

Senior Circle plus

NEWS AND HEALTH INFORMATION FOR SENIORS

SPRING 2006



Euclid
Hillcrest
Huron
South Pointe

Strength in Motion

**Tai chi benefits
arthritis sufferers**

Doris Kowalski was not going to wait to be told she had arthritis, or experience a fall because of weakness in her legs. She was going to take action—immediately.

“I was getting to the point where I needed help,” says Kowalski, a 76-year-old grandmother from Highland Heights. She had already experienced back pain, weakness in her legs, and twinges of arthritic pain in her shoulders and knee. Kowalski decided to enroll in tai chi classes.

“When I do tai chi, it brings relief and loosens up my body,” she says. “My legs are stronger. I feel great when I leave the classes and try to do the exercises everyday when I’m at home.”

For nearly two years, Kowalski has taken classes at Highland Heights Community Center. Sponsored by Senior Circle Plus at Hillcrest Hospital, the classes are also offered at Euclid, Huron and South Pointe hospitals.



Susan Cady, certified tai chi instructor, teaches tai chi for Senior Circle Plus. An instructor for 12 years, Cady says her goal is to help students like Kowalski address problems early. She guides them through a series of fluid, focused movements, seated or standing.

Students may visualize holding bubbles and moving them around their bodies, imitate stretching cats

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**Need a physician? Call Medline for a referral
at 440/312-4533 or 800/621-0004.**

The Season for Sneezin'

How to tell the difference between a cold and allergies

Ah, springtime. The sun is shining, the birds are chirping and “achoo!”—you’re stuck in bed and can’t enjoy any of it. But are your sneezes and sniffles caused by the blooming flora or the common cold? Learn the difference—and the different treatments—for yourself.

instance, allergy symptoms begin almost immediately following exposure to an allergen. But cold symptoms may take a few days to appear after exposure to the virus. And while a cold can last several days to two weeks, allergies last as long as you are exposed to the allergen—even

symptoms can lead to more serious conditions, including sinusitis and ear infections, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

Neither seasonal allergies nor common colds have a cure, but their symptoms can be treated. Relieve your cold by:

- resting in bed
- drinking plenty of fluids
- taking over-the-counter cold medicines, including decongestants and cough suppressants
- taking aspirin for headache or fever
- gargling salt water, if sore throat is present.

Antibiotics should not be used to treat the common cold—they do not kill viruses and may even make your situation worse.



Scrutinize Your Symptoms

While colds and allergies share some symptoms—sneezing and a runny and stuffy nose—other symptoms help distinguish one from the other. Cold symptoms can include a sore throat and general aches and pains. But allergies may cause wheezing and itchy, watery eyes.

Get a Definitive Diagnosis

In addition to analyzing your symptoms, there are other ways to determine what ails you. For

several weeks or months. If there’s still doubt as to what’s making you suffer, see your doctor.

Take Action with Treatment

Once you know what you’re up against, it’s important to treat your symptoms properly. Besides being inconvenient, untreated allergy

Prevention is the Best Medicine

Here’s how you can head off allergies and colds at the pass:

Colds:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot water.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Disinfect commonly used surfaces.
- Use paper towels instead of cloth.

Allergies:

- During warm months, keep your windows closed and air conditioning on.
- Use a quality air filter to keep out pollen.
- Bathe indoor pets regularly.
- Wash your hair every day.
- Wash your clothes in hot water.

Alleviate your allergy symptoms by taking over-the-counter or prescription antihistamines and decongestants and by using nasal steroids. Always talk to your doctor before using a medication or a combination of medications for the first time. ●

Source: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

A Stroke of Prevention

It's not too late to protect yourself

Nearly 700,000 Americans suffer strokes each year. Don't become one of them by ignoring the risk factors. Protect yourself with this advice from the American Stroke Association:

Control your blood pressure. Talk to your doctor about what your numbers should be and have your blood pressure checked regularly. Eat a healthy diet and take blood pressure-lowering medication, if necessary.

Quit smoking. Cigarette smoke reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood and causes damage to your arteries. Quitting can slow

and even reverse the harmful effects—no matter how long you've smoked.

