

Fear of Falls

The sounds of some one digging in the dirt resonate across Henry's backyard as he tills his vegetable and flower garden. Henry's been an avid gardener since he and his wife moved into their Medina home in the early 1970's. He took those skills and began volunteering as a Master Gardener at several nurseries in the area. His green thumb has produced one of the most spectacular flower and vegetable gardens in the neighborhood. He finds solace in his garden as he tends to its many needs. When he's not in the garden or helping at a nursery, Henry can be found at the local food bank or volunteering at Overlake Hospital Medical Center. Henry always makes a point to exercise daily, typically walking the quarter mile loop around their neighborhood. He has always maintained a very active lifestyle until this early spring.

One afternoon, Henry was in his garden watering his newly planted flowers when he stepped back, landing on the hose sprawled across the sidewalk. He tried to catch his balance but was unable to, causing him to land hard on his back and strike his head on the concrete. His wife called 9-1-1 and he was transported to Overlake where doctors determined he had severe trauma to the soft tissue in his back, as well as a concussion. After discharge, Henry followed-up with his physician three days later and was referred to physical therapy. After two months of intense rehab, Henry was discharged from physical therapy and told he could return to his normal routine without restrictions.

Later, one of the nurseries called and asked him to fill one of the Master Gardener positions. Thoughts of the uneven ground at the nursery and the rush of customers frightened him. He thought about returning to his garden, but memory of his recent fall would not fade and he reluctantly remained inside. Henry became more fearful, turning down volunteer opportunities to remain at home, which made this once vital and active man increasingly depressed. He had developed a fear of falling and was beginning to separate himself from all the things that

previously gave him great joy. His lack of involvement was also causing him to become weaker and less sure on his feet.

Falls are the leading cause of injuries to adults over the age of 65 in America with 85 percent of the injuries sustained in or around their homes. The fear of falling often leads to limited participation in activities which in turn may cause isolation and depression as in Henry's case. A variety of circumstances can cause falls and it is not necessarily a result of just growing old; many of the mishaps are preventable. In Henry's case, with some minor adjustments, his garden could be safe for him to move around, allowing him to return to his passion.

Senior Care has begun addressing falls by offering three different classes that focus on the importance of fall prevention. A fall prevention class called *A Matter of Balance* focuses on addressing fears around falling, providing preventive recommendations, teaching some daily exercises and offering one session to work directly with a physical therapist to learn techniques for rising successfully in the event of a fall.

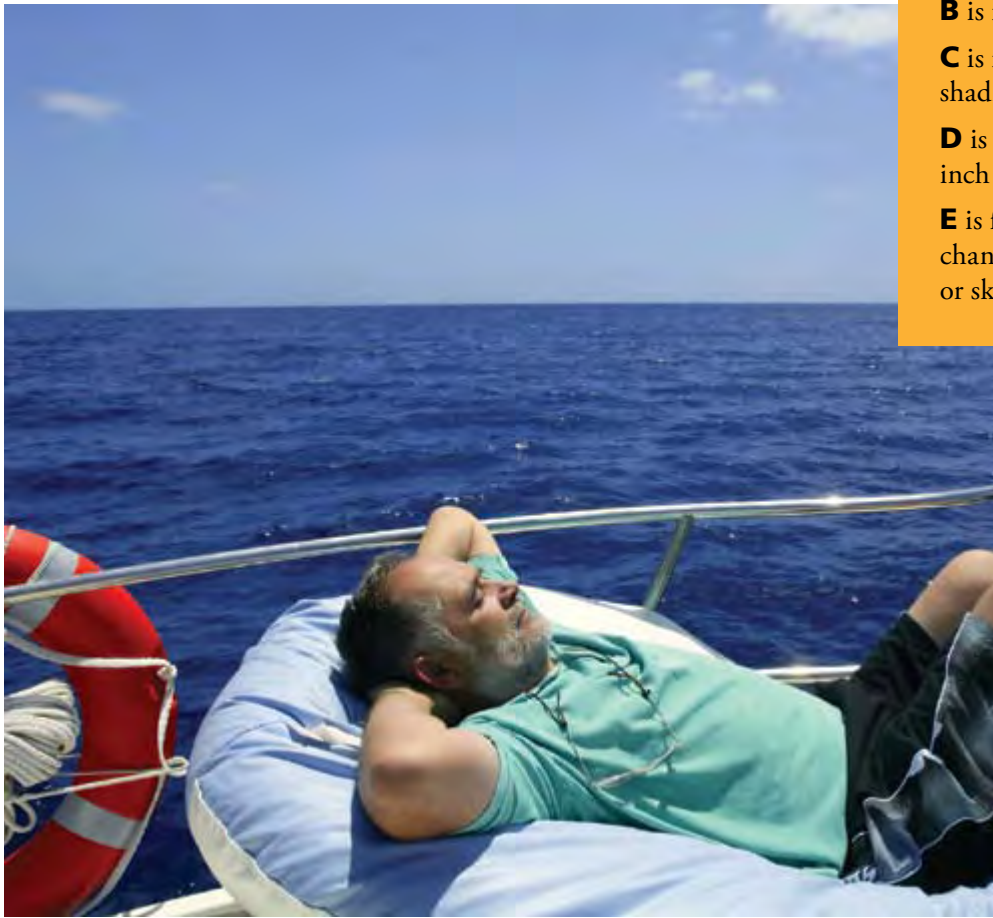
To complement *A Matter of Balance* class, Senior Care is also offering an *Exercise to Improve and Maintain Balance* class. Participants are taught how to strengthen key muscle groups and improve core strength which is used in maintaining balance. This one-hour class meets once a week for three weeks.

