

# SeniorCircle plus

NEWS AND HEALTH INFORMATION FOR SENIORS

WINTER 2005

THE CLEVELAND CLINIC  
FOUNDATION



## Preserving Eyesight

Each year, 2 million people are diagnosed with a form of age-related macular degeneration (AMD) known as “dry” AMD. One in five will develop a much more destructive condition known as “wet,” or exudative, AMD, which robs people of their eyesight.

A new clinical trial at the Cleveland Clinic Cole Eye Institute and other sites nationwide is under way to test a new drug, called anecortave acetate, to reduce the risk of dry AMD from progressing into wet AMD. To participate, patients must have dry AMD in one eye and wet AMD in the other. Vision in the dry-AMD eye must be 20/40 or better.

Cole Eye Institute ophthalmologist Peter K. Kaiser, M.D., says the study could be a breakthrough in how we treat macular degeneration.



If you're interested in becoming a study participant or would like to learn

more about this progressive condition, call 216/445-4086 or 800/223-2273, ext. 54086.

## Keeping Cholesterol in Check

### New guidelines for high-risk patients

“Lower is better.” That’s how Cleveland Clinic Heart Center cardiologist Steven Nissen, M.D., summarizes new cholesterol guidelines recently issued for people at high risk for heart attack and death from cardiovascular disease. The recommendations come from the National Cholesterol Education Program and are endorsed by several medical groups, including the American Heart Association.

### Are You at High Risk?

Patients at high risk include those who have had a heart attack, have diabetes, smoke and have high blood pressure, or have other multiple risk factors. The new guidelines recommend these patients lower their LDL (“bad”) cholesterol to 70 mg/dL. The previous guideline was 100 mg/dL. Thus, millions of Americans who once thought their cholesterol levels were fine may need treatment to lower their levels.

### Cholesterol Solutions

Aggressive drugs, including statins such as Lipitor®, may help. A recent study led by Dr. Nissen showed that Lipitor can reduce and even halt the formation of cholesterol in coronary



arteries, when prescribed in high enough doses.

For patients at moderately high risk, the new guidelines have an “optional” goal of an LDL cholesterol level less than 100 mg/dL. For those in the low- to moderate-risk categories, the guidelines have not changed. Those at low risk need to maintain their LDL level at 160 mg/dL or lower, and patients at moderate risk should maintain it at 130 mg/dL or lower. ●

Concerned about cholesterol? Talk with your healthcare provider or call the Cleveland Clinic Heart Center at 216/444-9353 or 800/223-2273, ext. 49353.



# Reduce Your Risk for Diabetes

**M**ore than 18 percent of people age 60 and older have type 2 diabetes. And while age is a risk factor, it's not the only one. Fortunately, a number of other risk factors are controllable. Here's what you can do to protect yourself from diabetes:

**Lose weight.** Being overweight is closely associated with diabetes. Just a 5 percent to 10 percent reduction in weight can greatly reduce your risk.

**Eat right.** Maintain a well-balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Don't deprive yourself of your favorite treats; just enjoy them in moderation.

**Exercise.** Get moving 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Try walking briskly around the block or climbing the stairs several times.

**Get screened.** It may be seven to 10 years before you notice the symptoms of type 2 diabetes, but that doesn't mean it's not there. Have your blood glucose levels checked regularly, at least every three years, or more often if you're at high risk.

*Source: American Diabetes Association* ●

## Schedule your blood

glucose test with your physician, or visit [cchs.net](http://cchs.net) and click on "Health Programs & Screenings" for a list of free diabetes screenings and diabetes education programs offered at your local Cleveland Clinic hospital.

# Home Sweet Home

**M**oving a loved one to a nursing home can be a difficult decision, not to mention stressful when searching for the right facility.

Here are some things to consider when looking for a nursing home:

**Medical needs.** Ask your loved one's doctor to recommend a facility that would be best suited for his or her needs. Consider what types of services are offered and what the staff-to-patient ratio is.

