

50+ HealthConnection

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Helpful resources

Raise your stroke IQ.

Did you know that every 40 seconds someone in our community experiences a stroke? On Wednesday, September 18, 2024, come hear from Huntington Health-affiliated neurologist Adena Shahinian, DO, who will share important information to help you increase your stroke knowledge and awareness, including the different types of strokes and advances in stroke treatment. At a special in-person Noon Hour event, which will take place at 12:30 p.m., Dr. Shahinian will share *Raise Your Stroke IQ*. See *Calendar of Events* for details.



Medicare Advantage.

Enjoy your golden years in good health.

If you're eligible for Medicare, you can enroll in a new Medicare Advantage health insurance plan or make changes to your existing plan between October 15 and December 7. Join us on Wednesday, November 6, 2024, at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom to learn more about Medicare Advantage coverage. An expert from the Center for Health Care Rights will speak about *Understanding Your Medicare Advantage Options*. See *Calendar of Events* for details.

Fostering pain awareness.

Each September, Pain Awareness Month gives us an opportunity to destigmatize pain and promote empathy and understanding for those who live with it. On Wednesday, September 25, 2024, Huntington Health-affiliated pain management specialist Taher Saifullah, MD, will discuss chronic low back pain, including effective pain management therapies. Join us at 12:30 p.m. via Zoom for *Managing Low Back Pain*. See *Calendar of Events* for details.



TAKING CHARGE

Stopping prediabetes in its tracks.

Almost 100 million adults in the U.S. have prediabetes. As the name suggests, prediabetes is a condition in which your blood sugar levels are higher than normal — but not high enough to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. However, just because you're diagnosed with prediabetes doesn't mean that you'll develop type 2 diabetes. Read on to learn about some of the lifestyle changes you can make to help stop diabetes in its tracks.

Stay active.

The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderately intense aerobic activity (e.g., walking briskly, biking on level ground, playing pickleball or mowing the lawn) or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity (e.g. jogging, swimming laps, riding a bike on hills or playing singles tennis) each week. The most important thing is to find a type of exercise you enjoy so that you are more inclined to do it regularly. Even incorporating small changes, like taking a short walk around the neighborhood each morning or dancing in your living room for a few minutes can lead to big results.

Eat mindfully.

Making dietary changes to prevent the onset of diabetes doesn't mean

you have to give up the foods you love. It just means making more mindful choices. Instead of eating your morning toast on white bread, for example, opt for a whole grain alternative. Try swapping out your lunchtime soda for sparkling water. For dinner, replace the beef in your meal with chicken. In general, eating more whole grains (instead of refined carbohydrates) and poultry or fish (instead of red meat), as well as drinking more water (instead of sugary drinks), can greatly lower your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Hit your weight loss goal.

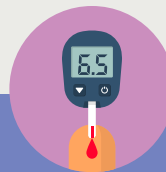
Significant weight loss can be a difficult and fraught process for many. Losing just a small percentage of your weight, however, can drastically reduce your risk of diabetes. In fact, research has shown that losing just 7% of your body weight can lower your likelihood of being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes by 58%. That's only 14 pounds for a 200-pound person.

Think long-term.

The most important thing to remember is that none of these tips will be helpful in preventing diabetes if they're not practiced regularly. When developing a plan to address your prediabetes, make sure that it is realistic, achievable and sustainable. Consider enlisting family members or friends to help keep you accountable.

Many organizations, such as the American Diabetes Association, also offer a lifestyle change program to help you prevent and/or delay the development of type 2 diabetes.

The best time to stop prediabetes is now. You can get a simple blood test to find out if you have prediabetes. Ask your doctor if you should be tested.



Did you know
Huntington Hospital offers a free diabetes support group? The support group is held monthly, and a light meal is provided to attendees. Meetings are held at the Research Conference Center, located at 734 S. Fairmount Ave. in Pasadena. Please call (626) 397-3376 or send an email to fatima.rojas@huntingtonhealth.org for more information about the group or how to join.

Sources: American Diabetes Association and CDC.



Especially for caregivers

Caregiving from a distance.