The third class in the series is the *Introduction to Therapeutic Yoga to Maintain Balance*. The breath-orientated practice releases tense muscles, strengthens core muscles and helps develop increased flexibility. This once a week class is adapted to each senior's abilities, with all of the yoga exercises done from a chair.

Call Senior Care at 425-688-5800 for information about classes focusing on balance or to request resources that can help reduce the risk of falls. Don't let the fear of a fall keep you from an active life. Take time today to prevent a fall tomorrow.

Enjoy the Sun Safely

The Seattle area averages 226 cloudy days a year. Despite the frequent cloud cover, applying sunscreen and other sun-protection behaviors are still important parts of a healthy lifestyle, even for Western Washington residents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. And the incidence of skin cancer is increasing. Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, has increased by about four percent each year for the past 30 years. In 2007, more than 1 million Americans were diagnosed with some form of skin cancer.



The ultraviolet rays from the sun or tanning beds, both UVA (long wave) and UVB (medium wave) rays, can damage your skin's DNA and cause skin cells to become malignant. Malignant cells can result in three different types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Basal cell cancers are usually easy to treat if caught early, and occur most commonly on the areas of the skin that are frequently exposed to the sun, such as the face, ears, neck, scalp and shoulders. Squamous cell carcinomas can also be treated if caught early, but are more likely to spread than basal cell cancer. The most common finding of both basal cell and

squamous cell carcinomas is a lesion that does not heal in a reasonable amount of time and may bleed easily after using a wash cloth or towel. Melanoma is the most serious and the most likely form to cause skin cancer deaths. This type of skin cancer often occurs on the face or upper back and commonly appears dark, spotted, bumpy and irregular in shape.

The following A to E guide, adapted by the American Academy of Dermatology, is helpful to use when checking your skin for any sign of skin cancer:

A is for **asymmetrical** shape.

B is for irregular **border**.

C is for varied **color**. Look for dark and light shading, spots or uneven color.

D is for **diameter**. Growths larger than ¼ inch should be seen by your doctor.

E is for **evolving**. It's important to note any change in size, color or symptoms of a mole or skin growth.

If you notice any of these changes in your skin, check with your dermatologist or primary care doctor immediately. In addition to identifying the early signs of skin cancer, there are many ways you can protect yourself and your family from the sun:

- Limit sun exposure during the peak hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear sunscreen year-round. Select one with an SPF of at least 15. For the most protection, apply 20 to 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapply every two hours, especially after swimming or heavy sweating.
- Wear dark, tightly woven fabrics for more complete sun protection.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Check your skin regularly for any growths or changes in moles, freckles or birthmarks, and report any suspicious changes to your doctor.

People over the age of 40 or those considered at risk for skin cancer, should see a doctor annually for a complete skin exam.

To protect your skin, remember to use the basic sun-safe precautions on both sunny and cloudy days so that you can enjoy our great Northwest wisely.

*Submitted by: John L. Winfield, MD, PS
Bellevue Dermatology Clinic*

Exciting New Senior Care Program: Care Transitions

In an effort to enhance services to Overlake patients, the Senior Care team is currently piloting a nationally proven program called the Care Transitions intervention. The model is designed to increase support to patients with the help of a transitions coach when the patient transfers from one healthcare setting to another. The term "care transitions" specifically refers to the movement patients make between healthcare providers and settings as their condition and care needs change during the course of a chronic or acute illness.

