

wecare NEWS

A newsletter from We Care—where peace of mind has a home address

On-line health assessment

We Care Home Health Services

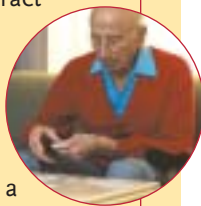
offers personalized health and support services for you and your family in your own home. We've created an on-line health assessment tool to help you find the right level of care for your needs. To fill out our no-obligation assessment, please visit www.wecare.ca and in the right-hand menu, click on "Services."



7 ways to stay sharp

A mind is a terrible thing to waste. Here are some tips to maintain your mental sharpness:

1. Add and subtract numbers in your head.
2. Play card games or do crosswords.
3. After reading a newspaper article, take a few minutes to reflect on what was reported.
4. Plan one project at a time.
5. Avoid negative criticism, both of yourself and of others.
6. Seek out new experiences.
7. Take some risks.



Improve health with a balanced diet

By Mary Ann Rosenbloom

Immunity to disease allows a person to live a long and healthy life and to remain in their homes for as long as possible. Malnutrition, which has a negative impact on disease resistance, can lead to poor healing, pressure ulcers, risk of falls and increased hospitalization. Some of the signs of malnutrition are pale skin, sunken eyes, weakness, fatigue, and irritability.

To keep your loved one healthy, ensure that he or she eats well-balanced, flavourful meals. Canada's Food Guide, available on-line from Health Canada, will help you plan



Ensure your loved one eats a variety of foods.

balanced meals. Supplements (vitamins, Boost and Ensure) and Meals on Wheels can help to round out a nutritional diet. And don't forget water, which is a vital source of minerals and a digestive aid. Water also helps to prevent a dry mouth, swallowing difficulties and constipation.

Welcome to We Care

We Care is the largest independently owned home care service provider in Canada, with over 50 locations from coast to coast. Our services include

- Nursing
- Personal support
- Specialized services for acquired brain injury and palliative care
- Meal preparation
- Homemaking and cleaning
- Companionship
- Specialized child care
- Respite and palliative care
- Alzheimer and Parkinson care

All of this 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year

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www.wecare.ca

Diabetes: Vigilance is important

Knowing what to look for is half the battle in beating diabetes, a condition that is all too common among older Canadians.

Good and bad news

It's a classic case of good news and bad news. The good news is that tremendous strides have been made in diagnosis, treatment and education in recent years. Today, diabetes can be effectively managed with proper care. Most people can control their condition with diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and self-monitoring of blood glucose levels. Medications and insulin injections only need to be used if required. The bad news is that 1.5 million Canadians have been diagnosed with diabetes. Experts believe that another 750,000 have it but aren't aware, and 60,000 new cases are reported each year.

A no surprises approach

The majority of the new cases



reported each year are in people over 50, especially those who have one or more of the known risk factors: excess weight, lack of activity or exercise, a family history, or heredity factors (e.g., of Aboriginal, African or Hispanic descent).

Caregivers need to be vigilant not only with the person under their care but also with themselves if they fall into a risk group. Be aware and watch for symptoms. Even if no definite signs exist, a blood sugar check should be included in your annual physical, especially if you're over 50.

A head start

The person under your care may already be diagnosed with diabetes. In this case, your role is to ensure that they receive any help needed and follow doctor's treatment recommendations to the letter.

Following the treatment usually means understanding and sticking to instructions and provided diet guidelines, trying to get a reasonable amount of exercise, watching weight, taking any medications and obtaining the right self-monitoring products.

Types of diabetes

Type I

(insulin-dependent):

Usually associated with children and adolescents. Less than 10 per cent of people with diabetes have this type.

Type II

(non-insulin-dependent):

The most common form of diabetes; it tends to develop in later life. One in 10 Canadians over the age of 65 have this condition.



Signs to watch for

Contact your doctor if you have any of these conditions:

- Unusual fatigue
- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination
- Change in appetite
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blurry vision
- Itchy skin
- Slower than normal healing of cuts
- Abdominal pain and nausea
- Sweet-smelling breath
- Tingling sensation in the arms and legs.

Self-monitoring

There is good news here as well. For insulin users, today's advanced devices have made insulin delivery more comfortable. And new research and development has improved the accuracy, simplicity and convenience of blood glucose monitors. As a result, self monitoring has helped to increase the independence and peace-of-mind of diabetes sufferers and their families.

We Care home care nurses are educated on diabetes care and can provide monitoring and preventative foot care.

Written with material from Roche Diagnostics

Ask our experts:

Forward your questions or comments, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.

My father-in-law has recently lost a considerable degree of mobility and now needs toileting, bathing and dressing assistance. How can we help him retain his dignity?

First, remember that your father-in-law's mobility is impaired, not his cognitive abilities. In order to maintain his dignity, his spiritual, emotional and physical needs must be met. He may feel strongly about maintaining his personal privacy and feel resentful about his loss of control in daily living. He will need a sense of control over his routine and support services to preserve his dignity.