**Location.** Choose a facility that is centrally located so that family and friends can make frequent visits.

**Atmosphere.** Visit the home several times, both planned and unannounced, to get a feel for its culture. Ask yourself: Are the residents treated well? Are appealing activities available? Is the food appetizing?



**Cost.** Ask what the costs are and get the numbers in writing. Consider how much of the costs, if any, will be paid by Medicare or Medicaid and whether the remaining portion is affordable.

**Asking the right questions can help you find the perfect home for your loved one. Visit [medicare.gov/nursing/overview.asp](http://medicare.gov/nursing/overview.asp) for a nursing home checklist to help you compare facilities in your area.** ●

## Need a Physician?

Use the numbers below to help you find a physician.

### The Cleveland Clinic

The Appointment Center:  
216/444-2273 or  
800/223-2272, ext. 42273

### Euclid, Hillcrest, Huron and South Pointe Hospitals

Medline Physician Referral:  
440/312-4533 or  
800/621-0004

### Fairview, Lakewood and Lutheran Hospitals

Medline Physician Referral:  
216/363-2300 or toll-free  
866/733-6363

### Marymount Hospital

MED-MATCH Physician Referral: 216/581-WELL (9355)

For an online listing of Cleveland Clinic Health System physicians, go to [cchspo/phys\\_dir](http://cchspo/phys_dir).

# Finding Dr. Right

**Don't trust your health to just anyone**

It's OK to look in the phone book for a restaurant or a mechanic, but when it comes to your health, not just any doctor will do. Since your physician will be entrusted with your health and will listen to your most intimate problems, finding the right one is crucial to your well-being.

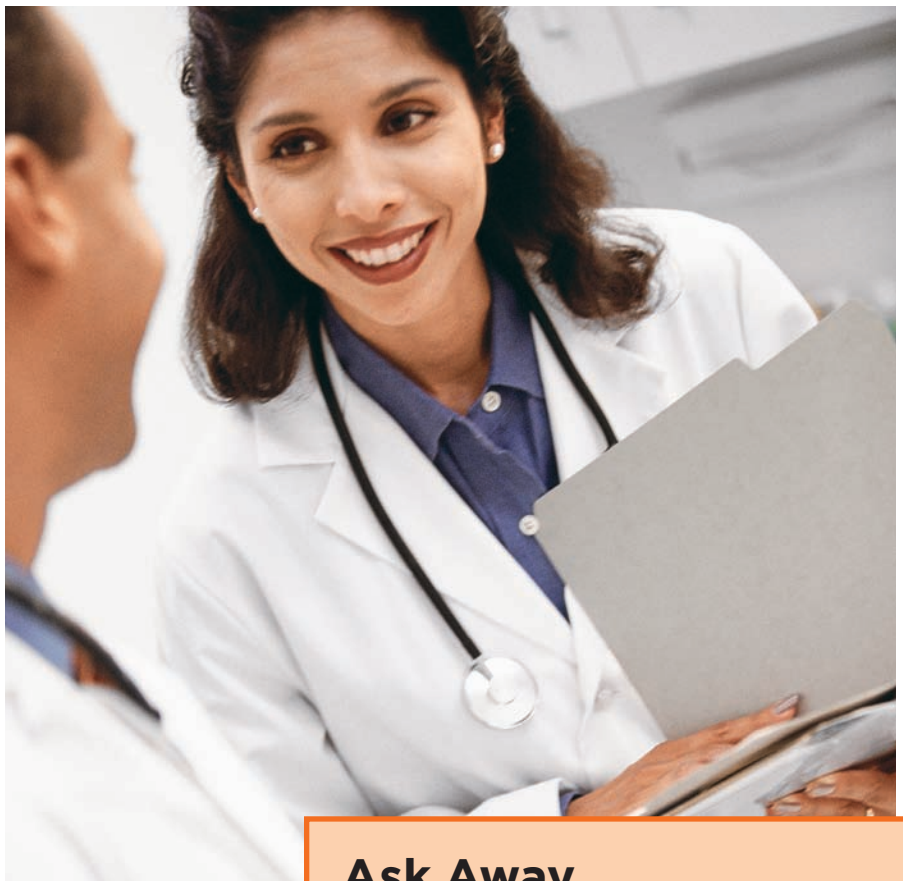
First things first: Start searching for a physician while you're healthy. That way, if you become ill, you won't be pressured to find someone quickly with whom you may not feel comfortable.

