

wecare NEWS

We Care—where peace of mind has a home address

5 tips to better exercise

Regular exercise will help you improve your health and combat caregiving stress. Here are a few tips to get you started on the right program:

1. Talk to your doctor to learn what exercise is best for you.
2. Select a few activities that you enjoy (e.g., jogging, swimming, tennis, etc.).
3. Shorter periods of regular exercise is better than longer periods of less frequent exercise.
4. Remember, frequency is more important than duration. Once you start exercising, stick with it!
5. Always stretch your muscles and warm up before exercising.

Source: *Solutions* magazine.



Don't mistreat your feet!

At We Care, we understand that your feet are vital to your health and mobility. That's why our nursing foot-care program is an integral part of our service. Our foot-care clinics are offered in retirement homes, seniors' buildings, condominiums, long-term-care homes, retail locations (such as pharmacies), and We Care offices across the country.

Is it time to intervene?

Knowing when to intervene on behalf of an aging loved one can be a difficult decision. This may well be a fragile period in your parent's life. Changes may occur on a daily basis, and behaviours may be inconsistent or hard to read. Your parent may hide problems to avoid worrying you.

You want to help but you don't want him or her to be overly dependent on you, so should you get involved?

Following are a few clues your parent might need help.

Activity levels: Suddenly mom is a glass half-empty gal, focusing on the negative. You notice that she is no longer pursuing hobbies or social interests that once provided her with pleasure.



Personal grooming: Few things raise the spirit like newly coifed hair, a trimmed beard or a freshly laundered shirt. However, when people are depressed, personal hygiene and grooming are often the first daily activities to fall by the wayside.

continued on page 2

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, palliative care and foot 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

INSIDE

Eight myths about osteoporosis **2**

Caring from a distance **3**

The right to live at risk **3**

Beat the stress of meal preparation **4**

Ask the experts **4**



Where peace of mind has a home address™

www.wecare.ca

Eight myths about osteoporosis by Sue Kelly, RN, PHN

1. Osteoporosis is a type of arthritis. “Osteo” means bone, and “porosis” means thinning, so osteoporosis literally means “thinning of bone.” It is commonly confused with osteoarthritis, which is a form of arthritis that results in a breakdown of the cartilage covering the ends of bones. In contrast, osteoporosis is a condition where bone itself breaks down. Bones then become thin, brittle and easily broken.

2. Osteoporosis is an old lady’s disease. Although osteoporosis is more common in women, at least one in eight men over 50 also has the disease. In fact, in Canada 20 to 30 per cent of osteoporotic fractures occur in men.

3. Walking provides enough exercise. Physical activity to prevent osteoporosis includes both weight-bearing and strength-training exercises. Walking is an excellent weight-bearing exercise, but it is not enough. Before starting strength-training exercises, check with your doctor.

4. No one in my family has osteoporosis, so I’m not concerned about my risk for fractures. No single cause for

osteoporosis has been identified. However, certain factors do play a role in the disease’s development. Major risk factors include being 65 or older, having a family history of osteoporotic fracture (especially if your mother had a hip fracture), having a vertebral compression fracture or a fracture with minimal trauma after age 40, long-term (more than three months) use of glucocorticoid therapy such as prednisone, medical conditions (such as celiac or Crohn’s disease) that inhibit nutrient absorption, and early menopause.

5. Low-fat foods are low in calcium. A glass of milk—whether whole, 2 per cent, 1 per cent, skim or chocolate—provides approximately 300 mg of calcium. Low-fat yogourt and cheese also have good amounts of calcium.

6. The sun provides adequate amounts of vitamin D. Vitamin D is needed to help the body absorb calcium, but very few foods contain it. Your body can make vitamin D when your skin is exposed to adequate sunlight, yet proper exposure can be difficult to achieve during the winter months in Canada. If you are over 50, you need 800 IUs per day, and milk only provides

100 IUs. Talk to your doctor about the right supplement for you.

7. Drinking coffee is not a risk factor for osteoporosis. Caffeine can contribute to calcium loss through the kidneys. Up to four caffeine drinks per day are not considered to be harmful, providing you get adequate calcium intake. Caffeine is contained in coffee, tea, chocolate and some soft drinks like cola beverages.