Senior Care case manager Lynn Shapley, RN, is the new transitions coach. Lynn meets patients in the hospital and makes a home visit after discharge. She follows patients for a four-week period to monitor medication self-management, make sure follow-up appointments with physicians and/or specialists are made and help patients build and maintain a personal health record. Lynn also discusses possible drug reactions and other "red flag" indicators that their condition is worsening and how to respond. The primary goal is to help empower patients to be their own advocates in their health and well-being and ultimately reduce hospital readmissions. Cardiac patients are the focus of the pilot project, with the hope to expand the program in the future to include a broader scope of patients.

F E A R FALSE EXPECTATIONS APPEARING REAL

This acoustic poem can be related directly to the fear of falling. We've all been there at one time or another. A fall can lead a person to develop a fear of falling again. They may start to alter their life style, may not go out as much or avoid situations where there are a lot of people and they could lose their balance.

The *Matter of Balance* classes address this very issue. Senior Care is in need of additional coaches. You can make a difference. Come join an enthusiastic and committed group of instructors who are making a difference in people's lives. No experience is required and training is provided. As a volunteer lay instructor you always teach with another instructor and the class sizes are small. Come make a difference!

One of the Senior Care *A Matter of Balance* coaches, Susan Posten shares experience of how she became a coach and what she gets out of the experience:

"I became interested in the subject of older adults and fall prevention after my 86-year-old mother fell and broke her ankle. As it happened, the request for the first group of coaches came out just after I retired, and although I've never taught anything in my life, I decided this was something I could do to make a difference.

What I didn't bargain for is how much I'd enjoy coaching! The curriculum is well done and the participants all have interesting stories; we all learn from each other. The Senior Care staff and the physical therapists are very supportive, and the other coaches are great to work with.

I think the best part is that our message is so empowering. Each of us does have the ability to improve our balance and prevent falls."

If you are interested or would like some more information about becoming a *Matter of Balance* coach call Senior Care at 425-688-5800. Join an enthusiastic and committed group of instructors. Come make a difference!



1035 116th Avenue NE, Bellevue, WA 98004
425-688-5000
www.overlakehospital.org/seniorcare
Charlene Raunio, Newsletter Editor
425-688-5806

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**Sonja Potter
Senior Care
Auxiliary**



Overlake Hospital Medical Center is a nonprofit, non-tax-supported hospital providing advanced medicine to the Puget Sound region. The Connections Newsletter is published six times per year by Overlake's Senior Care/Connections Department. It is distributed free of charge to Connections members.

If you would like to be removed from this newsletter mailing, have an address change, would like to receive an electronic copy, or know someone who would like to become a member, please contact Senior Care at 425-688-5800 or e-mail seniorcare@overlakehospital.org

Senior Care Community Classes

Unless otherwise indicated, these classes are held at Bellevue College, North Campus, 10700 Northup Way, Bellevue (corner of 108th Avenue NE and Northup Way).

Advance registration is required; call 425-688-5800.

Introduction to Therapeutic Yoga to Maintain Balance

Introduction to breath-oriented practice that will help to increase your circulation, release tense muscles, strengthen core muscles and help to keep each muscle and joint flexible and strong. The Yoga exercises are adapted to each senior's abilities and are done in a chair.

Date: Tuesdays, July 27 to August 31,

Time: 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Cost: \$69 for six-week session

Therapeutic Yoga to Maintain Balance

Continuation of breath-oriented practice that will help to increase your circulation, release tense muscles, strengthen core muscles and help to keep each muscle and joint flexible and strong. The Yoga exercises are adapted to each senior's abilities and are done in a chair.

Date: Thursdays, July 22 to August 26

Time: 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Cost: \$69 for six-week session

Seniors Making Art – Drawing

Draw as if your way of seeing matters. Instruction covers loose and tight or spontaneous and controlled drawing methods. Charcoal, ink and brush, oil pastels and graphite pencils on large paper will be used. This class will have a bit of "homework," practicing the method of drawing presented in each week's session. You will decide which method you prefer and develop your style in that method. The only thing you must bring is a sense of humor and a willingness to be astonished at your work. Sponsored by Betty and Kemper Freeman, Jr., Craig Shrontz, and Lynn Ristig.

Date: Thursdays, July 1 to August 12 - 7 sessions

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

Cost: FREE

Limited to 15 participants. New students have first priority. Call and leave a message. You will be called if you are in the class.

Walk for Life

Join this free, ongoing walking program to exercise safely and effectively. Meet friends and benefit from expert staff who are on site for information, advice and monitoring.

Date: Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Time: 8 to 9:30 a.m.

Place: Bellevue Square, enter at Skybridge 4

Cost: Free

No registration required, for information call 425-688-5800.