Do you live far from a loved one who needs support in his everyday life? Caregiving from far away can be challenging, but you can still help, even if you don't live close by. Here are some tips to make long-distance caregiving a bit easier.

Prepare for emergencies.

Have you met your loved one's neighbors and friends? Ask if there is anyone he can count on who lives nearby, and make a list of important contacts and phone numbers so you know who to call in case of an emergency. Make sure you also have contact information for physicians and pharmacies easily accessible, in case they are unexpectedly needed.

Plan your visits in advance.

Set aside time throughout the year to visit your loved one in person. Try to plan activities that are relaxing, match his personal interests and are enjoyable for both of you. And when you do visit your loved one, stay present. While you may have tasks to check off your to-do list, it's important to also make the most of limited one-on-one time.

Keep important documents organized.

As a long-distance caregiver, you may be responsible for your loved one's health care documents, wills, bills, insurance claims and/or financial information. Consider having dedicated physical and digital spaces — such as a file in a cabinet and a folder on your computer — to keep documents for easy access.

Stay connected.

Regular communication with your loved one might be the most important part of long-distance caregiving. You can opt for any form of contact — text, email or phone — that works best for you and your loved one. Video-based platforms, such as Zoom or FaceTime, can be especially helpful tools to identify any expressions, emotions or issues that may not be communicated well over text or phone. With permission, you may also want to attend your loved one's telehealth visits, so you can stay up to date on his health needs.

Lean on your support system.

Long-distance caregiving is no easy feat. You may feel guilty or anxious about your role in your loved one's life. But taking care of yourself is paramount — and means you can better care for your loved one. Make sure to lean on your own support system to help you through the ups and downs of long-distance caregiving.

Sources: Fallon Health; Kaiser Permanente; and the National Institute on Aging.



If you're a caregiver, you're not alone. Senior Care Network (SCN) offers professional assistance, referrals to important resources, and support for family caregivers, including long-distance caregivers. For more information, call SCN at (626) 397-3110 or (800) 664-4664 or email us at 50+membership@huntingtonhealth.org.



Ask the doctor Q&A with Norman Chien, MD

Norman Chien, MD, is a
Huntington Health-affiliated geriatrician.

Q. Why does my doctor need to know what supplements I'm taking?

A. Dietary supplements come in many forms, including tablets, capsules, powders, energy bars and liquids. Multivitamins are the most common dietary supplement.

There are two categories of dietary supplements: nutritional and herbal. Nutritional supplements are designed to provide vitamins and minerals your body needs, but that you may not get enough of in your diet. Calcium, vitamin D, vitamin B12, iron and fiber are common nutritional supplements that many people take. Herbal supplements are derived from plants that are touted as having health benefits. Popular herbal supplements include echinacea, ginkgo and flaxseed.

Although you don't need a prescription for most supplements, that doesn't mean they can't significantly affect your health. Some can be harmful if taken with certain prescription medications, or before surgery or other medical procedures. That's why it's always a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new supplement, including a multivitamin. Your doctor can review your personal health needs and tell you if a supplement could be beneficial.

Q. My mom gets chronic ear infections. Should she see an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist?

A. Otolaryngology is the medical specialty that focuses on the diagnosis and treatment of ear, nose and throat disorders. Otolaryngologists are commonly referred to as ear, nose and throat, or ENT, doctors.

There are many reasons why your mom should make an appointment with an ENT, or ask for a referral from her primary care physician. One reason is her recurring ear infections. Often, ear infections are a result of another illness that causes congestion and swelling, such as a cold, flu or allergies. An ENT specialist can help your mom find relief from symptoms and prevent future infections.

Other reasons to see an ENT doctor include:

Persistent hearing loss. If you experience problems with your hearing for more than a week or two, it's time to see an ENT specialist. Temporary hearing loss can happen from time to time when you listen to loud music for longer than recommended, for example. But when the problem persists, it should be evaluated by an ENT doctor.

Sources: Mayo Clinic and Nutrition.gov.

Chronic sinusitis. Sinusitis is a common condition in which the cavities around your nasal passages (sinuses) are inflamed and swollen. It is considered chronic if it lasts for more than 12 weeks, despite treatment. If you suffer from chronic sinusitis, an ENT doctor can determine the best treatment plan for you.

