

**Q:** With all the talk about dementia in the media, I feel like I'm having more memory problems. Do you think it is just normal forgetfulness, or am I developing dementia?

**A:** Forgetting where you put your keys or having a person's name on the tip of your tongue – we have all experienced moments like these. What do these momentary lapses of memory mean? As we become older, the question is often asked about whether this is just being forgetful, the beginning of cognitive impairment or even dementia.

In order to explore the answer to this question, it is important understand factors that can contribute to memory loss and to differentiate between what type of memory loss a person is experiencing. By examining the signs and symptoms of memory loss, there are strategies and treatments available that can help resolve symptoms and cope with those that cannot be changed.

**Types of Memory Loss**

Many of us experience an increase in forgetfulness as we age. We may momentarily forget a name, have to search for a word or occasionally misplace eyeglasses. As we age, our body experiences age-related physiological changes. Some of these changes affect our brain, and can include experiencing temporary memory lapses that are a normal part of aging. It may take us more time and effort to learn new things and we may occasionally have difficulty remembering a name or word. However, we recover and these memory lapses do not affect our general functioning.

More serious signs of memory loss are defined by an increase in frequency of forgetfulness and the severity of the memory problem. For example, it's the difference between forgetting where you put the car keys and not knowing what to do with the keys to the car or how to drive it. Other signs of more serious memory loss might include repeatedly

asking the same question, confusion about time and place, becoming lost in a place very familiar to you, not taking care of yourself and or the inability to follow directions.

This type of memory loss affects our ability to perform familiar activities of daily living including shopping, driving, handling money, and self-care, such as neglecting personal safety, hygiene and nutrition. It often can include a decline in the ability to process information, understand one's environment, difficulties in problem-solving and impaired judgment and decision making.

**Medical**

Memory problems can sometimes be caused by medical conditions that are often treatable. Medication side effects, dehydration, vitamin or mineral deficiency, brain injury, thyroid problems and depression are just a few of the health issues that can contribute to memory loss. These are serious conditions and should be treated by a physician.

**Emotional**

Often people do not realize that emotional difficulties such as stress, anxiety, depression, grief, loneliness and boredom can also contribute to confusion and increased memory loss. Coping with changes that occur late in life such as retirement or loss of a spouse or friend can cause a person to be more forgetful. Memory loss caused by emotional problems can sometimes be mistaken for dementia. However, seeking treatment from a doctor or counselor, or taking steps to improve coping skills can help resolve these types of memory problems.

**More Serious Memory Problems**

If you are worried about memory problems you are having, you should

## Ways to Keep Your Memory Sharp

- One of the best ways to keep your memory sharp is to stay active, both physically and mentally.
- Learn a new skill.
  - Volunteer in the community.
  - Spend time with family and friends.
  - Use memory tools such as big calendars, to-do lists, notes to yourself.
  - Put your wallet, keys, eyeglasses in the same place every day.
  - Get lots of rest, eat well and exercise.
  - Use alcohol in moderation.
  - Do routine activities with your opposite hand, i.e. brush your teeth with your opposite hand.
  - Stay involved in activities that exercise the mind and body.

see your doctor. You may need to have a complete medical exam for memory loss, which would include examining use of medications, diet, other medical problems and medical history. The doctor may have you undergo problem-solving, memory and language skills tests. Blood and urine tests as well as a CAT scan of the brain can also be helpful in diagnosis. Remember, while mild forgetfulness is often a normal part of aging, dementia is not. Dementia is caused by a disease such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's or stroke.

If you are concerned that you or someone you know has a serious memory problem, consult your doctor. It's important to find out what the cause of the memory problem may be, and the treatment will depend upon the cause. But if it's not serious, remain active, and keep yourself challenged in your everyday life.

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## Pancake Breakfast a Huge Success

The Sonja Potter Senior Care Auxiliary held the Annual Pancake Breakfast and Silent Auction in March at the North Bellevue Community Center. The successful event raised more than \$6,300 for Senior Care and was enjoyed by over 100 guests. Bellevue Senior Health Center physicians were the Chefs of the Day, flipping and serving the pancakes to guests. Guests were also invited to bid on the over 170 silent auction items.

The Auxiliary would like to extend a special thanks to the St. Louise Youth Group for waiting tables and helping with the event clean-up and to the Snoqualmie Valley Hospital Swing Bed Program for sponsoring the event.



Bellevue Senior Health Center Physicians preparing pancakes while Sonja Potter Auxiliary members serve.



Silent auction displays.

