

Eldercare Answers

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Staying Healthy: Medicare & Annual Wellness Visits



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Prior to 2011, the only time Medicare covered a physical exam was during your first year receiving benefits. The best way to stay healthy is to stay ahead of potential problems – “Nip it in the bud!” - as Grandma used to say.

Valentine’s Day turns our minds to love. Love for others and yes, love for yourself so you can be there for those who love you. This means self-care that includes making good health a priority. A small problem detected during an exam can direct you to the right medications, life style changes or a procedure that will lead to a long and healthy life.

Because the annual exam takes time and includes lots of testing, many primary care physicians only schedule a few a week – so call your doctor now for an appointment that might not happen for six weeks or more.

Physicians will also check cognitive functioning to see if you need further testing. These tests might detect something that is reversible, not just conditions like Alzheimer’s disease. Don’t be afraid of these tests – they actually give you more control over your life and health. People who might have a dementia, like Alzheimer’s, detected early, can be given medications that increase functioning, giving more quality to life for everyone in the family.

If your family member is your primary concern and resists going to the doctor – tell him or her that this is a new benefit and is about maintaining health. A family member showing signs of dementia, but without a diagnosis, may fear going to the doctor – so you will need to be creative in getting them to this appointment. Remember, we may not want to tell those with dementias about future events too far in advance (depending on where they are in this process). Plan a pleasurable activity – like an outing for ice cream, watching the children play or observing boats going in and out of the harbor. It might be just to hit a bucket of balls at the golf course – use favorites of the person and focus on this activity as you wait for the exam. This may minimize the impact of the appointment.

If someone has difficulty waiting, schedule the exam as the first appointment of the day or the first appointment after the lunch break – eliminating waiting reduces anxiety. Bring some snacks and an activity – again to reduce worry, stress and anxiety.

For all of us who want to enjoy our later years, here are a few tips to secure the future you desire:

1. Follow a heart healthy diet – low fat, low sugar, less red meat, more fish and lots of fruits and veggies and, of course, exercise at least 3 times a week.

2. Meditate – Research shows us that stress increases bad fats that land around our waist from

cortisol, a hormone released into the blood stream when we are stressed. Stress is a contributor to many other health issues. Take fifteen minutes a day to focus on breathing while listening to music or find meditations you can read each day.

3. Hydrate – be sure to drink at least four to six glasses of fluid a day – water is the best choice.

4. Do an exercise that improves balance – make this a goal for 2013. Try dance, yoga, Tai Chi or other movement exercises that increase your balance and reduce falls.

5. Stay engaged – volunteer, visit friends, join clubs – challenge your brain with classes or games.

6. Have a small piece of dark chocolate once a day (sugar free types are available too)!

Love much, stress less and don’t forget to have that annual exam. We are here to help you 24/7 when life requires “expertise” for those potholes we all find ourselves or our aging family members in from time to time.



**Eldercare Services provides
Counseling, Support Groups,
Home Care and Care
Management to aid Family
Caregivers. If you or someone
you know could benefit from
self-care, give us a call at
(866) 760-1808 or email us at
Info@EldercareAnswers.com.**



**Eldercare Services works with Seniors and their families in Walnut Creek, Lamorinda, Alameda County, San Francisco, San Ramon Valley and the Marin County , CA.
Visit us on the web at www.EldercareAnswers.com for more information.**

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

Alzheimer's: 101 & Alzheimer's: 102 For Families Experiencing the Challenge

**3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon
(Class topic alternates monthly - Classes continue in January)
1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595**

Cost for Classes: None

Class Registration:

Please call at least 3 days ahead

For more information regarding classes and support groups, visit us at www.EldercareAnswers.com or call (925) 937-2018 or email us at Info@EldercareAnswers.com

Support Groups

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

Caring for An Aging Family Member

**2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM
1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595**

**1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM
605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131**

Cost for Support Groups: None

Support Group Registration: Not required

More Info: (925) 937-2018 or (415) 469-8300



Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care, and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808 or email us at Info@EldercareAnswers.com.