

HEALTHWORD  
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

December 2005

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's Live Well, Live Long project, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Live Well, Live Long provides education and resources to professionals in the field of aging to help them improve health promotion and disease prevention efforts aimed at older adults. Current and past issues of this newsletter are available on the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc/HealthWord.cfm>.

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IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE

What's hot in health promotion for older adults, part II: New developments and resources in the areas of nutrition, diabetes, and physical activity

PROGRAM EXCHANGE

Spotlight on Rx Hotline, a call-in resource for information on the Medicare prescription drug plan

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Health promotion education and training events around North America

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FEATURE:

WHAT'S HOT IN HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OLDER ADULTS, PART II

In this issue, we continue our two-part series highlighting health promotion efforts that incorporate the latest thinking on common issues affecting older adults. This month we look at what's hot in nutrition, diabetes, and physical activity. To read last month's issue, which discussed older-driver wellness, falls prevention, and cognitive vitality, visit <http://www.asaging.org/cdc/HealthWord.cfm>.

NUTRITION

Finding the most appropriate nutrition advice from food pyramids

This year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture rolled out the latest version of its "Dietary Guidelines for Americans." The new guidelines highlight variety (eat foods from all food groups), proportionality (eat more whole grains, fruits, veggies, and no- or low-fat dairy products, and eat less saturated or trans fats, added sugars, cholesterol, salt, and alcohol), and activity (be physically active every day). Later in 2005, the USDA revised its food pyramid, a

symbol designed to make the guidelines more understandable. The new “MyPyramid” (found online at <http://www.MyPyramid.gov>) produces a customized food guide plan based on gender, age, and activity level.

A number of organizations have produced alternative food pyramids that may provide supplemental information or be more suitable for older adults or elders of culturally diverse backgrounds:

\* The Harvard Healthy Eating Pyramid, which distinguishes between types of grains, fats, and proteins and recommends alternatives to dairy products:

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/pyramids.html>

\* The Tufts Modified Food Pyramid for Older Adults, which recommends several vitamin and mineral supplements and at least eight glasses of nonalcoholic liquid per day:

<http://nutrition.tufts.edu/consumer/pyramid.html>

\* Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust, which has created four pyramids for traditional Latin American, Asian, vegetarian, and Mediterranean healthy diets:

<http://www.oldwayspt.org/pyramids/pyramids.html>

In addition, look for the Live Well, Live Long project to release its “Food for Health: Nutritional Well-Being for Older Adults” free downloadable module in January 2006:

<http://www.asaging.org/cdc>

## DIABETES

Small changes in daily habits can prevent or manage type 2 diabetes

Older adults at risk for type 2 diabetes can lower their chance of developing the disease -- by more than 70 percent -- by taking the following steps: Engaging in 30 minutes of physical activity five or more days a week; consuming low-fat meals high in fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain foods in appropriate portion sizes; and, if the person is overweight, gradually losing five to seven percent of body weight.

For a comprehensive resource on diabetes prevention and management for older adults, including diabetes education curricula and a physical-activity program for people with diabetes, visit the Live Well, Live Long website at <http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module7/home.cfm>.

Additional resources on diabetes and older adults:

\* The American Diabetes Association’s “Am I At Risk?” paper-and-pencil screening tool:

<http://www.diabetes.org/risk-test.jsp>

\* Information on diabetes care and supplies covered by Medicare:

<http://www.asaging.org/medicare>

\* The National Diabetes Education Program's "Power to Control" brochure, which also addresses Medicare benefits: [http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/Power\\_broch\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.ndep.nih.gov/diabetes/pubs/Power_broch_Eng.pdf)

\* The Chronic Care Model, which discusses how to create a continuous system of care for people with chronic disease, including diabetes: <http://www.improvingchroniccare.org>

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

How much? How often? Key recommendations end the confusion

In 1995, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine recommended that all adults, including elders, engage in 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most (five or more) days of the week. "Moderate intensity" means an effort similar to briskly walking one mile in 15-20 minutes. This guideline only applies to endurance activities that improve cardiovascular function. Older adults are advised to engage in three other types of physical activity: Strengthening (two to three times per week), stretching (three to seven times per week), and balance (three times per week).

