

SeniorCircle plus

NEWS AND HEALTH INFORMATION FOR SENIORS

WINTER 2006

THE CLEVELAND CLINIC
FOUNDATION 

Do You Have Low Vision?

Functional vision is so basic to everyday living that sudden—or even gradual—vision loss can have a devastating impact on quality of life. At the Cleveland Clinic Rehabilitation Institute, we offer a specialized program for adults with diagnosed vision problems resulting from macular degeneration, glaucoma, stroke, multiple sclerosis, diabetic retinopathy and other conditions.

Patients learn how to better manage daily activities like self-care, home management tasks, leisure activities and driving. Although we cannot restore sight, we can teach patients to use a number of techniques and devices so they can live as independently as possible. For more information, call 216/445-8479.



Help for Seniors with Cancer

Geriatric oncology assessments provide added peace of mind

If you are 60 or older and have a cancer diagnosis, you may benefit from a geriatric oncology assessment from professionals at the Cleveland Clinic Taussig Cancer Center. An assessment can help identify problems related to a cancer diagnosis and treatment that may otherwise get overlooked.

Older adults with cancer are at high risk for developing complications from the disease and its treatment. For example, the multiple medications that many older adults take to control other acute or chronic diseases may interfere with cancer treatment. Older adults also experience more severe side effects like confusion, anemia, weight loss and swallowing difficulties from cancer treatment.

At the Geriatric Oncology Clinic, a specially trained geriatrician completely assesses your health issues, paying special attention to social and



family circumstances. You leave with a clear understanding of your health care needs and a solid plan for care that may include consulting with a social worker, nutritionist, and physical and/or occupational therapist. You also learn about community and private support options that may be available.

The cost of an assessment typically is covered by most major health insurance plans, Medicaid and Medicare. For an appointment, call the Cleveland Clinic Cancer Answer Line at 866/CCF-8100. ●

Need a physician? Call the Cleveland Clinic Appointment Center at 216/444-2273 or 800/223-2273.

Get the Most from Medicare

No one likes to throw away money, especially if they're on a tight budget. According to the Administration on Aging, Social Security benefits constitute 90 percent of income for one-third of Americans over age 65.

To stay on top of a tight budget and avoid spending money needlessly, be sure to enroll in Medicare's new prescription plan before May 15, 2006. If you currently have Medicare Part A and/or

Part B, you can now join the new prescription drug plan. Those who miss the May 15 deadline and do not have a prescription plan that covers as much as or more than a Medicare prescription drug plan will have to pay more each month if they enroll after the deadline.



To find out how to save money and choose a plan that best meets your needs, visit medicare.gov or call **800/MEDICARE (800/633-4227)**. ●



Let It Snow!

Shoveling snow is great exercise, but it's also dangerous if not done properly. Here are a few tips to follow before heading outdoors:

- Get a physical and get your doctor's consent before winter is in full swing.
- Make sure to loosen up your muscles by stretching.
- Wear gloves, a hat, a scarf and face protection. Keep dry, since

wet clothing loses 90 percent of its insulating value.

- Use a lightweight shovel that suits your body size.
- Wear waterproof boots with treads, and watch for ice.
- Avoid back strain by pushing the snow. If you must lift it, don't pick up too much at once. Bend your knees and lift with your legs.
- Pace yourself, and watch for heart attack warning signs, since shoveling snow may cause a quick increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.

For additional winter-safety tips, from what items to pack in your car trunk to how to prevent Christmas tree fires, visit the National Safety Council at nsc.org. ●

The Greater Cleveland YMCA Joins the Circle!

Get membership discounts and enjoy free water aerobics. Visit ymcacleland.org to find the location nearest you or call **216/566-YMCA (9622)**.

Chart Your Health

Take control of your health care by keeping track of your health history

If you can't remember what medications you took five years ago or the doctors who prescribed them, then keeping a record of your health might be one of the best things you can do to stay healthy.

