

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.  
F32 - URG, P.O. Box 500  
Rio Grande, Ohio 45674-0500

Phone: 1-800-582-7277  
TTY: 1-888-270-1550  
www.aaa7.org



Assistance. Advocacy. Answers on Aging.

## Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Pamela K. Matura, Executive Director

February 2011

1-800-582-7277  
TTY 1-888-270-1550  
www.aaa7.org

### CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE NEWS

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Vision Loss/Home Accident Prevention

We all depend on our eyes, so it is important to have regular eye exams every two years by a specialist in eye disease (ophthalmologist) or someone who examines the eyes (optometrist), especially after age 50. These exams can also spot other serious diseases such as diabetes. Finding and treating disease early can prevent serious diseases from getting worse and leading to blindness. Danger signs to watch for are changes in the color or size of an object when one eye is covered or when straight poles appear bent or wavy. See an ophthalmologist without delay.

- Tell the doctor of any medicines the person is taking and if there is a history of glaucoma.
- Get a yearly eye exam for a person with diabetes.

### Prevent Falls

Falls are the leading cause of death, injury and hospital admissions among the elderly population. Last year, more than 1.6 million seniors were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries.

### Why Do Seniors Fall?

**Failure to exercise regularly** results in poor muscle tone, decreased bone mass, loss of balance and reduced flexibility.

**Impaired vision**, including age-related vision diseases, as well as not wearing glasses that have been prescribed.



**Medications**, like sedatives, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic drugs, plus taking multiple medications, increase the risk of falling.

**Health conditions**, such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and arthritis cause weakness in the extremities, poor grip strength, balance disorders and cognitive impairment.

**Hip replacements and other surgeries** leave an elderly person weak, in pain and discomfort and less mobile than they were before the surgery.

**Environmental hazards**, such as poor lighting, loose carpets and lack of safety equipment.

### Safety Monitors

It helps to know where the person in your care is at all times, especially at night. Monitors and sensor pads for bed, chair, or toilet electronically detect the *absence* of pressure, which sets off an alarm. These very thin pressure pads can be put under or on top of the mattress; they won't disturb sleep. They plug into the monitor via a telephone type line.

Chair and toilet sensors work in the same way. Other sensors sound an alarm if a person steps on the pad. These can be used beside the bed, in a hallway or in front of a chair.

### Resource for You

Contact your state's **Commission for the Blind** for information on self-help organizations for those with low vision. Ask for help in finding products (“talking” watches, etc.) and aids that will help the person adjust to low vision. Seek out radio stations that have programs of newspaper readings.

**NEXT ISSUE . . . SENIOR NUTRITION - EAT SAFELY & WISELY**

The Ombudsman program can handle your concerns about areas such as elder abuse, client care, consumer rights, etc. For more information, call 1-800-582-7277.

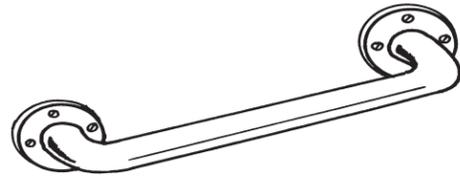
For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medicaid fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.

*Article continues on page 2*

### Focus on Fall Prevention

An 85 year old needs about three times the amount of light a 15 year old needs to see the same thing. Contrasting colors play a big part in seeing well. As much as possible, the color of furniture, toilet seats, counters, etc., should be *different* from the floor color. Remove all hazards that might lead to tripping.

- Clear clutter. Remove debris, loose cords, slippery rugs.
- Don't move furniture. Some frail seniors hold onto furniture or other items while moving through the home. Until canes or walkers are introduced, keep everything securely in place.
- Install safety bars, grab bars or handrails in the shower or bath.
- Put non-slip stickers or tape on the tub/shower floor.
- Use a stool riser seat to make getting on and off the toilet easier.
- Make sure stairs are sturdy with strong hand railings. Keep stairwells well-lit.
- Increase lighting levels in the home to aid vision.
- Tack rugs down to the floor, especially those near the top of or on stairs.
- Remove *unnecessary* furniture.
- Tape electrical cords to baseboards or put them behind furniture.
- Insist on non-slip shoes or slippers. Properly fitted, low-heeled, non-slip footwear is much safer than going barefoot. Many socks and shoes are available with non-skid treads on the bottom. Avoid slippers that can easily slip on and off.
- Use fall mats, cushioned floor pads, 1 or 2 inches thick with beveled edges. They cushion the fall and prevent injuries; they're especially useful in bathrooms or beside the bed, where falls occur most frequently.
- Encourage the use of canes and walkers. Make sure the mobility device you choose is the correct height for person and has rubber tip or other traction on the bottom.
- Use motion-sensitive lights that come on when a person enters a room or use night lights in every room.
- Keep frequently used items in easy-to-reach cabinets.
- Use a grasping tool to get at out-of-reach items, rather than a chair or stepladder. Wipe up spills immediately.



Source: *The Comfort of Home: A Complete Guide for Caregivers*

### *Taking Care of Yourself* . . . . Reduce the Risk of Heart Attack – Manage High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure isn't a problem that you can treat and ignore. It's a condition you need to manage for the rest of your life.

**Take your medications properly.** If side effects or costs pose problems, don't stop taking your medications. Ask your doctor about other options.

**Check your blood pressure regularly.** If it's high, and you are prescribed medication, take it exactly as directed, even if you feel fine.

**Schedule regular doctor visits.** Work with your doctor to bring your blood pressure to a safe level—and keep it there.

**Adopt healthy habits.** Eat healthy foods, lose excess weight and get regular physical activity. Quit smoking. Limit alcohol to no more than one glass per day.

**Manage stress.** Say no to extra tasks, release negative thoughts, maintain good relationships, and remain patient and optimistic. Try deep breathing.

Sticking to lifestyle changes can be difficult—especially if you don't see or feel any symptoms of high blood pressure. If you need motivation, remember the risks associated with uncontrolled high blood pressure: stroke, heart attack, kidney failure, and more.

Source: *MayoClinic.com*

### Live Life Laughing!



### *Inspiration*

*Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.*

~ Martin Luther King Jr.

### *Good Manners*

Having a person with less energy and mobility hunt for something she needs can make her feel inadequate or even cause a fall. Always leave a note to remind the person, "Your sweater is on the chair." Always put it back where it was!

For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medical fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.