To begin your search for Dr. Right, ask family and friends for recommendations. If you're new to the area, ask your previous doctor for a referral or consult your new neighbors. A local pharmacist may be able to help, too—she may be able to offer you good insight into a doctor's bedside manner and care philosophy.

Once you find some doctors you'd like to consider, follow these tips from the AARP for choosing the one that's best for you:

**Get approval.** There's nothing worse than finding the perfect doctor and then discovering he's not included on your insurance plan's provider list. Eliminate any doctors that don't accept your coverage.

**Availability.** Find out which doctors are accepting new patients. Ask about their availability. How



far in advance must you schedule an appointment?

### **Vital statistics.**

How convenient is the doctor's office? Consider the location, hours, parking availability and if it accommodates any special needs you may have.

### **Ask the board.**

Contact your state health department or the medical review board to determine if there have been any complaints filed against the doctor. If there have been, you'll want to learn the details of the complaints.

**Talk to the doc.** Schedule an appointment to interview the physician in person or over the phone. This will allow you to ask specific questions about his practice and techniques,

## Ask Away

Even the best doctors can't read minds. That's why it's important for you to ask questions about your health. To get started, try these:

- What is my condition? What's the cause?
- Do I need tests? Why?
- What are the possible treatments? How effective are they?
- Will I need to go on medication? What are the side effects?

If you have difficulty understanding your doctor, take a friend or family member to the appointment with you. For additional tips on communicating with your physician, visit [aarp.org](http://aarp.org) and click on "Health and Wellness," then "Checkups and Prevention."

and help you decide whether or not you'd like to become a patient.

While choosing the right doctor is important to your health, don't stress over the decision. If you decide you're not comfortable with your choice, feel free to look for a different physician. Just remember to keep your medical history up to date and have your records transferred with you. ●

Learn more about preventing falls and staying independent. For a free fact sheet on fall prevention, call **216/444-8919** or **800/545-7718**.

## Staying Off Strokes

**R**educe your risk for stroke by keeping your weight, blood pressure and lipid levels within the normal ranges. A healthy diet and lifestyle can help. Follow these practical tips:

- **Be realistic.** Make one or two small changes toward healthier eating every month and stick to them.
- **Be adventurous.** Expand your tastes and try a greater variety of foods.

- **Be flexible.** Balance your diet and physical activity over several days.
- **Be sensible.** Enjoy all foods—just don't overdo it.
- **Be active.** Walk the dog—don't just watch the dog walk.

For help making lifestyle changes toward healthier eating and disease prevention, make an appointment with a Cleveland Clinic registered

dietitian at the Clinic's main campus or at one of several suburban family health centers. Call **216/444-3046** or **800/223-2273, ext. 43046**. ●

## Free Shoes for Diabetics

**D**id you know that under Medicare Part B coverage, you may be eligible to receive a free pair of therapeutic shoes at the beginning of each year? To be eligible, the doctor treating your diabetes must certify that you need therapeutic shoes because of your diabetes and that you're experiencing one or more of several diabetes-related foot problems, such as skin ulcers, bone deformity or nerve damage. Medicare also requires that a podiatrist or other qualified doctor prescribe the shoes.

Through the Cleveland Clinic's Diabetic Foot Care Program, you can access highly skilled podiatrists and other subspecialty physicians to help you control your diabetes, as well as receive guidance in accessing all available resources.

"Managing diabetes begins with education. Learning proper foot care and using special therapeutic shoes when necessary will help avoid serious foot problems," says Peter Cavanagh, Ph.D., academic director



of the Cleveland Clinic Diabetic Foot Care Program.

For a free brochure about the program or for more information about therapeutic shoes, call **216/445-3555** or **800/545-7718**. For an appointment, please call **888/931-FOOT (3668)**. ●