

Caregiver Assistance News – January 2012



Area Agency on Aging of Dane County

2306 S. Park St., Madison, WI 53713

(608) 261-9930

http://www.danecountyhumanservices.org/Aging/AreaAgencyOnAging/Caregivers/national_family_caregiver_support_program.aspx

This month's topic: Fell Down – Now What?

Many good wishes for a Happy New Year!

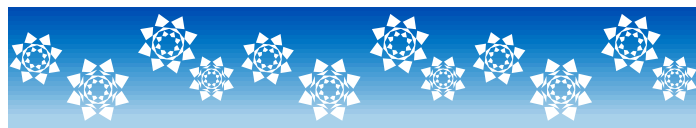
As the hustle and bustle of the holidays fade and daylight hours are limited, many of us can feel a bit lethargic. This might be especially true if you are providing care for someone where it is difficult to get out due to snow and cold temperatures. It's especially important at this time of year to do something for yourself to keep your spirits up. Some time away from caregiving responsibilities, doing something for yourself (shop, meet a friend for lunch, attend a support group meeting, or anything else that brings you enjoyment), is a great solution.

We hope you take advantage of the resources and services of the *Caring for the Caregiver Program* of Dane County. Through the funding provided by the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP), we help you access respite (time away from your caregiving responsibilities) for a few hours a week, or even a short vacation to rejuvenate yourself. We can also arrange someone to provide supportive home care, such as heavy chore work, or bathing, dressing, etc. The installation of ramps, railings, or other supportive devices can make the home safer. Just give us a call at 261-9930 to inquire about these offerings, and more.

There are a whole host of other supportive services for caregivers – support groups, lending library, educational opportunities, special programs, etc.

Please call, or check our web site

http://www.danecountyhumanservices.org/aging/areaagencyonaging/Caregivers/national_family_caregiver_support_program.aspx for further information. The site is updated regularly.



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January Events

Family Caregiver Education Series

Monday, January 9, 2012, 5:30 - 7 pm

Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance
517 N. Segoe Rd., Madison

Join us to learn about topics of interest to families and friends of those with Alzheimer's or a related dementia on the second Monday of each month. The topic will be "**Introduction to Alzheimer's and Dementia: Getting Started**". Learn about dementia and its warning signs, what to do if you are concerned about yourself or someone you know, and how the Alzheimer's Alliance can help.

No registration necessary - just drop in. Questions: 608.232.3400.



Agrace HospiceCare Educational Seminar

Tuesday, January 10, 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Don & Marilyn Anderson HospiceCare Center
5395 E. Cheryl Parkway, Madison

"Grief in the Workplace: Help for Employees, Supervisors and Managers" is a free educational seminar that offers insight on what workplaces can do to assist employees who are grieving. Participants will learn practical suggestions and recommended procedures for dealing with grief in the workplace. Pre-registration is requested; please call Laura Jennings, (608) 327-7192.



Taking Care of YOU: Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Thursdays, January 12-February 16, 5:30-8:00 pm

Madison Police Dept. - East District
809 S. Thompson Dr., Madison

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a 6-part educational series designed especially for family caregivers. This program will help family caregivers: reduce stress, improve self-confidence, better communicate your feelings, balance your life, increase your ability to make tough decisions and locate helpful resources. Cost is \$10 for the series, which includes *The Caregiver Helpbook*.

If necessary, we can provide someone to stay with the person in your care so you can attend the series. Transportation is also available. For more information, call Amy Rockhill, 828-4812. You can register directly online at:

https://ghcscw.com/Health_Ed_Courses.asp?topicids=13&topicid=12&titleid=&locid=23

Sponsored by Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin

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“Know the 10 Warning Signs”

January 23, 6:00 pm

Coventry Village, 7707 N Brookline Drive, Madison, WI

January 25, 6:00 pm

Colonial Club, 301 Blankenheim Lane, Sun Prairie, WI

The warning signs of Alzheimer’s disease are often dismissed as side effects of normal aging. If you or someone you know is experiencing memory loss or behavioral changes, it’s time to learn the facts. For more information, contact Emily Hilker, Alzheimer’s Association, 608.203.8500, or email: emily.hilker@alz.org.



Upcoming Events

Coming in 2012: Meeting of Minds workshop for people with mild memory impairment.

The Madison Children’s Museum will partner with the Alzheimer’s & Dementia Alliance of Wisconsin to host two twelve-week *Meeting of Minds* memory enhancement activity sessions at the museum. This workshop series will include special modifications from the regular *Meeting of Minds* sessions to incorporate aspects of the museum’s SPARK! programming with physical activity such as tai chi and mental puzzles.

This will be a morning weekday workshop series with two-hour sessions. Day and time of the workshop is still to be determined. If you are interested or would like to know more, call Pat Wilson at 608.232.3406.



Keeping Seniors Connected

March 5 - April 9, 2012

Stay connected with friends, family and important resources. This FREE class for older adults who are visually impaired meets once a week from 10 a.m. to Noon at the Madison Senior Center. Topics cover: accessibility options on Windows-based PCs, low vision software, voice recognition software, applications to Internet and e-mail, and use of Skype. At the conclusion of the series, participants receive a large-print manual and a high-contrast keyboard. Optional home visits to transfer classroom skills to home computers. Presented by technology staff at the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired. Class limit: 12 participants.

