

HEALTHWORD
Putting Health Promotion Back in Motion

January 2007

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HEALTHWORD is a monthly e-mail newsletter produced by the American Society on Aging'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

New research findings and resources may help reduce elders' risk of falling in the home

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

Guidance on addressing health literacy in your health promotion program

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Health promotion education and training events around North America

FEATURE:

FALLS: RESEARCH AND HOME SAFETY

Each year, many older adults fall in their homes, suffering serious and often fatal injuries. According to the Home Safety Council, falls are the leading cause of death in the home. New research findings released by the council in September 2006 have shed light on some of the circumstances surrounding such falls. The findings may help older adults, professionals, and caregivers reduce fall risk.

The Home Safety Council's primary conclusion was that many homes lack critical home safety elements. According to the council's study, "A difficulty in communications and lack of knowledge may be keeping many caregivers from discussing safety practices with the older adults for whom they provide care." Caregivers report that worries over how the older adult will react to suggestions, as well as lack of knowledge about appropriate changes to make, are the top reasons for not taking steps to make their homes safer.

Fall-prevention and home safety programs should therefore address caregiver concerns such as these. The council's website (<http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/family>) lists critical actions that caregivers and professionals can take to make homes safer for older

adults. Many of the home-safety steps that the council lists are simple -- installing grab bars in bath and shower stalls, using nightlights, and ensuring rugs have nonskid backs or liners.

A combination of education regarding home safety practices, physical activity, and proper medication management can help individuals greatly reduce their risk of falling in the home. The National Institute of Health's "Falls and Older Adults" website (<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/falls/toc.html>), which was designed especially for elders, contains information about the risks of falling, home safety, the importance of physical activity, the use of adaptive devices such as canes, and other fall-prevention techniques. The site also has a section on what to do if one does fall.

The American Society on Aging (ASA) has addressed the topic of falls in several of its publications. The spring 2005 issue of the NEST (Network on Environments, Services, and Technologies for Maximizing Independence) constituent group newsletter contained an article by Judith C. Barker discussing sociocultural barriers to home safety. It is available online at <http://www.asaging.org/networks/NEST/max-124.cfm>. In addition, the winter 2002-03 issue of "Generations," ASA's quarterly journal, was devoted to falls and fall-related injuries. The issue, which includes articles from some of the nation's leading experts, is available for purchase online at <http://www.asaging.org/generations/gen26-4/toc.cfm>.

To keep up to date on fall-prevention research, tools, and programs, visit the fall-prevention website of the National Council on Aging (NCOA)'s Center for Healthy Aging at <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org/content.asp?sectionid=69>. It describes the Falls Free Coalition (a group of national organizations and state coalitions), offers a list of recommended resources, and publishes an e-newsletter. In collaboration with the Home Safety Council and the Falls Free Coalition, Home Safety Workgroup the National Council on Aging is seeking to identify and promote 10 "Creative and Best Practices in Home Safety Assessment and Modification" See the calendar of events below for more information or visit <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org>.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE: HEALTH LITERACY

Health promotion programs can only be effective when people understand the program's message and its importance. Part of making your health promotion program accessible to a diverse audience includes addressing health literacy. The following resources may offer you guidance:

* Health Literacy Improvement Website
<http://www.health.gov/communication/literacy/>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion recently launched a website promoting the improvement of health literacy. The site contains a wealth of information, including a basic overview of health

literacy concepts, techniques for improving health literacy, a health literacy PowerPoint presentation, and links to other resources.

* Report: "The Health Literacy of America's Adults: Results From the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy"

<http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>

This report is the first release from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, a program that is assessing the health literacy of American adults.

* Issue Brief: "Cultural Competence and Health Literacy: Making Your Health Promotion Program Accessible to Diverse Groups of Older Adults"

http://www.asaging.org/cdc/issue_briefs/Issue_Brief_4.pdf

This issue brief, available on ASA's Live Well, Live Long website, discusses how to better address low health literacy through the creation of culturally appropriate health promotion messages.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Call for Nominations: Creative and Best Practice Programs/Services in Home Safety Assessment and Modification

Deadline: Jan. 31, 2007

In collaboration with the Home Safety Council and the Falls Free Coalition, Home Safety Workgroup the National Council on Aging is seeking to identify and promote 10 "Creative and Best Practices in Home Safety Assessment and Modification" that address fall risks and are linked to, or part of, a more comprehensive falls-prevention intervention. The programs and services selected will be announced at the ASA-NCOA Joint Conference in March 2007. To learn more about the awards or to nominate your program, use an easy-to-complete form available on the Web at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=478512814179> or visit <http://www.healthyagingprograms.org>.

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Event: Effective Community-Based Physical Activity Programs for Older Adults

Date: Feb. 14-15

Location: Seattle

The public health and aging networks have identified as a priority the development and evaluation of effective interventions for older adults and their dissemination/sustainability in community settings. This conference focuses on the RE-AIM framework for dissemination of best practices: Reach to target audience; Efficacy/Effectiveness of programs; Adoption by target settings; Intervention implementation/fidelity; and Maintenance of intervention effects. For more information,

download the brochure (as a PDF file) from
<http://www.son.washington.edu/cne/brochures/Spring06/HAN/07107-C.pdf>.

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Event: Thinking Ahead: Lifelong Wellness Expo
Dates: March 30, 2007
Location: California State University, Fullerton

The second annual Thinking Ahead Expo, sponsored by the Orange County chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, will offer exercise and fitness demonstrations, healthy dining information, massage therapy, and cosmetic treatments. For more information, visit <http://www.alzoc.org>.

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Event: 2007 Joint Conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on Aging
Dates: March 7-10, 2007
Location: Chicago

The theme of this year's conference is "Lets Rethink Aging." This not-to-be-missed conference will feature more than 900 sessions covering a diverse range of topics in aging. It will showcase innovative programs, foster policy discussion and advocacy, and share cutting-edge research findings. For more information, visit <http://www.agingconference.org>.

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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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