy marriage have a higher risk of heart disease. Negative marriage qualities - such as having a critical spouse - have a bigger effect on heart health than positive marital qualities. The study concluded that being in an unhappy marriage caused stress, which can be harmful to cardiovascular health. The study emphasizes the need for marriage counseling as marriages grow older, not just in their early stages.

Source: *theglobeandmail.com*



Alzheimer's Support in Scioto County

"What Families Need to Know...When the Diagnosis is Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementia"

Caring for someone with memory loss is a 24-hour-a-day challenge. This series of educational sessions provides a special opportunity for families to learn and share together in an informal setting. Topics are presented by experts in their respective fields.

Two-Part Series: November 5 and 12 - 12 Noon - 4:00 pm

Southern Ohio Medical Center Main Campus, Micklethwaite Education Building, Room 4
1805 27th Street, Portsmouth

Program is free, but reservations must be made in advance - call 800-272-3900.

Alzheimer's/Dementia Family Caregiver Support Group

First Tuesday of Each Month - 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm

Southern Ohio Medical Center - East Campus
2201 25th Street (Gibson Building - 1st Floor), Portsmouth

For more information, contact Melissa Dever at 740-710-1821.

Grief Support Group - Jackson County

Monthly Grief Support Group at Four Winds Community in Jackson, located at 215 Seth Avenue. Meetings are from 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

October 12 • November 9 • December 14

This is a free community service.

Please RSVP to (740) 285-7813 or call with any questions.



Don't Fall - Be Safe

Dizziness can mean different things - balance problems, feeling faint, light-headed, weak, or unsteady. Some causes are minor problems, and some are serious and even life-threatening. If you feel dizzy regularly and you do not know why you are dizzy, you should see your doctor to be checked.

Don't Delay in Going to the Hospital

One of the reasons women die more often than men following a heart attack is that women wait longer to go to the hospital. More heart muscle has already died by the time they receive treatment.

Source: *Strong Women, Strong Hearts* by Miriam E. Nelson, PhD.; Penguin Group



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Safety Tips - *Water Therapy*

Water therapy is a time-tested form of healing. It is also a safe way for a person with a disability to exercise because there is no danger of falling. Floating in water allows easy movement and little strain on joints and muscles.

Using a kickboard or simply walking in place in water may produce aerobic benefit. Water also resists movement, so it produces increased heart rate in less time. Water can also be a good place to exercise for those with balance problems. Talk to a physical therapist about whether a water aerobics class might be appropriate for the person in your care. YMCAs often offer water aerobics classes for people of all abilities.