Although other federal agencies recently recommended 60 to 90 minutes per day of endurance activity for the purposes of weight control, many older adults may find this recommendation overwhelming. In fact, it may not be effective for all elders. Health promotion programs for older adults, then, should keep these key recommendations in mind:

1. Regular physical activity provides many health benefits to older adults of any age.
2. To obtain these health benefits, elders should engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per day on most days of the week.
3. Older adults should do things they enjoy in order to be active every day.

Additional physical-activity promotion resources:

\* Information on ways to gauge the intensity of physical activity, such as the talk test: [http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module6/phase2/phase2\\_7b.cfm](http://www.asaging.org/cdc/module6/phase2/phase2_7b.cfm)

\* The Active Aging Partnership's "National Blueprint: Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults 50-Plus": <http://www.agingblueprint.org>

\* International Council on Active Aging website: <http://www.icaa.cc>

\* The Live Long, Live Well project's "Physical Activity for Older Adults: Exercise for Life" free downloadable module, which includes a complete physical activity program: <http://www.asaging.org/cdc>

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## PROGRAM EXCHANGE

### RxHelp

Need help understanding or explaining the new Medicare prescription drug benefit to your clients? The Medicare Rights Center, an independent source of healthcare information and assistance for Americans who have Medicare, recently launched RxHelp, a national hotline for professionals serving the Medicare population. Its goal is to provide unbiased advice so older adults can find the plan that works best for them. Professionals -- or elders themselves -- are welcome to call 877-RXHELP-0 (877-794-3570) from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern time.

We welcome information from the electronic HEALTHWORD community about health promotion programs around North America. Send us a description of a program that you think other readers will be interested in learning about. Please keep in mind that this venue is not a commercial forum to purchase products but an interactive community of professionals. Send all submissions to Nancy Bui at [nbui@asaging.org](mailto:nbui@asaging.org).

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event: National Leadership Summit on Eliminating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health

Dates: January 9-11, 2006

Location: Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Minority Health and a number of cosponsors are bringing together leaders from government, academia, public health agencies, minority-served institutions, and cultural-minority communities for a three-day summit on "Embracing a Common Destination: Improving Health Outcomes for All Americans." To learn more about the summit or to register online, visit <http://www.omhsummit2006.org/index.htm>.

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Event: 33rd Annual Current Topics in Geriatrics

Dates: February 9-11, 2006

Location: Baltimore

Cosponsored by the American Geriatrics Society and the John Hopkins Geriatric Education Center, this three-day program will bring practical information to clinicians and other healthcare professionals who care for older adults. The program will discuss effective health promotion and disease prevention programs, diagnosis and management of specific diseases, and common syndromes in older adults, such as weight loss and chronic pain. For more information, visit <http://www.hopkinscme.net/etrakwebapp/calendar.aspx>, and choose "33rd Annual Current Topics in Geriatrics."

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Event: Active Aging in Asia-Pacific: Showcasing Best Practices

Dates: February 26-28, 2006

Location: Honolulu

In order to promote the concept of “active” or “productive” aging and to facilitate the exchange of ideas among Pacific Rim countries, the University of Hawaii has coordinated this conference to explore innovative gerontology programs and policies in the Asia-Pacific region. The conference will have a special focus on Hawaii, where the older population is culturally diverse and the care of older adults is infused with the spirit of aloha and ohana (family). For more information, visit <http://vrchawaii.org/ActiveAging/>.

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For more educational offerings in the field of aging, visit the searchable “Events in Aging” calendar on the ASA website: <http://www.asaging.org/calendar>.

Have an event related to health promotion and aging that you would like to tell your colleagues about? Please submit your event, call for papers, or grant announcements to Nancy Bui at [nbui@asaging.org](mailto:nbui@asaging.org). Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

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SUGGESTIONS AND QUESTIONS. For more information or comments about the newsletter, please contact Chaya Gordon, research manager at ASA, at [chayag@asaging.org](mailto:chayag@asaging.org).

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