8. If taking calcium upsets your stomach, then stop taking it. Always talk to your doctor before you stop taking a prescribed medicine. To help alleviate stomach upset and maximize calcium absorption, keep the following tips in mind:

- Take calcium carbonate during or immediately after eating.
- Take calcium with plenty of water.
- Take no more than 500 mg of elemental calcium at one time.

For more information, visit the Osteoporosis Society of Canada website at www.osteoporosis.ca or call 1-800-463-6842.

Sue Kelly, RN, PHN, is the Director of Health and Wellness for We Care Health Services.

continued from page 1

Bill paying: If your parent is recently widowed and is having difficulty with the bills, your loved one may just need a helping hand until he or she can master these new skills. On the other hand, if your parent was very conscientious about paying the bills and you see a marked change in this habit, then you have a reason for concern.

Health watch: Many symptoms of declining health can be

attributed to treatable medical conditions. Medical intervention may be required if your loved one shows a marked loss of appetite, a change in sleeping patterns, loss of hearing, incontinence or is becoming accident prone.

Medication management: Is your parent using medication inappropriately? Perhaps there are now so many drugs that he or she can’t remember which does what or which to take when. While a good medication

regimen has positive effects, taking medication improperly can have unfortunate and sometimes deadly results.

Confused: Your parent may have become confused, suspicious or fearful. If these traits have not been part of your loved one’s personality in the past, there may be a problem.

Forgetfulness: Dad can’t remember the names of friends or family or goes to a familiar place and can’t get home.

Caring from a distance

All has been well for the last few years and then suddenly, in the middle of the night, the dreaded phone call comes to say that mom, who lives in another province, seems confused and unable to care for herself. Her helpful neighbours who watch over her well-being have taken her to the hospital. You're on the next flight. Welcome to the world of long-distance caregiving.



tune you into priorities and give you a quick, transparent assessment of where help is needed this time.

- Understand current medical situation and risk factors.
- Review medical appointments and consultations with doctors and other health care professionals.
- Liaise with other family members and significant others to deter-

mine their roles and willingness to help.

- Check medications and make sure your elder is taking them on time. Know the location of the local pharmacy and who holds prescription renewals.
- Ascertain the schedules of other caregivers and family members.
- Find out how care routines, such as dressing and bathing routines, are being handled.
- Review meal planning (e.g., Meals on Wheels, grocery shopping, etc.)
- Assess chores to be done: laundry, yard work and household maintenance. Arrange for someone to look after them.
- Arrange regular transportation to appointments, church, social events, etc.
- Audit the finances. Are there bills that need to be paid?
- Locate and put all essential documents (e.g., powers of attorney for personal care and finance, wills, banking information) in a safe place.
- Arrange for social visits from friends, family and volunteers.
- Check for financial assistance or insurance funding that might be available.
- Know who has access to family keys and any home security codes.

On the road again

Adult children often find themselves helping from a distance and travelling back and forth on a regular basis. If this sounds like you, you're not alone. Delve into these valuable ideas that'll help you provide care from a distance:

Step 1. Don't panic. Navigation is generally more important than speed.

Step 2. Realize that conditions change and that, given your distance, you'll probably find yourself experiencing more dramatic situations than those of us involved on a daily basis.

Step 3. Gather information. Be ready to share what you know and keep track of all your conversations.

Step 4. Take care of yourself. Travelling back and forth can be stressful. Be sure to slow down, eat well and prioritize your health.