Support for this issue has generously been provided by:

**Bellevue Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic**  
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**Sonja Potter Senior Care Auxiliary**

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Connections



## State-of-the-Art Healthcare in One Convenient Facility Overlake's New Medical Center Opening in Issaquah

**W**hen Overlake's new Medical Center Issaquah opens its doors this summer, patients in the Issaquah area will have greater access to first-rate healthcare than ever before. The facility, located at 5708 East Lake Sammamish Parkway in the Overlake Center development, will offer both an improved patient experience and greatly expanded healthcare services. Patients' needs and comfort are a top priority, and the new 9,500-square-foot medical center was designed with those goals foremost in mind.

"One of the most compelling reasons for this move is the ability to grow and consolidate all our services in one place," says Craig Henderson, Overlake president and CEO. "Moving to a new location, rather than remodeling our existing one, offers the greatest advantages for our patients."

Overlake continues to be deeply committed to providing essential and convenient care to the community. Now, under one roof, patients will find a Primary Care Clinic, Urgent Care Clinic, Anticoagulation Clinic, Breast Screening Center and Women's Clinic, as well as a classroom for community education.

Here are some details about the enhanced services that will be housed at the new Medical Center Issaquah.

**Expanding Primary Care**

The new facility will also feature dedicated office space for primary care physicians. Caring for the whole family is a top priority for these physicians who have a broad range of experience in pediatrics, women's health, chronic disease management and sports medicine.

**Urgent Care Clinic**

In the four years since it opened in its original location, the Urgent Care Clinic has served a vital role in the Issaquah community, offering expert care 24/7 to a growing number of patients with urgent, but nonemergent, healthcare needs. The new Urgent Care Clinic, staffed by experienced emergency providers, will be able to handle the increased demand even more effectively.

**Anticoagulation Clinic**

Patients on anticoagulants, or blood-thinning medications, will receive the same high-quality care they have been accustomed to, but in an enhanced facility that will serve the community five days a week instead of the current four. Carita Osterback, manager of Outpatient Services at Overlake says, "Finger-stick readings allow us to assess and adjust our patients' medications in a single visit." In addition, the clinic's nurse practitioners and pharmacists provide ongoing education to patients on how to

*continued on inside center panel*



# Cataracts

## Causes, Prevention, Treatment

Sight is our most precious sense, enabling us to enjoy the beauty of our world, from the majesty of Mt. Rainier, to the precious faces of the family we love, to drive a car, to garden, work, to read. For centuries, cataracts destined a person to functional blindness. Today, modern microsurgical techniques allow people to enjoy good, clear vision after cataract removal. In fact many patients see as well as they did decades earlier or better than they did even in youth.

### What is a Cataract?

A cataract is any cloudiness that develops in the normally clear lens of the eye. The natural lens itself is referred to as a cataract when it has turned cloudy to any degree. A cataract is *not* a growth, a white film, a “skim,” or a kind of cancer.

The natural lens of the eye is transparent like a camera lens, and is suspended behind the iris, the colored portion of the eye. The lens is about the size of an M&M and consists of a transparent outer capsule filled with a flexible gel. The lens fine focuses the light rays onto the retina at the back of the eye. Early cataracts degrade the quality of this focus. Almost everyone who lives long enough will develop cataracts as do more than half of all 65-year-old patients. Decreasing vision may be rapid over months, yet is more commonly so slow that many patients do not know they have any decline in visual quality.

### What Causes Cataracts to Develop?

Typically, cataracts develop as part of normal aging. Heredity plays a part in cataracts development, just as it determines when hair begins to turn gray.

A serious injury can cause a traumatic cataract to develop. Besides injuries, other factors can contribute to earlier than normal cataract development – such as exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, harmful chemicals or radiation; use of some medications; disease or infection prior to birth. It is even possible to have congenital or juvenile cataracts.

### Symptoms of a Developing Cataract

Cataracts symptoms vary widely. The most common symptom is increasing glare from oncoming headlights, driving into the sun, or when losing golf balls into the horizon. Often reading is impaired, or more light and magnification are required. Frequent eyeglass prescription changes may occur. Color sense is progressively diminished, yet few notice this until dramatic colors are restored with surgery. A person experiencing these visual changes should have a thorough eye exam so the underlying condition can be clearly diagnosed and differentiated from other important eye conditions as macular degeneration.



### The Solution to Cataracts

While we cannot prevent cataracts, recent studies have shown that cataracts may be delayed by giving up smoking, protecting the eyes from UV rays, lowering high blood-sugar levels, eating fresh fruits and vegetables, and wearing protective eye wear to prevent injury.

Fortunately, modern microsurgery offers a very real and even exciting solution to the cataract challenge. If there are no other serious problems with the eye, cataract surgery performed by a skilled surgeon can provide excellent vision in more than 90 percent of cases.