Lump in the neck. A lump in the neck that lasts more than two weeks should be checked out by an ENT physician. Cancer that begins in the head or neck can spread to the lymph nodes in the neck before it moves elsewhere. A lump can be the first sign of mouth, throat, thyroid or certain types of blood cancers.

ringing in your ears. Tinnitus — or ringing in the ears — can negatively affect the quality of your life. In some cases, it can also be an early symptom of hearing loss. While there is no cure for tinnitus, an ENT specialist can help you with strategies to decrease the perception of the ringing sound.



To learn more about when you should seek care from an ENT doctor, we invite you to attend Senior Care Network's Noon Hour lecture *What's an otolaryngologist?* on Wednesday, December 4, 2024. See [Calendar of Events](#) for details. Visit huntingtonhealth.org/ENT to find a trusted Huntington otolaryngologist.

This column is for information only. Please discuss any treatment options with your doctor.

On the younger side

Setting the record straight on getting older.

It's no secret that our society views aging negatively. While youth is often associated with liveliness, health and beauty, many believe that your quality of life decreases with each passing year. As you get older, people may begin to assume that your memory isn't as good, or that you're frail. You may start to get unsolicited help when walking up the stairs or start hearing you're "too old for that." As a society, we have ingrained in us some assumptions around what aging will mean for us and our future years. Here are some of the biggest myths about aging, and the truth behind them.

Aging leads to cognitive and physical decline.

Although your health can deteriorate over time, it's often within your power to delay or even reverse it. The more you use your muscles, for example, the more you can encourage their growth and prevent atrophy. Similarly, regularly using your processing and reasoning skills can help keep them sharp. Aging can even improve your cognitive abilities in certain ways. With age, you can better synthesize different sources of information and see the big picture.

Aging is "ugly" or "undesirable."

Many ideas about aging are regarded as the unquestioned truth. In reality, these are often simply cultural norms — bolstered by the stereotypes in movies and television, as well as the cosmetic industry peddling "anti-aging" products to consumers. It's important to remember that aging is a completely natural process that happens to all of us, and beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Aging doesn't have any benefits.

Seen in a different light, aging is a privilege not afforded to everyone. Aging can have many benefits, including the ability to learn new things, create new memories, and improve your skills. More years means more exposure to different ideas and perspectives. And the older you get, the more opportunities you have to do the things you enjoy.

Don't believe everything you hear about aging. Though growing older does present its own set of challenges, it's wrong to assume that aging automatically results in a diminished quality of life.



Sources: American Society on Aging; Harvard Medical School; National Center to Reframe Aging; and TIME.



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40 years of service.

In 2024, Senior Care Network (SCN) is marking a special anniversary: four extraordinary decades of serving our community. We were founded in 1984 to help people age well and remain safely in their homes — and we are one of the first hospital-based programs of our kind in the nation.

Since our inception, SCN has achieved significant impact. We have provided care coordination services to more than 15,000 community members in the San Gabriel Valley and beyond — helping them remain safely in the community and avoid unnecessary nursing home placement. The professionals in our Resource Center have also taken 200,000 phone calls from community members with questions about aging or who need information on resources. Additionally, more than 55,000 people to date have attended our popular Noon Hour lectures or other community health education events.

As we look to the future, we are truly thankful for the opportunity to continue to help improve the lives of local seniors, adults with disabilities and family caregivers. We look forward to serving you for the next 40 years and beyond!



50+ HealthConnection members receive informative publications, including event calendars, from SCN throughout the year. If you received this newsletter and are not yet a 50+ member, you can sign up for free by visiting huntingtonhealth.org/50+. If you prefer, you can leave a message on our membership line at (626) 397-3147 or (800) 664-4664 and a member of our staff will be in touch to sign you up by phone. Alternatively, you may email us at 50+membership@huntingtonhealth.org.

In addition to sending you our future publications, we'll also provide you with a membership card so you can take advantage of membership benefits, including a discount at Huntington Hospital's Bistro Café and S. Robert and Denise Zeilstra Gift Shop.

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