

WESTMORELAND COUNTY

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

INSIDE LINE

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD WITH DIABETES

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 20.8 million people or seven percent of the United States' population have diabetes. Foot complications are among the most serious and costly complications of diabetes. Diabetes increases the risk for nerve damage that causes a loss of feeling in the feet. It also frequently causes blood vessel changes that hamper circulation. These two problems can lead to sores, infections, fractures and other injuries that may lead to amputations.

Fortunately, you can prevent ulcers and possible amputations with proper foot care. Here's how:

- Follow your doctor's suggestions for keeping blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol close to normal. This may also prevent kidney and eye disease too.
- Check your feet everyday for cuts, sores, swelling and infected toenails. If your foot changes color, shape or feels different, tell your doctor.
- Wash your feet in warm, not hot, water and dry them well. Avoid prolonged soaking, which will dry your skin. Use talcum powder or cornstarch between your toes. Do not use lotions between the toes as this may lead to extra moisture and infections. Rub a thin coat of lotion or cream on the tops and bottoms of your feet.
- Trim your toenails and use an emery board to smooth sharp edges. If you have corns or calluses, smooth them with a pumice stone or other gentle product.
- Wear lightly padded socks and shoes that fit well. Ask your doctor about special therapeutic shoes.
- Improve circulation by propping your feet up when you sit. Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down to stimulate blood flow.
- Avoid smoking, which worsens diabetic complications by affecting the small blood vessels and blood flow to the feet and makes wounds heal slowly.
- Discuss exercises approved by your doctor to increase circulation and blood flow to the legs and feet.
- Have a foot exam at least once a year by a podiatrist.

To learn more, visit the American Diabetes Association's website at www.diabetes.org.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO AND ORAL CANCER

If you think that smokeless tobacco is safer than cigarettes, think again. People who use smokeless tobacco like snuff and chewing tobacco increase their risk of developing oral cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute.

People can develop a white lesion or “snuff patch” which is a thickening of the lips’ lining. Some of these lesions may develop into oral cancer. However, if smokeless tobacco is stopped, the “snuff patch” is reversible.

About 30,000 Americans are diagnosed each year with oral cancer, including cancer of the lips and mouth. Of these, more than 8,000 will die of the disease. Tobacco use of all kinds accounts for 80 to 90 percent of oral cancers in this country. Symptoms include the following:

- A sore on the lip or in the mouth that won't heal.
- A lump on the lip or in the mouth or throat.
- A white or red patch on the gums, tongue or inside of the mouth.
- Unusual bleeding, pain or numbness in the mouth.
- A constant sore throat.

If you have any of these symptoms, contact your physician immediately.

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS

by the National Institutes of Health

The ranks of caregivers in our country are swelling. Americans are living longer, and the population is getting older as the baby boomer generation ages. Medical breakthroughs have also turned once fatal diseases into chronic illnesses that require a great deal of care. More than 50 million people provide care for a chronically ill, disabled or aged family member. Many of them have full-time jobs and other responsibilities on top of their caretaking duties.

Family caregivers, who are often older themselves and mostly female, tend to neglect their own health and emotional needs under the stress. They must cope with many uncertainties about the future, along with their own sadness about what is happening to their loved one. Researchers found that many caregivers felt emotionally or physically drained, had problems sleeping, and were financially stressed. However, more work is clearly needed to understand the needs of modern caregivers.

Caregiving is complex and multifaceted, and long-term interventions tend to work better than one particular kind of intervention. If you're caring

for someone in your family, here are some tips:

- Reward yourself with mini-breaks.
- Exercise.
- Attack the problem, not the person.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Use every tool you can find – local groups, web-based support networks, and reading materials.
- Block out negative thoughts. Think “want to” not “have to”.

For resources from the National Institute on Aging, call 1-800-222-2225 and for local support group meetings call the Westmoreland County Area Agency on Aging at 724-830-4444 or 1-800-442-8000.

TIS THE SEASON – SHOPPING SECRETS

Here's how to get in and out of the mall fast and get the gifts you want for your special someone.