A record of your health history will help you and your physicians—especially in cases of emergency. With a record of past conditions, surgeries, screenings and more available at your fingertips, your physician will be able to spend valuable time focusing on your current ailments and needs.

Building the Bigger Picture

A health history is a written record that provides an overview of your health. It should include a list of your allergies, medications and family diseases. (For more, see “Leaving a Legacy.”) If you're seeing a new physician, the history could help save time and prevent a repeat of treatments you've already had.

This written document also is a valuable resource for your family. According to the Alzheimer's Association, individuals who have a parent or sibling with Alzheimer's



Leaving a Legacy

Take time to gather your health history today. For starters, be sure to include your:

- health care providers and their phone numbers
- emergency contacts
- medical insurance company and ID number
- blood type
- allergies (i.e. drugs, foods, insects)
- health conditions (i.e. diabetes, arthritis)
- current and past medications
- dates of past surgeries and hospitalizations
- test dates and results (i.e. cholesterol, weight)
- cancer screening dates and results (i.e. mammogram, colonoscopy)
- immunizations (i.e. tetanus, flu)

are two to three times more likely to develop the disease than those who do not. Women with a mother or sister who has had breast cancer are more likely to develop the disease themselves, according to the American Cancer Society. By knowing the risks, future generations can take preventive steps to reduce their chances of developing specific conditions, and seek appropriate screenings to catch diseases at earlier stages.

Write It Down

How you track your history is up to you. Keep handwritten notes in a three-ring binder or in a computer file. Just make sure your history is easily accessible in the event of an emergency. Also include a section to note things such

as your eating and sleeping habits. This information could prove useful in spotting trends.

The Cleveland Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic Health System (CCHS) are at the forefront of offering an electronic medical record for all patients. Currently, patients at The Cleveland Clinic have access to MyChart, a secure Internet-based service that connects them to portions of their medical record. Patients at CCHS hospitals soon will have similar access. For details, including a demo of MyChart, visit clevelandclinic.org/mychartinfo. ●

Getting Started For free printable charts, visit the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality at ahrq.gov/ppip/50plus/50charts.htm.

Control Your Diabetes

If you have difficult-to-control diabetes—or diabetes and a history of heart disease/surgery—you may be eligible for the Cleveland Clinic Diabetes Mellitus Disease Management (DM²) Clinic. This intensive program helps people control their disease and avoid serious health consequences. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to high cholesterol levels, stroke, heart attack

and poor circulation. Kidney damage, eye and skin problems, and nerve damage can also result.

To enroll in the Clinic, you need a physician's referral. If your diabetes is out of control, talk to your doctor and ask for a referral to DM². Then call us at 216/444-6571 or 800/223-2273, ext. 54903, to schedule your first appointment.

Herbal Supplements

Natural is not always safe

Many patients today turn to alternative therapies to relieve chronic pain, especially back pain. The use of herbal products—most commonly ginseng, garlic and ginkgo biloba—is estimated to be growing at a rate of 25 percent per year.

If you use herbal supplements, there are a few important things to know, says Daniel Mazanec, M.D., of the Cleveland Clinic Spine Institute. “One, as dietary supplements, herbal supplements are unregulated by the U.S. Food and

Drug Administration. This means the manufacturer is responsible for making sure the supplement is safe. Two, just because a product is natural does not mean it's safe. Herbals are actually drugs with adverse effects and potential for interaction with other medications. Three, it is crucial to tell your physician if you're using herbal supplements and how much, especially if you're about to have surgery.”

This last point is particularly important, because all herbal supplements



should be stopped at least one week before scheduled surgery, cautions Dr. Mazanec.

If you're older than 60 and experiencing chronic back pain, call the Cleveland Clinic Mature Spine Center. We can help you stay active and independent while minimizing your pain. Call 216/444-**BACK (2225)** for an appointment. ●

Tune In! The Senior Connection radio show airs every Monday and Friday at 8 a.m. and Saturday at 6 a.m. on WERE-AM 1300.

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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