Manage your diabetes. Diabetes puts you at greater risk for stroke. Be physically active every day and control your blood glucose levels.

Lower high cholesterol. High cholesterol increases the likelihood of developing heart disease, and heart disease is a risk factor for stroke. Talk to your doctor about lowering your cholesterol count.

The Cleveland Clinic and Lakewood and Marymount hospitals are certified by the Joint

Don't Delay If you experience sudden symptoms such as numbness—especially on one side of the body—confusion or difficulty speaking, dizziness or loss of balance, difficulty seeing or a severe headache, you may be having a stroke. Call 9-1-1 immediately.

Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations as Primary Stroke Centers. This means the hospitals have met strict national stroke care standards. Several other Cleveland Clinic hospitals are applying for certification. ●

You're Not Alone

Don't brave your diabetes by yourself. Seek support

Upon receiving a diagnosis of diabetes, you may feel overwhelmed and isolated. And while diabetes is a chronic condition, that doesn't mean it's not manageable.

The first thing you should do is educate yourself about the disease. Ask your doctor about enrolling in a diabetes education program. In addition to learning about the disease and how best to treat it, you'll discover how to keep your diabetes under control through a healthy diet and proper exercise and how to monitor your condition and recognize complications.

Besides arming yourself with knowledge, it's a good idea to surround yourself with support.

While your family and friends may empathize, they'll never know exactly what you are going through. That's why it's important to participate in a diabetes support group. Beyond gaining emotional support, you'll learn tips and coping techniques from others who share your condition, and you'll offer others help, too. Diabetes support groups



have even been found to help reduce stress, according to the American Diabetes Association.

To find a support group in your area, call **800/342-2383**. The Cleveland Clinic Health System and several of its hospitals offer diabetes management and education programs. Call your local Cleveland Clinic hospital for details. ●

Take Up Tai Chi

CLASS:

Tai Chi For Health

WHERE & WHEN:

Euclid Senior Center
One Bliss Lane, Euclid
Tuesdays, 3:30-4:45 p.m.

Highland Heights
Community Center
5827 Highland Road
Highland Heights
Mondays, 2-3:15 p.m.

Severance Tower Apartments
Community Room

25 Severance Circle
Cleveland Heights
Mondays, 10-11:15 a.m.

Warrensville Senior
and Civic Center
4567 Green Road
Warrensville Heights
Wednesdays, 10-11:15 a.m.

MORE INFO:

Please call 216/761-8555
for more information on
session dates and fees. No
reservation is required; bring
soft-soled shoes.



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or slowly 'stir tea' with their heads to loosen the neck. "My students with arthritis report great improvements in pain reduction and mobility," Cady says.

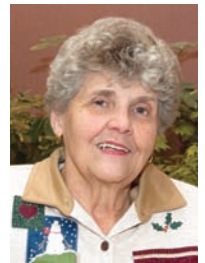
The Arthritis Foundation endorses tai chi because it helps to strengthen joint muscles and promotes flexibility. Physicians also see benefits for arthritis patients, and tai chi is among the Chinese alternative therapies gaining increasing popularity. "I think any

movement, through tai chi or other forms of exercise, is beneficial," says Timothy Nice, M.D., orthopaedic surgeon and director of orthopaedic surgery at Hillcrest Hospital.

"As you get older, you tend to become more sedentary. You lose cartilage in your joints and become stiff. Anything that stretches those joints is beneficial," says Nice. "Movements like those associated with tai chi are low velocity, low

impact, so they're not putting strain on the joints. But they are increasing blood flow to those joints and helping improve flexibility."

Kowalski is proof of those benefits. "I walk with confidence now. Tai chi perks me up like a cup of coffee," she says. ●



Doris Kowalski

Senior Circle Plus is changing to serve you better. Look for our new name, logo, newsletter format and expanded services in our next issue!

The information contained in *Senior Circle Plus* is for educational purposes only and should not be relied upon as medical advice. It has not been designed to replace a physician's medical assessment and medical judgment.

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