

Precautions for Senior Citizens

By Niru Prasad

As we are growing older, it is very important for all of us to follow some guidelines for staying healthy. With this in mind, I have prepared some tips and guidelines since I have always believed in preventative medicine.

Health Safety Guidelines

- Healthy way of living.
- Prevention of disease by proper immunizations.
- Avoid summer related injuries.
- Recognize early signs of dehydration and heat related illnesses.
- Planning safe summer vacations.
- Avoid insect bites and stings.
- Thinking positive and about the bright side of aging.

Disease Prevention - Immunizations

- Cholesterol screening every year.
- Influenza vaccine every year.
- Tetanus booster every 5 to 10 yrs.
- Pneumococcal vaccine every 5 yrs.
- Regular dental checkups every year.
- Hearing and vision should be checked every year.
- Periodic checkups for hypertension, diabetes, and breast exam with routine mammogram as advised by your physician.
- Routine pelvic exam with Pap smear in females, as well as prostate check up in males, and routine annual colonoscopy to detect colon cancer.

Vaccination for Adults and Seniors

Then following are the immunizations suggested by CDC for 65 yrs old and older.

Influenza vaccine Every year during fall and winter.

Pneumococcal vaccine 1 to 2 doses at age 65 Or older.

Tetanus, Diphtheria Petussis vaccine The complete series during childhood and Td booster every 10 yrs.

Hepatitis B If you are a specific risk factor for hepatitis. The vaccine is given in 3 doses within 6 months.

Hepatitis A If you are travelling to an area where there is prevalence of hepatitis A.

Measles, mumps and rubella Vaccine You need at least 1 dose of MMR if born in 1957 or later.

Varicella vaccine If you never had chicken pox or received only 1 dose. talk to your health care provider.

Zoster vaccine for Shingles if you are 65 or older or are immunocompromised.

For travel outside the united states consult the travel immunization services.



Protection against summer related illnesses

During extreme hot and humid weather, we suffer heat illnesses due to poor thermoregulatory mechanism. Drink plenty of fluids including drinks with balanced electrolytes such as Gatorade because sweating can lead to loss of salt and potassium from body.

- Try to stay indoors in air conditioned facilities or shaded areas.
- Dress in light, loose and layered clothes.
- Wear hats and sun glasses to protect yourself against strong sunlight.
- Avoid drinking carbonated drinks and alcohol since drinking alcohol during extreme hot weather can lead to vasodilatation leading to low blood pressure and dizzy spells. Excess carbonated drinks can lead to abdominal cramps and nausea.

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- Know the medications you are taking since certain medicines such as thyroid pills, hypertension medicines, antihistamines, anti-anxiety pills, and antibiotics such as tetracyclines have adverse effect on you during hot weather.
- Recognize the warning symptoms of dehydration such as dry tongue, dizziness spells, and try drinking plenty of fluids.
- Heat cramps are due to loss of potassium and electrolytes from the body from sweating and can be corrected by fruit juices and balanced electrolytes solutions.
- Heat syncope is fainting spells due to volume deficit and vasodilatations leading to peripheral pooling of blood causing low cardiac output.
- Recognize the early signs and symptoms of heat syncope such as cool moist skin, weak pulse, low blood pressure and dizziness spells and seek medical help immediately.

How to stay cool inside your home

- Close blinds, shades, and drapes so hot sunlight does not penetrate.
- Eat light to avoid indigestion and stomach cramps. A good insulation will keep cool air. Inside for a longer period.

Planning Your Summer Vacation

- Make sure Hotels and airlines know your personal needs.
- Notify your travel agents of your health conditions so they are prepared for any medical emergency.
- Always carry your medications, immunization card, allergies and your physician contact as well your health insurance cards in your purse or wallets.
- Before making hotel reservations make sure hotel is equipped with proper handicapped equipments as needed.
- Driving precautions.
- Maintain good health; know your limits as to how much driving you can do without problem.
- If your driving skills are impaired due to poor vision, arthritis, or any disabilities ask for help.
- Lastly, know the details of your car such as brakes, adequate gasoline, adjustable steering etc before you start.

The Bright Side of Aging

As all of us are getting older there is a lot of fear in our minds. We are worried about our health, financial

situations, families, jobs and other aspects of life regarding our future and destiny. With all these facts in mind, I did some research as to how we age gracefully and I was amazed to find out how many research studies have been done in medical science regarding the positive aspects of aging.

- ✓ It's a documented fact that older adults with bright outlook to future live longer and happier than those with negative thoughts.
 - ✓ Remember our life is full of joys, sorrows, failures and accomplishments. The key to happiness is always count your blessings, be happy and never look back then you will not see your shadows behind.
 - ✓ For us to be healthy it is very important to eat well balanced diet supplemented with vitamins, and minerals.
 - ✓ Researchers have proved the facts that antioxidant supplements like vitamins A, C, E and Selenium protects cells by neutralizing free radicals and atomic fragments that can cause cells destruction in bodies.
 - ✓ Furthermore scientists have proved the fact that vitamin E supplement in elderly lowers the risk of heart attacks, stroke and Alzheimer's' disease.
 - ✓ Exercises are very important in all stages of life as it keeps our body healthy.
 - ✓ Light up your life and get regular medical checkups as suggested by your physician.
 - ✓ Laughter is the best medicine to improve your mood when you are feeling down. The heart and lungs are stimulated when you laugh because the amount of oxygen in your blood is increased due to deep breathing. ✓ Furthermore, the heart beats faster and blood pressure rises, temporarily followed by a drop in blood pressure and relaxation of skeletal muscles.
 - ✓ Additionally, with laughter there are exercises of facial muscles, hence it prevents wrinkles.
- Lastly be cheerful, happy and think positive. Remember the saying, April showers brings May flowers and winter blast bring spring joy.
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