

THE PULSE

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM
THE WELLNESS CENTER AT NORUMBEGA POINT

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Preventing Wintertime Falls

While we all know the long New England winters can bring a variety of weather scenarios, being aware of the forecast can help you prepare for a trip out into the elements.

To help prevent wintertime falls, seniors should try to stay on the sidewalk. If you must step off the curb, stay as close to the edge of the street as possible. Try to avoid carrying heavy packages while walking on ice or snow. Take it slow, wear non-skid shoes and wear brightly colored gear. Take your time while walking and take care to walk on cleared / salted walkways and always try to use steps with handrails. Hazardous driving conditions may keep motorists from stopping on time or breaking effectively. Remember that heavy snow muffles the normal sounds you expect to hear that alert you to oncoming vehicles. Don't hesitate to reschedule an appointment or travel plans if pending weather may create poor conditions.

Some physical factors can lead seniors to fall more easily than younger people. These factors include muscle weakness, poor balance, blood pressure that drops too much on standing and vision problems. For these reasons, winter is not the time to abandon your exercise routine. It actually can be the perfect time to try something new. Take advantage of the pool and join the water walking class or try Tai Chi or Yoga. Both can help build your leg muscles and make you feel better all around. Research also shows that exercise can help fight off the winter blues.

Pay attention to your surroundings and reduce your personal risk for falls so you can enjoy the season.

Wellness Center Office Hours:

•Non-Emergent
Monday –Friday
1:30-3:30 pm

Blood Pressure Checks:

Thursday, December 8th
10:00am - 11:00am

To Contact Wellness:

Call the front desk at
781-899-5505:

Nursing: Ext. #108

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*Please feel free to let us know if
you have any requests health
related presentations for the
upcoming year.*

We wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season!

Brain Boosters: Stuck in the dreary doldrums of winter? Clear out the cobwebs collecting in your mind by focusing your attention on some brain-boosting food. Start your day with whole-grain cereal and a glass of O.J.—both are loaded with folic acid, which aids memory function and keeps neurons firing fast. Snack on some peanuts; they contain choline, which is known to enhance mental energy. Fruits and veggies—especially berries, grapes, apples, plums, broccoli and spinach—help protect against memory loss. Don't forget fish oil which is also good for your brain. Get the essential omega-3s from fish by eating salmon, sardines and herring, or take a fish-oil supplement to keep you thinking clearly.

Dysphagia

is the medical term for difficulty swallowing, or the feeling that food is “stuck” in your throat or chest. It is estimated that 15 million Americans are affected by dysphagia, so you may know someone that is affected by dysphagia. The risk for dysphagia increases with age. There are a variety of causes that would result in trouble swallowing, including gastroesophageal reflux (GERD), neuromuscular conditions, conditions that cause the narrowing of the esophagus, and stroke. Some signs and symptoms of dysphagia include: choking or breathing food/saliva into your lungs while swallowing, coughing while trying to swallow, weak voice, “gurgly” voice, pressure sensation in mid-chest, pain with swallowing, chronic heartburn, and belching.

Dysphagia can be dangerous as it can result in choking or aspiration. Aspiration is when food/liquids are inhaled into the lungs; this can result in recurrent infections or aspiration pneumonia. These infections can be very dangerous for immune-compromised individuals such as the elderly.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms your doctor may be able to prescribe a helpful medication or refer you to a speech-language pathologist. Speech therapists can give you useful tips on how to adapt chewing or swallowing behaviors to limit risk of choking or aspirating. This December we will be having a speech therapist come speak to us on the dangers of aspiration and ways to cope with swallowing difficulties. We will be collecting questions prior to the lecture, so drop off any questions at the wellness office.

Cold and flu: Fact or Fiction

In the thick of cold and flu season, people will believe just about anything in order to feel better. But does science back the advice you've been following for years? Here are some common cold remedies and prevention techniques from *WebMD.com* and the truth behind their claims:

Claim No. 1: Washing hands is critical. Fact: Colds are spread by touching someone or something with cold-causing viruses and then touching your nose, eyes or mouth. Wash hands thoroughly and often.

Claim No. 2: Feed a cold, starve a fever. Fiction: There's no solid evidence that colds get better with food or that you shouldn't eat when feeling feverish. It's more important to listen to your body and eat when you're hungry.

Claim No. 3: Bundle up or you'll catch a cold. Fiction: While colds are more common in colder seasons, you can't catch one from low temperatures.

Claim No. 4: Taking a shower will make you feel better. Fact: A hot shower can loosen clogged nasal passages to help you breathe.

Claim No. 5: You'll catch a cold by going outside with wet hair. Fiction: A wet head will just make you cold. It won't give you a cold.