

Health Mentors Newsletter

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Dear Health Mentors,

I hope you are all enjoying a happy and healthy start to 2010. As we head into this Spring, our students are looking forward to meeting with you again and to addressing important issues related to chronic conditions and disabilities and to person-centered care, including **Wellness Planning** (for the first year students) and **Medication Review** (for the second year students). Please see page 2 for a more detailed description of each of these upcoming visits.

We hope that you will continue to enjoy your experience as a Health Mentor this Spring, and we thank you for your ongoing participation in this important educational program. Best wishes for a great 2010!

Sincerely,
Laurie Collins, MD

Health Mentor Voice

“I have been a health mentor for a few years now. I love interacting with the students from different backgrounds. It is a really nice program and we learn a lot about one another. The programs allows me to attend other outings other than just with my church and family.”

Alberta Felder, Health Mentor

“Being a Health Mentor for me is quite rewarding in that I feel that I am giving something to the future . These students will be dealing with even more seniors as the nation ages. Perhaps, in some small way I can instill in a young mind some experience that one day may be useful in dealing with some other senior somewhere.”

Vincent Novelli , Health Mentor

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side effects. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you avoid interactions by changing when or how often you take certain drugs.

Whenever you get a new medication, **read the entire label.** Many medications have particular requirements or when you take them (morning, evening, bedtime) and whether you take them with food, water, or on an empty stomach.

Know the potential side effects of your medications. All prescription and non prescription drugs can have side effects. Knowing what to expect will help you recognize side effects if they occur. Many times, a change in dose can eliminate side effects while still providing therapy.

Consider using a **pill box.** These have a place for each day's pills, which helps you avoid forgetting your medications. Some pill boxes even have multiple spots for each day, helping you organize your pills according to when you take them – morning, noon, night, or bedtime.

Know why you are taking each medication. Certain drugs can be used to treat more than one condition, so it's important that you know what each medication is targeting. Watch expiration dates and **throw out all expired medications.** Prescription and non-prescription drugs alike contain a delicate balance of active ingredients, and out-of-date medications can lose potency or even go bad.

Use caution with over-the-counter (OTC) medications. While they are available without a prescription, OTC drugs still contain powerful medicines. According to the

National Council on Patient Information and Education, many OTC medications contain the same active ingredients, and combining OTCs can lead to an accidental overdose.

Keep your medications in a safe place. The FDA recommends all medicine be stored in a cool, dry place. If there are children or pets around, keep your medications far out of their reach.

Don't hesitate to ask your doctor or pharmacist any questions. The best way to be safe is to be informed. Remember, your health care professionals are here to help you.

Resources for Healthy and Safe Living

By: Grace Fried

First Year Medical Student
& Kanani Titchen

Second Year Medical Student

Earlier this winter, the second year Jefferson health care students visited our Health Mentors to conduct home safety assessments. We felt that some follow-up would be beneficial all around – allowing our mentors to tap into the resources they need and allowing us, the students, to be of some tangible help to you who give so generously of your time. Here are some of the ideas and low cost or free resources we compiled as a follow-up to our assignment to help improve home safety and general health for senior and for those living with a chronic condition or disability:

Create a Birthday or Holiday wishlist for your friends and family.

We all have received lovely but un-needed items as gifts; wouldn't it be great if our family and friends knew exactly what we needed when they were shopping for gifts for the holidays or for our birthdays? Post your wishlist to your fridge or e-mail it out so that friends and family have an easier time showing how they appreciate you!

Create a common wishlist in your senior living home, and post it in a public space. One man's trash is another man's treasure. Who knows what gems you may have lying around that someone else needs?

Resources PCAcares:

Philadelphia Corporation for the Aging healthcare, living assistance, housing, transportation, social services, nutrition/meals, finances, insurance, etc. see <http://www.pcacares.org> for a full listing or call 215-765-9040.

Senior Housing Assistance Repair Program (SHARP)

Completes minor repairs and modifications for homeowners age 60 and older. Includes bathroom modifications; installing wrought iron railings; fixing doors; steps, locks, and leaking faucets; installing smoke alarms; and repairing or replacing stair railings. To apply, call the PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040.

Free Eye Exams:

from The Foundation of the American College of Ophthalmology

<http://www.eyecareamerica.org/eyecare/care/> Eligibility:

- Senior Care (Age 65 and over)
1-800-222-EYES

- Diabetes Eye Care Program
1-800-272-EYES

- US citizens, without other health insurance, call for more details.

List of Senior Centers by County:

- <http://www.paseniorcenters.org/communitycounty/index.htm>

Utilities Assistance:

- http://www.puc.state.pa.us/general/consumer_ed/energy_asst_progs.aspx

Free and Reduced Price Dental Clinics in Philadelphia:

- www.padental.org Click on "Free and Reduced Price Dental Clinics" on the left side navigation bar

- **Emergency Assistance for Seniors in Winter** (Food, shelter, medicine, fuel)
www.keepseniorswarm.org

**Thank you to
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