Include him in the decision-making process and give him the opportunity to voice his concerns or objections. Changing things too rapidly without his consent may cause your father-in-law more distress rather than give any benefit.



I want my children to have a relationship with my mother, but her hearing loss makes communication very difficult. Any tips?

A referral from your mother's doctor for a hearing evaluation is the first step to better communication with her grandchildren. She will receive information about the latest hearing aids and assistive devices that can help the whole family enjoy a closer relationship. Meanwhile, the following tips may help with communication:

- Face her directly so that she can read lips, facial expressions and body language.
- Speak slowly and clearly, avoiding exaggerated lip movements and shouting.
- Do not obscure your face and mouth with your hands, and eliminate distractions such as eating or gum chewing.
- If you need to repeat yourself several times, try rephrasing your sentence.
- Be aware of the environment. Large, crowded rooms are difficult settings for the hearing impaired. Turn off the TV/radio to reduce background noise.

My bachelor father has poor eating habits, and he only eats properly when his home care nurse visits. How can I ensure he eats well? Are there any dietary supplements he can use?

Elderly people who live alone frequently have poor nutritional habits; often, the loss of a spouse poses a significant hurdle.

First, determine if his habits are due to loneliness, finances, or a lack of knowledge about cooking. Then, your father should be referred to a nutritionist by a doctor. The nutritionist will evaluate your father's nutritional status and suggest ways for him to improve his eating habits as well as recommend any supplements.

If your father is not buying groceries because of money concerns, you can help him by preparing meals in advance and freezing them. Another option is to look into agencies such as the Salvation Army that can assist low-income individuals. Contact a local home care nursing office who can direct you to agencies that provide meals or to assisted living homes in your area.

Stroke alert

A stroke is a sudden loss of brain function caused by the interruption of blood flow to the brain (an ischemic stroke) or the rupture of blood vessels in the brain (a hemorrhagic stroke). A stroke can affect your ability to move and co-ordinate movement; to feel touch, temperature, pain and movement; to see or to interpret what you see; and to think, remember, understand, plan, reason or problem-solve.



The average person waits 18 hours after a stroke before seeking medical help, often because the person does not know the warning signs, which include

- sudden weakness, numbness or tingling in the face, arm or leg
- temporary difficulty or loss of speech; trouble understanding speech
- sudden loss of vision (particularly in one eye) or double vision
- sudden, severe, unusual headaches
- dizziness, unsteadiness (especially in conjunction with other symptoms)

Learn what you can do to avoid stroke. Call your local We Care office and ask about the Healthy Heart program.

Source: Canadian Heart and Stroke Foundation

Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of Solutions® magazine,



courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location. Visit www.wecare.ca

Send your questions to skelly@wecare.ca



Home accessible home

Imagine this scenario. Your mom has been discharged from the hospital with a prescription for a manual wheelchair, a bath seat and toilet rails. However, she can't get in and out of the front door, let alone the bathroom! How do you make your home more accessible?

Simply put, you've got to quickly consider your options. Is it possible to move to a more accessible home? Is it possible to renovate or remodel? To help you decide, think carefully about your loved one's present and future situations.

- Is your parent's health stable?
- Will housing changes be required if your loved one's abilities decline?
- What are his or her goals for independent living?
- What housing modifications are needed?
- Will daily assistance be needed from an outside caregiver? Does space need to be planned for helpers to work or live in the home?
- Does your parent have enough money or funding to live independently and safely?

Planning ahead is best but if you're in crisis mode, call your local We Care office for help and advice.

Excerpted from The Complete Canadian Eldercare Guide, which is available by visiting www.solutionsmagazine.ca or your local We Care office.



BCS - 8844

Walkers increase safety

Walkers, also called rollators, are used by people with many different health needs and lifestyles. By portraying a non-institutional look and encouraging at-home use, modern walkers help many individuals to live independently with minimal assistance.

Walkers help not only with physical but also neurological conditions. For people with the following conditions, walkers offer increased safety, comfort and autonomy in a variety of ways.

Parkinson's disease: The person with Parkinson's tends to have a shuffling walk. Using a rollator provides the person with support and a barrier that will push back and slow the person down. Adding an optional slow-down brake will help if cognition becomes an issue.



Alzheimer disease: A person with Alzheimer needs a focal point, a frame of reference. The walker will keep the person's attention focused on their environment.

Respiratory: A walker can facilitate the carrying of heavy oxygen equipment with the use of an oxygen tank holder accessory. And the walker seat provides a place to rest when the user is tired or short of breath.



Hip or knee replacement: After a hip or knee replacement, a person will need some time to



Photos: Invacare Canada

recover while they regain their ability to walk. A walker will provide the necessary support.

Stroke: Some milder stroke patients can still walk with a rollator, using the one-hand brake and one forearm support on the affected side.

Arthritis: The person with arthritis requires support when walking and usually cannot walk long distances without resting. Accessories, such as the anatomical handles, can be added to maximize use and independence while minimizing fatigue.



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