

SENIORGRAM: SENDING A MESSAGE ON SENIOR ISSUES

Dementia awareness: You can make a difference

by Barbara Bodzin, Executive Director, LifePath

We've all misplaced keys, blanked on someone's name, or forgotten a phone number. When we're young we tend not to pay much mind to these lapses, but as we grow older sometimes we worry about what they mean. While it's true certain brain changes are inevitable, major memory problems are not one of them. That's why it's important to know the difference between normal age-related forgetfulness and symptoms which may indicate a developing cognitive problem.

The following chart can help make that distinction:

Normal age-related memory changes	Symptoms that may indicate dementia
Ability to function independently and pursue normal activities despite occasional memory lapses	Difficulty performing simple tasks (paying bills, dressing appropriately, washing up)
Able to recall and describe incidents of forgetfulness	Unable to recall or describe instances where memory loss caused problems
Need to pause to remember directions but doesn't get lost in familiar places	Gets lost or disoriented in familiar places, unable to follow directions
Occasional difficulty finding the right word but no trouble holding a conversation	Words are frequently forgotten or misused, repetition of phrases or stories in single conversation
Judgment and decision-making ability intact	Trouble making decisions, may demonstrate poor judgement or behave in socially inappropriate ways

The brain is capable of producing new brain cells at any age, so significant memory loss is not an inevitable result of aging. Similar to muscle strength, you have to use it or lose it. Your lifestyle and daily activities have a huge impact on the health of your brain.

Here are ways to improve cognitive skills:

Stay social. People who aren't socially engaged are at higher risk for memory problems than people who have strong social ties.

Exercise regularly. Exercise protects against dementia by stimulating the brain's ability to maintain old connections as well as make new ones.

Stop smoking. Smoking heightens the risk of vascular disorders which can cause stroke and constrict arteries that deliver oxygen to the brain.

Manage stress. Cortisol, the stress hormone, damages the brain over time and can lead to memory problems. Even before that happens, stress or anxiety can cause memory difficulties in the moment.

Get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation reduces the growth of new neurons in the hippocampus and causes problems with memory, concentration, and decision-making.

Watch what you eat. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and drink green tea as these foods contain antioxidants, which can keep your brain cells from "rusting." Foods rich in omega-3 fats (such as salmon, tuna, trout, walnuts, and flaxseed) are particularly good for your brain and memory.

September is World Alzheimer's Month. Alzheimer's Disease International aims to raise awareness and challenge stigma surrounding dementia. Please call LifePath at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or email info@lifepathma.org to speak to a resource specialist who can provide dementia-related information and resources. Learn more at LifePathMA.org.

INFORMATION & CAREGIVER RESOURCE CORNER

What you need to know about pain

By Laurie Deskavich, Information & Caregiver Resource Center Program Director, LifePath

September is Pain Awareness Month. Pain Awareness Month was developed to help increase awareness regarding pain and its effects and to educate people about treatments that are available to relieve pain. According to Johns Hopkins University, by understanding more about what causes pain, we can improve treatments to help relieve suffering.

Q: What do I need to know about pain and its effects?

A: It is important that you know that there are two types of pain:

- **Acute pain** is usually a result of an injury, illness, surgery or inflammation. Acute pain generally is resolved within a short period of time (one to two weeks).

- **Chronic pain** is pain that continues for months or even years.

Untreated pain can affect your quality of life. Here are some facts about pain and its effects:

- Pain affects more people than diabetes, heart disease and cancer combined.

- Workers lose on average of 4.6 hours per week of productivity due to pain.



The Chronic Pain Self-Management workshop helps people build self-confidence to assume an active role in managing their chronic pain. The next workshop starts in October. Learn more by contacting the Healthy Living Program at LifePath: 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259. Or go online to LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops.

- An estimated 20 percent of adults report that their sleep is interrupted by pain or discomfort a few nights a week or more

- 80 percent of people will experience back pain at some point

- Back pain is the number one reason people visit their family doctors

- 83 million people indicate that pain affects basic functioning in their everyday lives

- Pain is a warning sign that indicates a problem that needs attention

- Living with pain can be debilitating and adversely affect everyday life

Medication is not the only way to manage pain! There are many pain intervention and management options available that do not rely solely on prescription opiates. Seek the advice and assistance of your primary care physician to find a pain specialist right for you.

The Healthy Living Program at LifePath can help you manage chronic health conditions and pain management as well as learn ways to eat healthier, exercise more, and develop healthy habits. There is even a workshop series specifically for chronic pain. For more information, call us at 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259 or visit LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops.