- Make plans to take a day off and hit the mall midweek – Wednesdays are usually the least crowded.
- Go in the morning when you are most alert and have better judgment, meaning you'll get better gifts quicker if you're an early shopper. The worst time to shop is mid-afternoon when

store employees have reached the end of their shift and aren't quite as helpful.

- Check in your coat and packages so you don't have to lug your stuff around the whole time. Ask at the information desk.
- Take in a breath of fresh air and natural light (two energy boosters) instead of the mall's recycled air and fluorescent lights.
- Make smart snack choices at the mall. Sweets will give you that sugar rush but leave you even more exhausted than before, and greasy foods take more time and energy to digest. For drinks, have a water bottle with you to sip throughout the day, hot chocolate made with skim milk or a fruit smoothie made with 100% juice. The best meal choices are a whole-wheat pretzel, small bean burrito, seafood, or of course, pizza (but avoid the meat and extra cheese toppings). We can't forget dessert, and a yogurt and fruit parfait fits the bill perfectly.

STRESS FREE HOLIDAYS

The holidays can be filled with stress and anxiety, but there really is no need for the added tension. Here are some easy steps to simplify and enjoy your holidays:

- **Not every family tradition has to be done every year.** Write down everyone's favorite traditions, throw them into a hat, and have the youngest family member pull out three for the year.
- **Have a one-course party.** If you plan to entertain this year, skip the four-course dinner party and focus on one – appetizers or sweets!
- **Bring the paper goods.** Everyone has several parties to attend where a baked good is expected so offer paper goods instead.
- **Try a cookie swap.** Instead of making eight different kinds of cookies, gather a group of pals who will each bring their specialty, then divide them so everyone gets a mix.
- **Maintain balance.** Take time to stroll, read a book or phone a friend. Anything healthy to clear your mind of the hectic times.
- **Don't cut into snooze time to get**

things done. Being sleepy only adds to stress. You'll get more done if you're functioning at your peak.

- **Keep spending under control.** Ask each person on your list to name their five most-wanted gifts. They won't know what you'll pick so they'll be surprised, and you'll have less worry.
- **Pass on treats that aren't special to the season.** Focus on holiday fare that you can only get this time of year. So chocolate cake, no; but peppermint chocolate bark, yes.
- **Dress in something fabulous and fitting.** You tend not to gorge yourself when you feel really good about how you look.
- **Light a candle.** Curb sweets cravings with a sniff of a vanilla, banana, or peppermint candle. Studies have shown these aromas suppress hunger!

WILLIAMSBURG TURKEY SOUP

This is a hearty way to use the leftover turkey pieces following Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner.

2 large onions, chopped
3 large celery stalks and leaves, chopped

2 large carrots, chopped
2 c. water
½ lb. butter
1 c. flour
2 ½ qts. hot turkey or
chicken broth
1 pt. half-and-half
1 c. diced cooked turkey
1 c. cooked rice
salt and pepper to taste

In a medium
saucepan over medium heat,
cook onion, celery and
carrots in water; cover and
cook 20 minutes. In a large
saucepan, over low heat,
melt the butter and stir in
the flour, beating constantly.
Then add broth and half-
and-half; cook, stirring until
bubbly (4 to 5 minutes).
Add the vegetables and their
liquid and cook, stirring for
10 minutes. Add the turkey
and rice and season to taste.
Serves 10-12.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

- **2007-2008 LIHEAP Program** – to apply, call or visit your local county assistance office (Greensburg, 724-832-5524 or 724-832-5218 and New Kensington, 724-339-6800). You may also apply online at www.compass.state.pa.us.
- **Spelling Bee** – Westmoreland County residents 55 and older can compete on November 14, 2007 at 9:00 a.m. in the Science Hall of Westmoreland County

Community College.
Call 724-925-4213 or
1-800-262-2103, ext.
4213 for a registration
packet. The winner
and runner-up will
represent
Westmoreland County
at the 2008
Pennsylvania Older
Adult Spelling
Championship in the
spring.

- **Medicare Prescription Drug Plan** – begins November 15, 2007 and ends December 31, 2007 for an opportunity to enroll or change plans. The APPRISE Program will be holding comparison and enrollment events by appointment only. Call to register at 1-800-262-2103, ext. 4213.
- **Life Line Screening** – by Green Meadows on December 17, 2007. Call for your scheduled time at 724-537-5255.

