

HEALTHWORD
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

December 2006

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging's (ASA's) Live Well, Live Long project. 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

Safe traveling strategies for avoiding deep vein thrombosis

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Helping elders set realistic New Year's resolutions can be a powerful form of health promotion

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Health promotion education and training events around North America

FEATURE: SAFE TRAVELS

By Nancy Ceridwyn

Traveling for the holidays? Share these travel-health measures with your loved ones and the elders you work with who may be flying with the reindeer or driving over the river and through the woods this season. Immobility from hours of sitting in airplanes, cars, and trains is a risk factor for developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a blood clot that forms in the deep veins usually located in the large muscles of an arm or leg. A life-threatening condition arises when such clots break off and travel to the lungs.

Airline magazines and the occasional news article encourage airplane travelers to stretch their legs, rotate their feet, raise and stretch their arms while taking deep breaths, and walk around to avoid the dangers of immobility. Those taking to the highways are encouraged to stop at least every two hours to stretch, which can also help drivers stay awake.

The United Kingdom's national Department of Health recommends that air travelers take the following steps to lower their risk of DVT:

- * Wear loose-fitting clothing
- * Store hand luggage in the overhead bins to keep the room under the seat free for moving feet and legs
- * Bend and straighten legs, feet, and toes every half-hour while seated during the flight
- * Avoid taking sleeping pills, which encourage sleep that discourages stretching and walking

More good news is that airline travelers can reduce their risk for DVT by staying hydrated, limiting caffeine and alcohol intake, and wearing support stockings. In certain circumstances, doctors may also recommend taking blood-thinning medications.

Extended travel is not the only contributing factor to DVT, a silent killer that can have few or no symptoms. For a full list of risk factors, from advanced age to specific medical conditions, visit the DVT module found on the ASA Live Well, Live Long website at www.asaging.org/cdc (look to the bottom right of the home page). DVT prevention can be one of the best holiday gifts that you can give to yourself and your clients.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE:
SETTING REALISTIC NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS
By Chaya Gordon

Part of the American tradition of celebrating the New Year seems to be making resolutions that are doomed to failure. According to Janet Polivy and Peter Herman, 25 percent of New Year's resolutions are abandoned within the first 15 weeks of the year. Not only that, but individuals tend to make the same New Year's resolution an average of ten times, and those who manage to make a resolution last for six months or longer have often tried five or six times before finally succeeding. The lack of success in carrying out New Year's resolutions can be demoralizing and can lead to an attitude of "I give up -- why bother?" until the next year, when "false hope syndrome" starts a new cycle.

To avoid this trap, resolutions should be realistic goals based on an individual's life and circumstances. The "American Journal of Health Promotion" suggests that healthy behaviors are a result of four elements: awareness, motivation, skill-building, and opportunity. Without opportunity or access to ways to promote health, good intentions cannot be realized. For example, an older adult may resolve to exercise regularly, but if he or she does not have transportation to get to a senior center or community center, has no idea how to be physically active alone at home, and doesn't have an exercise buddy or a family member who can offer support, the likelihood that he or she will start being physically active just because it's on a New Year's resolution list is very low.

On the other hand, setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based) goals and using positive rather than negative reinforcement may help an elder take small steps toward making lasting changes. The older adult in the example above might start by setting a goal for January of making two phone calls to ask about transportation to a senior center from the county paratransit system or from the senior center itself. For

more information on goal setting, see chapter 2 of “Nutritional Well-Being: Food for Health” (<http://asaging.org/cdc/module8/home.cfm>) or chapter 2 of “Physical Activity for Older Adults: Exercise for Life!” (<http://asaging.org/cdc/module6/home.cfm>). For more information on health behavior and supportive environments, read “Health Promotion for Older Adults: Meeting the Challenges of the Future” at http://www.asaging.org/cdc/issue_briefs/Issue_Brief_1.pdf.

The following suggestions may help create empowering New Year’s resolutions for improved health. Happy New Year!

1. I will honor my life experience, appreciate my strengths and abilities, and love myself.
2. I will make changes for me, not for anyone else.
3. I will get more in touch with my body and listen to what it is telling me.
4. I will ask for support from family, friends, and others if I need it, and I will offer support when needed.
5. I will pick one or two things to work on and set goals that are SMART (see above).
6. I will try something new.
7. I will connect with others.
8. I will have fun.
9. I will start by taking small steps.
10. I will give myself credit for what I accomplish.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event: Being Ageless: A Conference on Lifelong Health, Vitality, and Meaning
Dates: Jan. 12-14, 2007
Location: Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

This conference, presented by Omega Institute, will offer practical and inspiring guidance on how to live well, live long, and live with meaning and purpose. Keynote faculty include Andrew Weil, health and wellness pioneer; Maya Angelou, poet and activist; Jon Kabat-Zin, founder of the Stress Reduction Clinic; and Goldie Hawn, actress and founder of the Bright Light Foundation. For more information, visit <http://www.omega.org/>.

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Event: ElderCare Expo
Dates: Jan. 12-14, 2007
Location: London, Ont.

The ElderCare Expo’s mission is to help informal care providers (relatives, spouses, friends) better help the elders they care for live dignified, comfortable, and happy lives. Health promotion-related sessions include “Losing Your Memory? Learn About the Mini-Mental Test,” “Hip Fracture Prevention, Management, and Rehabilitation,” and

“The Seniors’ Diet for Type 2 Diabetes: Challenging the Myths and Managing the Realities.” For more information, visit <http://eldercareexpo.ca/1024/default.shtml>.

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Event: American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) Combined Sections Meeting
Dates: Feb. 14-18, 2007
Location: Boston

The Combined Sections Meeting features programming designed by all 18 of APTA's specialty sections, and brings together more than 5,000 physical therapy professionals from around the nation. The Geriatric Section is sponsoring several health promotion sessions, including “Health Promotion and Wellness SIG Programming: The Rage Against Age,” “Clinical Decision Making Across Cultures,” and “Yoga Techniques for Skeletal Health.” For more information, visit http://www.apta.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Combined_Sections_Meeting_CSM_&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=154&ContentID=17889.

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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 Betsy Dorsett at betsyd@asaging.org. Include the title, organization, date and time, location, contact information, and a short description of the event.

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