Registration begins January 23. Transportation assistance may be available. Call Jean at 237-8106 or e-mail: jkalscheur@wcblind.org



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Fell Down – Now What?

Each year, one-third of the population 65 years and older experiences at least one fall, and half of those seniors fall repeatedly. An older adult is treated in a hospital emergency room for a fall every 18 seconds, and every 35 minutes an older adult dies as a result of a fall-related injury. Among older adults falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.

Many people who fall, even if they are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities, leading to reduced mobility and loss of physical fitness which in turn increases their actual risk of falling.

People who fall frequently should be enrolled in an emergency signaling system. Protective equipment such as knee and elbow pads can help prevent injuries.

Source: CDC

TIP: Leave a blanket, pillow, and phone on the floor out of the way of foot traffic. In case of a fall, the person in your care can stay warm and call for help.

Lifestyle Changes

Lifestyle changes can help prevent falls:

- stay indoors when it is rainy or icy
- have regular vision screening check-ups for correct eyeglasses
- use separate reading glasses and other regular glasses if bifocals make it difficult to see the floor
- be cautious when walking on wet floors, and remove all hazards such as loose rugs and electrical cords in pathways
- wear good foot support
- be aware that new shoes are slippery, and crepe-soled shoes can cause the toe to catch
- have foot pain corrected
- keep toenails trimmed and feet healthy for good balance
- review medications, which may have side effects, with the doctor
- limit alcohol consumption, especially when taken with medications

If the Person in Your Care Falls

A good way to tell if a part of the body has been injured in a fall is to compare it with an uninjured part. For example, compare the injured leg with the uninjured leg. Do they look and feel the same? Do they move the same way?

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When you suspect a broken bone, follow these steps:

- If the person cannot move or use the injured limb, keep it from moving.
- Do not straighten a deformed arm or leg.
- Splint an injury in the position you find it.
- Support the injured part above and below the site of the injury by using folded towels, blankets, pillows, or magazines.
- If the person is face down, roll him over with the “log rolling” technique. If you have no one to help you and the victim is breathing adequately, leave the person in the same position.
- If the person does not complain of neck pain but is feeling sick to the stomach, turn the person on one side.
- If the person complains of neck pain, keep his neck steady by putting a few pillows on either side of his head. Keep the head flat.
- Place a piece of cloth on the injury site and apply ice over the cloth.
- Keep the person warm with a blanket, and make the person as comfortable as possible.
- Call 911.

If You Fall

How you react after a fall can cause more injuries than the fall itself. If you try to get up too quickly or in the wrong position, you may make an injury worse. Relax, take several deep breaths and determine if you are hurt. If you believe you are injured, do not attempt to get up. Instead, call 911 or get help from a family member.

But if you do not feel dizzy, are not in pain, and feel strong enough to get up, follow these steps:

- Roll over on to your hands and knees.
- Crawl to a steady chair.
- Put your strongest leg under you so that your foot is on the floor.
- Stand up using your arms on the chair for support.
- Sit on the chair until you feel comfortable to walk.
- Be sure to let your health care provider know about your fall.

A physical or occupational therapist can teach you and the person in your care the best techniques for getting up from the floor after a fall. (Check local programs in your community on fall-prevention classes.)

Fear of Falling

A person with Alzheimer’s - even in the early stages - probably will have subtle changes in walking ability that will become more severe as time goes on. This can create difficulty with balance. If the person has other illnesses, the problems may be more severe. It is natural that he will fear falling.

To help the person in your care feel more confident, adaptive devices such as walkers or canes can be useful, but you will have to remind him to use these devices. Bring the cane or walker to the person when he has forgotten it. Exercises that you can do with the person in your care may improve his balance. Remember,

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before starting any type of exercise routine, get advice from your physician. Start slowly with only moderate effort. Give him time to build strength and stamina. Exercise helps reduce risk, and the benefits of exercise are cumulative, so find a way to make it easy and enjoyable to exercise. Exercise is also a particularly effective way to reduce depression.

Source: The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease

Hazards for Elderly Using Walking Aids

About 47,000 older Americans are treated in emergency rooms each year for falls associated with walkers and canes. Be sure to get proper training on the correct use of assistive devices.

Source: Journal of the American Geriatrics Society



Inspiration

*I do not take a single newspaper, nor read one a month,
and I feel myself infinitely happier for it.*

~ Thomas Jefferson



Taking Care of Yourself - Benefits of Exercising to Music

Exercising to piano music may help improve balance and prevent falls among the elderly. A new study shows older men and women who participated in a piano-music-based exercise program were less likely to suffer a fall than those who didn't. Those who exercised to piano music also showed improvements in balance and the manner or style of walking.

Source: WebMD Health News; Archives of Internal Medicine

Note:

If you as caregiver fall, you may not be able to rely on a person with Alzheimer's to help you or to call for help. Consider enrolling yourself in a First Alert-type service.

Pet Safety

Pets are wonderful companions, but be careful. 86,000 people a year go to the emergency room because they tripped over the family pet. Dogs are the primary cause of pet-related falling accidents.

Source: National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services

Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.