In the past, patients waited for their cataracts to “ripen” or “mature,” living through months or years of gradually deteriorating vision. This frustrating wait is no longer necessary – people may have their cataracts removed as soon as they start to interfere with their lifestyles, hobbies, comfort or driving. Every year I treat commercial pilots and Metro bus drivers with early impairment, while most of my patients make adjustments until cataracts interfere with personal driving comfort or other activities.

### Modern Cataract Surgery

New surgical technologies and anesthesia allow cataract surgery on a low stress, outpatient basis, allowing you to return home shortly after the procedure. In a matter of minutes, a micro-incision allows us to liquefy the cataract and replace it with a lens implant designed and selected with computer guidance to achieve optimal vision. Amazing optical technologies, such as the Crystalens and Restor implants, can even yield vision ranging from distance to near without glasses.

Thanks to amazing advances in micro-surgical technique, in optical technology, pharmacologic and other advances, vision decline from cataracts can be viewed as an opportunity to turn the clock back to better vision than you may have had in decades.

*Submitted by: Michael L. Gilbert, MD  
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*continued from front cover*

minimize their risk of blood clots.

### Breast Screening Center

The Breast Screening Center is a dedicated breast center offering full digital screening mammograms. A breast imaging radiologist leads our team of highly skilled professionals in a soothing, spa-like atmosphere. Should additional imaging services be required, our team at the diagnostic center is available to seamlessly continue the care of our patients.



*Architect's rendering of facilities lobby.*

Celebrate the opening of the new, expanded Overlake Medical Center Issaquah with fellow community members. Check the Overlake Web site, [www.overlakehospital.org](http://www.overlakehospital.org) for the opening date and time or call Senior Care at 425-688-5800.

### Women's Clinic

The Women's Clinic, staffed by a lactation educator and lactation-certified registered nurses, offers first-rate postpartum services to new mothers and babies.

### Community Education Classroom

The facility will offer a series of informative programs and classes on a wide range of topics, from diabetes education to weight loss surgery. It will also continue to offer its comprehensive childbirth and postpartum classes.

FALSE  
EXPECTATIONS  
ARE  
APPEARING  
REAL

This acrostic poem can be related directly to the fear of falling. We've all been there. Maybe you experienced a fall, which can be devastating, particularly if you become injured. But you also feel a sense of embarrassment, "How could I have fallen in front of all those people?" Or you may have fallen in the privacy of your own home but had great difficulty getting back up. Falls can lead to a person developing a fear of falling. They may start to alter their lifestyle, maybe choosing not to go out as much or avoiding situations where there are a lot of people where they could loss their balance.

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

One of the Senior Care *A Matter of*

*Balance* coaches, Susan Posten, shares her 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 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 has the ability to improve our balance and prevent falls."

Call Senior Care at 425-688-5800 for more information about being an instructor. Come make a difference!

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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](mailto:seniorcare@overlakehospital.org).

## Senior Care Community Classes

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

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

### Seniors Making Art, Acrylic Painting

Enjoy the range and scope of painting with acrylics, as we journey step by step through several techniques and subjects to achieve finished paintings. This class will be suitable for beginners as well as those wishing to hone their skills. Taught by Carrie Tomberlin. Sponsored by Betty and Kemper Freeman, Craig Shrontz and Lynn Ristig, Seniors Making Art and Overlake Hospital Medical Center.

**Date:** Thursdays, July 1 to August 12  
(no class held July 15)

**Time:** 10 a.m. to noon

**Cost:** FREE

**Limited to first 15 registrants. Priority given to those that have never taken a Seniors Making Art class.**

## Additional Overlake Community Classes

**PACCAR Education Center  
Overlake Campus  
1035 116th Ave. NE, Bellevue  
Advance registration required;  
call 425-688-5259**

### Hypnosis for Weight Loss

In this three-part series you find out what you can do to lose 20 pounds within weeks. Hypnosis can help you change those old destructive mental programs that keep you stuck. Most attendees begin losing weight almost immediately (one to two pounds per week) and, to their surprise, find that they actually enjoy the process. Taught by Robert W. Felix, certified hypnotherapist.

**Dates:** Thursdays, July 9, 16 and 23

**Time:** 7 to 9 p.m.

**Cost:** \$89



### 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 with support and information as they navigate twists, turns, and responsibilities. Come meet and talk with others who are dealing with similar issues.

Two support groups are offered to help meet the needs of caregivers.

## Bellevue

### Family Caregiver Support Group

**Date:** Thursdays, July 9, 23,

**August 13, 27**

**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.

## Mercer Island

### Family Caregiver Support Group

**Date:** Tuesdays, July 7 or August 4

**Time:** 3:30 to 5 p.m.

**Location:** Mercer Island Senior Health Center  
7707 SE. 27th Street,  
Suite 110, Mercer Island  
**Cost:** FREE

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