Nutrition Notes

Cooking for one or two - simple strategies to make it work!



by Karen Lentner, MA, RD, LDN, Nutritionist

Do you ever find yourself thinking about preparing a meal and end up having cheese and crackers or a cup of tea with a bowl of cereal for dinner? Does it hardly seem worth the effort to plan and cook a meal for one person? Do you find yourself snacking your way through the day or eating whatever is easy and available? It doesn't have to be difficult to cook nutritious, tasty meals for one or two people if you take a little time and plan ahead!

In order to stay healthy, we all need a variety of foods. Although cooking for one may be a challenge, it can also be fun. Plan your meals before you do your shopping. Look at grocery store flyers to see what's on sale this week; look at cookbooks, magazines, or search online for recipes that are appealing. Check your kitchen to see what you already have on hand. Consider a small roast or chicken one day, utilizing leftovers for a sandwich or additional meals later in the week. Keep it simple, be flexible. Once you've planned your meals, a grocery list easily falls into place. Try shopping with family or a friend, purchasing items together (eggs, seasonings, meat, or packaged produce) to share the amount and cost. Convenience foods may be expensive and high in salt; keep this in mind when planning. Limit frozen dinner entrees, read labels, and add fresh or frozen fruits or vegetables to increase nutritional value. Cook a meal to share with a friend, and next time have your friend cook the meal.

Stocking your refrigerator and pantry helps you avoid having nothing to eat. Items may include rice, pasta, beans (dried or canned), eggs, canned tomatoes and sauce, canned tuna, chicken pieces, meatballs, pizza dough, peanut butter, hummus, and frozen vegetables in bags. Many of these items allow



LifePath's Healthy Eating for Successful Living workshop is a program for people who want to learn more about nutrition and healthy heart and bone strategies. The next workshop starts in October. Learn more by contacting the Healthy Living Program at LifePath: 413-773-5555 or 978-544-2259. Or go online to LifePathMA.org/events/healthy-living-workshops.

you to use just what you need. If making a stew or soup, prepare a recipe and freeze the remainder in small plastic containers (dated) and reheat at another time. Add leftover frozen fruit (bought in season or on sale) to pancake batter or muffins; add vegetables, cheese, meat/chicken or beans to stews, soups, salads, or eggs.

Consider following a weekly meal outline to help you plan:

- Sunday – traditional meat, potato/rice, vegetable
- Monday – breakfast for dinner
- Tuesday – casserole or sandwich made with Sunday leftovers
- Wednesday – pasta/meatless
- Thursday – eat from the freezer
- Friday – stir fry or tacos
- Saturday – soup/stew, sandwiches, or salad

Once a week, prepare and freeze extra portions of at least one main dish.

A quick and easy meal may include:

- English muffin pizza topped with tomato sauce, vegetables, cheese
- Microwaved baked potato topped with meat, chili, vegetables, and/or cheese
- Pasta/rice with ground beef or legumes, vegetables, and sauce

It's easier than you think – cook ahead and freeze what you can!

Consider Meals on Wheels or joining friends for a meal at your local senior center. For more information, contact LifePath at 413-773-5555, 978-544-2259, or info@LifePathMA.org. Read more Nutrition Notes articles online at LifePathMA.org/news/stories/nutrition-notes

Presentations on the VA Aid and Attendance Program for elders to take place this fall

The Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District of the Department of Veteran Services will hold four events for elder veterans and their spouses across Franklin County this fall to highlight the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Aid and Attendance Program, which can greatly assist in caregiving services both in home and at assisted living facilities.

Presentations on the VA Aid and Attendance Program will take place on:

Monday, September 20, 2018

6 to 7:30 p.m.

Conway Grammar School
 24 Fournier Road, Conway, MA

Montague, October 1, 2018

6 to 7:30 p.m.

Hawlemont Regional School

10 School Street, Charlemont, MA

Tuesday, October 9, 2018

6 to 7:30 p.m.

Greenfield Senior Center
 35 Pleasant Street, Greenfield, MA

Wednesday, November 14, 2018

11 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Greenfield Savings Bank
 282 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA

Pre-screening and pre-registration are required to attend. Contact 413-772-1571.

Member towns of the Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans' Services District include: Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Conway, Deerfield, Erving, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leverett, Leyden, Monroe, Montague,

New Salem, Northfield, Plainfield, Rowe, Shelburne, Shutesbury, Sunderland, Warwick, Wendell, and Whately.



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