A beginner's checklist

When you arrive on your parents' doorstep, read through the following list to help you direct your caregiving efforts. It'll



The right to live at risk

Let's face it, your parents' health will decline and they'll probably face a crisis or life-altering event such as a serious illness. With ongoing changes in their physical and mental health, you or other family members may need to accept more responsibility. Know, however, that your parents have the "right to live at risk."

This means that unless they are mentally incapable or causing harm to others, they can make their own decisions concerning their housing, legal issues, care and finances. While you may be concerned and have some great ideas for solutions, be aware that ultimately—and legally—it is your parent's decision as to if, how, and when they'd like to receive care.

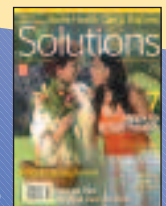
As caregivers, we have to be careful not to judge or interfere with the choices our parents may make. If your parents recognize their limitations and strengths, the best you can do is help them with their decisions and then be prepared to accept their choices; even if you do not always agree. Remember, it is their choice to live at risk.

Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of Solutions®

magazine, courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location.

Visit www.wecare.ca or call 1-800-605-0916.





Beat the stress of meal preparation

How do you ensure that your parent is eating well? As a busy caregiver, you may not have the time to prepare meals in advance or be home at mealtime. Voila! The Meals on Wheels program may be your elder's ticket to improved nutrition.

Partially subsidized by the provincial Ministries of Health, local service clubs, and donations from clients, volunteers and corporate sponsors, the Meals on Wheels community service provides home delivery of meals to anyone in need. Generally, referrals are accepted directly from individuals or from relatives, neighbours, social workers and health care professionals.

Across Canada, friendly and reliable volunteers give their time to deliver nutritious meals and cheery smiles to independent seniors.

Amply covering the four food groups, Meals on Wheels lunches and dinners are usually comprised of soup, an "entrée of the day," bread, beverage and dessert, but the menu may vary from community to community.

Accommodations can also be made for specialty diets, including for older loved ones who are vegetarian or who have diabetes.

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.



9174 We Care News is produced by BCS Group. www.bcsgroup.com

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 is recovering from a stroke. Apart from this condition, he is in good physical shape. How can I help him keep fit during his recovery?

As your father-in-law is in good physical shape and his condition is stabilized, his recovery should progress well. Factors such as the side of his body that is affected, and if he was left- or right-handed previously, will affect the impact the stroke has on his abilities. Assistive devices such as a cane or a walker and modifications to his residence (i.e., a ramp) will encourage mobility.

A daily exercise plan should be developed which will include monitoring his progress and making changes to the plan as needed. The plan should allow for sufficient rest periods and should be in conjunction with his normal daily routine. Your father-in-law's health care professionals should help develop and monitor any exercise program.

I know I should be eating better, but it's hard for me to get enthusiastic about preparing meals. How can I encourage myself to eat well?

Spend a little time educating yourself about the health benefits of a balanced diet. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* is a good place to start. Plan your menus ahead of time—for the whole week if you can. Make a

list from your menus and shop accordingly. Make shopping part of your weekly or bi-weekly routine. Cook in "bulk" where appropriate, and freeze individual portions for times when you are too busy or tired to cook. Also, exercise regularly; it will make you feel good about yourself and improve your appetite. Treat yourself well; buy special foods once in a while, set the table and light a candle if you like! Finally, consider community organizations (e.g., Meals on Wheels) that deliver if you are really not up to cooking!

My 74-year-old aunt lives alone. I don't think she needs a nurse, but she could definitely use some help. Are there other kinds of assistance available?

There are a variety of non-medical services available to help your aging aunt to live independently and safely within her home. Among the types of help available are personal support workers, who can provide help with bathing, house cleaning, meal preparation and similar activities. There are also companions, who can help with daily activities such as shopping or light housework, or can just sit and spend time with your aunt.

Your local We Care Canada office can help you identify the assistance that your aunt needs to maintain her independence.

Send your questions to Sue Kelly at skelly@wecarecanada.com



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