BANKRUPTCY LAW

by Maureen Kroll, Attorney at Law

Many times the consequence of going through a divorce is financial devastation. Now one household is split in two, with double the expenses, without any financial help from family or other sources, one or both spouses may have to file for bankruptcy.

Serious health problems or loss of income are other major precipitators of financial distress. Many people fear the stigma of filing for bankruptcy. However, one's credit rating is most likely not good anyway.

It is illegal for creditors or collection agencies to harass you or make threats if a bill is past due. Of course they can ask to be paid, but cannot call you at work if you have notified them in writing that you do not wish for them to do that.

Filing a bankruptcy petition will stop creditors from continuing the debt collection practice. If you want to keep certain items such as your car or certain credit cards, those debts can be reaffirmed, that is you can continue to keep those credit cards or your car. You may also be able to keep your home depending on the amount of equity in the property.

The Bankruptcy Law has changed. Now a debtor must complete an assessment to determine if he qualifies for bankruptcy protection. This "means test" looks at the debtor's income and expenses, and one must meet this criteria before filing the bankruptcy petition. Next, protection is still available in some way either through a complete dissolution of assets or a reorganization wherein only a certain amount is paid on a debt over a period of time.

Most attorneys will have an initial meeting on a reduced fee or complimentary basis. Investigating this remedy for debt relief should not be overlooked.

GOT SHOTS?

Immunizations are not just for children anymore. They play a very important role in helping seniors stay healthy, since the immune system tends to weaken as people age. The Centers for Disease Control encourages all older adults to be immunized for illnesses such as the flu, pneumococcal pneumonia, and hepatitis B, along with measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, and diphtheria.

Some Interesting Facts

- Influenza is responsible for 20,000-40,000 deaths annually.
- There are an estimated 40,000 deaths annually from pneumococcal disease.
- 500,000 deaths occur from pneumonia.
- Hepatitis B infects 200,000 to 300,000 people per year.

Pneumococcal Pneumonia:

This type of pneumonia is very serious for people over the age of 65. It can infect the lungs, lining of the brain, and the blood. It is recommended for everyone over the age of 65 to receive the pneumococcal vaccination.

If you received your first one before the age of 65, a second immunization is recommended.

How Often Should Immunization be Administered?

Pneumococcal disease, measles, mumps, and rubella are usually given once in your lifetime. The flu vaccine is given yearly since the flu virus changes all the time. Tetanus and diphtheria vaccines must be supplemented with boosters every 10 years. The hepatitis B vaccine is given in 3 doses over a six month period.

Keeping a Shot Record:

Keeping a personal record of the immunizations you receive is very helpful not only to yourself, but your doctor as well. Keeping track of the types and dates you receive immunizations, and any possible side effects will help you continue to get the proper vaccinations.

Where Can I Get Immunized?

Contact your health care provider or local health department for a list of providers for these immunizations. Your city or county health department or local hospital may offer clinics that provide these vaccines.

Contacts:

- County Health Departments
- National Coalition for Adult Immunization
- Centers for Disease Control

- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
- American Lung Association

SEARCHING FOR A JOB?

If you are 55 years of age or older, a resident of Westmoreland County, and your income falls within our guidelines, you may be eligible for our training program.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) at Westmoreland County Community College enrolls low-income older adults to update old skills or get training in new skills, allowing you to earn while you learn in preparation for re-entering the job market. All positions earn \$7.15 per hour, 20 hours per week, and are available throughout Westmoreland County.

For more information, please call Mimi Owens or Rebecca Dunn at 724-925-4066 or toll-free at 1-800-262-2103 and ask for the Senior Employment Program.

Available Training Positions

Clerical Trainee – Primary duties may include receptionist activities, copying and collating materials for mass mailings, assisting with fundraising activities, performing data entry, and maintaining information areas.

Dietary Aide – Must be knowledgeable in minimal food preparation techniques

and have the ability to work with senior citizens.

Docent – Training provided in archiving, researching, and preserving local history.

Library Aide – Individuals should possess an inquisitive, helpful attitude.

Maintenance/Groundskeeper – Custodial, painting, and outdoor work.

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