Support Groups

Caring for a loved one is a difficult job. It is well documented that if family members want to continue providing care, they cope better when they are armed with support and information as they navigate the twists, turns and responsibilities of caregiving. Meet and talk with others who are dealing with similar issues. Two support groups are offered to help meet the needs of caregivers.

Family Caregiver Support Group – Bellevue

Dates: Second and Fourth Thursday of each month (July 8, 22, August 12, 26)

Time: 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Bellevue Senior Health Center
1750 – 112th Ave. NE, Suite A-101, Bellevue

Cost: FREE

For questions, call Regina Bennett, MSW, 425-688-5807.

Family Caregiver Support Group –Mercer Island

Dates: Second Tuesday of each month (July 13, August 10)

Time: 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Location: Mercer Island Senior Center
7707 SE. 27th Street, Suite 110, Mercer Island

Cost: FREE

For questions, call Karin Miller, MSW, 425-688-5637.



How do I get reimbursed for the walker or wheelchair I purchased?

Resources

If you have specific questions, would like more detailed information, or need to find a Medicare approved vendor:

- “Medicare and You 2010” handbook.
- 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)
- www.medicare.gov including, but not limited to:
 - “Medicare Coverage of Durable Medical Equipment and Other Devices.”
 - Supplier Directory – look up Medicare approved vendors by zip code.
- Call any local DME vendor to ask questions.
- Call your doctor’s office.
- Call Overlake Senior Care – we are here to help!

While not impossible, the chance of being reimbursed by Medicare for a piece of Durable Medical Equipment (DME) which was already paid for out-of-pocket is highly unlikely.

What are DME and Supplies?

Besides walkers and wheelchairs (which are considered mobility devices), other DME are things like hospital beds, commodes, lifts, scooters and other items that are medically necessary to assist with day-to-day functioning in your home.

Covered supplies, also for medical necessity, include: prosthetics (i.e. limbs, breast prostheses, ostomy supplies, and vision aides), respiratory devices (i.e. oxygen, suction pumps, ventilators, and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machines), orthotics, dialysis equipment, diabetic shoes as well as surgical dressings.

Examples of items not covered by Medicare include: walker accessories, gait belts, bathroom safety items (i.e. grab bars, hand held shower hose, bath bench, and raised toilet seats), gloves, wipes, bathing products, bed assist rails, blood pressure cuff and other equipment to help with activities of daily living (i.e. reachers, sock aids, shoe horns and adaptive utensils).

How does Medicare pay for DME and Supplies?

DME and supplies are covered under Medicare Part B. Once your Part B deductible is met, Medicare will cover 80 percent of the “Medicare allowed amount” for the DME item. Some Medicare Supplement insurance plans will cover the remaining 20 percent. Certain DME items can be purchased outright, while others will be “capped rental items” which means Medicare rents the item for 13 months and then you own it. As a rule, Medicare will pay for new equipment every five years, with some exceptions.

If DME or supplies could help you function better in your home, make a doctor’s appointment to be evaluated because covered items require a doctor’s order like a prescription for medications. DME and supplies must be obtained through a DME vendor, such as a Medical Supply Company or a local pharmacy, that



is Medicare approved and will take care of billing Medicare for you. Be sure to ask about this before making any purchases.

Some DME or supplies can be brought home the same day they are ordered. Others may require a specific Medicare form, a “Certificate of Medical Necessity,” to be completed and processed before you can get them which can take anywhere from days up to six weeks. Items like power scooters, power wheelchairs, and particular oxygen equipment and supplies require more in-depth documentation by your doctor to justify why you need them to assist you in your home.

There are many other situations in which DME can be recommended for you (i.e. when discharged from the hospital, or physical therapist, etc.) but DME will always require an order from your doctor. Remember, do not purchase any DME until you know for sure if it is covered by Medicare.

A Caution

There are coverage limitations related to lift chairs. Medicare will only pay for the lift mechanism of the chair, not the chair itself, as long as it is purchased from a Medicare approved vendor. Most recliner or furniture stores are not Medicare approved vendors.



By Andy Lynn Nelson, MSW
Senior Care Resource
Coordinator
425-688-5801
andy.nelson@overlakehospital.org

Save the Date

Celebrating 50 Years of Healing

In honor of our **50th** anniversary, Overlake Hospital Medical Center invites you to our third **Eastside Vitality Community Health Fair**. Join us for a day of free health screenings, seminars by medical experts, fun with local personalities and much more.

Saturday, October 23, 2010

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Overlake's Bellevue Campus

Watch for details at
www.overlakehospital.org/50years

Eastside Vitality

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