

UK Elder Care

IN THE KNOW

E-Newsletter

August 2011



A MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

Do you know about the Work-Life Supervisor of the Year Award? Going on its third year, the Work-life office gives an award to one supervisor who is highly regarded by his or her employees for consistently supporting their work-life needs. In addition, there is an annual ceremony honoring the winner and all of those nominated held during National Work and Family Month. If you have an outstanding supervisor, consider nominating them for this prestigious award. Nominations are being accepted now. For more information about the program, how to nominate your supervisor, and to learn about past winners, visit the Work-Life web site: http://www.uky.edu/HR/WorkLife/Supervisor_of_the_year_award.html



NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Feds Enhance Site for Comparing Nursing Homes

There is now more information available to help families evaluate nursing homes. The federal government has revamped the criteria on its "Nursing Home Compare" Web site, where consumers can compare nursing home care in the United States. In addition, new information about complaints against nursing homes will soon be available on the site.

The government has approved 21 new quality-of-care measures that assess patients' experiences at both long-term care and short-term care facilities. The new measures focus on pressure ulcers (bed sores), self-reported pain, falls, infections, and general patient well-being. Among the new measures are ones that look at the percentage of residents in a facility who report that they have moderate to severe pain, the percentage of residents assessed and appropriately given the vaccine to prevent pneumonia, and the percentage of residents who were physically restrained. The 17 measures that were previously in place have been retired.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will use the new measures on Nursing Home Compare, an online database where consumers can search for nursing homes in their area and compare their quality of care. The measures are designed to help consumers better

understand the quality of care provided in nursing homes and allow nursing homes to compare their performance with nearby facilities.

In addition, soon CMS will begin posting even more information to its Home Compare site. Beginning in July 2011, Nursing Home Compare will list the number of civil money penalties and other enforcement actions against the nursing home for the past three years, as well as the number of substantiated complaints against the nursing home and the number of incidents reported by residents for the past three years.

To visit Nursing Home Compare, visit <http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/>

Source: www.elderlawanswers.com

NIH Tips for Older Adults to Combat Heat-Related Illnesses

Risk of heat-related problems increases with age

Older people can face risks related to hot weather. As people age, their bodies lose some ability to adapt to heat. They may have medical conditions that are worsened by heat. And their medications could reduce their ability to respond to heat.

The National Institute on Aging (NIA), part of the National Institutes of Health, has some advice for helping older people avoid heat-related illnesses, known collectively as hyperthermia.

Hyperthermia occurs when the body overheats. Conditions involving hyperthermia have different names, including heat stroke, heat fatigue, heat syncope (lightheadedness or fainting in the heat), heat cramps and heat exhaustion.

Health-related factors that may increase the risk of hyperthermia include:

- Pre-existing diseases such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Decreased ability to move around
- Dementia or cognitive impairment
- Certain medications that may cause dehydration or that may affect the responses to heat by the heart, blood vessels or sweat glands
- Being substantially overweight
- Drinking alcoholic beverages
- Being dehydrated
- Age-related changes in the skin, such as decreased functioning of small blood vessels and sweat glands

Lifestyle factors that can also increase the risk of hyperthermia include hot living quarters, lack of transportation, overdressing, visiting overcrowded places, and not understanding how to respond to weather conditions. Older people, particularly those at special risk, should pay attention to any air pollution alert in effect. People without fans or air conditioners should go to shopping malls, movie theaters, libraries or other places with air conditioning. In addition, they can visit cooling centers which are often provided by government agencies, religious groups and

social service organizations in many communities.

Heat stroke is an advanced form of hyperthermia. It occurs when the body is overwhelmed by heat and unable to control its temperature. In heat stroke, the body temperature is at least 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Someone with heat stroke may have a strong rapid pulse, lack of sweating, dry flushed skin, faintness, staggering and mental status changes such as confusion, combativeness, disorientation or even coma. Seek immediate medical attention for a person with any of these symptoms, especially an older adult.

If you suspect that someone is suffering from a heat-related illness:

- Move them into an air conditioned or other cool place
- Urge them to lie down and rest
- Remove or loosen tight-fitting or heavy clothing
- Encourage them to drink water or juices if they are able to drink without choking, but avoid alcohol and caffeine
- Apply cold water, ice packs or cold wet cloths to the skin
- Get medical assistance as soon as possible

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) within the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services helps eligible households pay for home cooling and heating costs. Individuals interested in applying for assistance should contact their local or state LIHEAP agency. For more information, go to www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap/ or www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap/brochure/brochure.html.

For a free copy of the NIA's AgePage on hyperthermia in English or in Spanish, contact the NIA Information Center at 1-800-222-2225 or go to www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/hyperthermia.htm, or www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/Spanish/hyperthermia-sp.htm for the Spanish-language version.

Source: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/NewsAndEvents/WhatsNew.htm>



UPCOMING EVENTS ON CAMPUS & IN THE COMMUNITY

- **UK Elder Care - Caregivers Support Group** –UK employee caregivers will meet Wednesday, August 17th 12:10 – 12:50 p.m. in the Keeneland Room, W.T. Young Library. This is open to anyone. For more information, call 323-4600.
- **Fayette County Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Training** is for those who have a friend or family member who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. Local and statewide experts on Alzheimer's disease, caregiver basics, legal decisions, and how to care for the caregiver. The program will take place on Friday, August 12th 10th from 9:15 to 4 p.m. at the Fayette County Extension Office. Registration is \$10 and includes lunch. Registration required; call 1-800-272-3900.

- **Early Stage Support Group.** This six week program will provide information, support and encouragement to persons in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease and their care partners. The support group will provide an opportunity to discuss issues and changes related to memory loss and gathering to share experiences and feelings. This series will start in September. Registration required. Call 1-800-272-3900 for more information and to sign up.



CAREGIVER SURVIVAL GUIDE

Before It's Too Late: Planning for an Emergency

If you're among America's 54 million caregivers, knowing how to evacuate a loved one or how a loved one can take shelter during an emergency may not be as easy as just stepping out a door, or crawling out a window, especially if your loved one has mobility challenges and physical issues. Not only do you have to consider how you yourself will get out of the house during an emergency, but how will your loved one also be able to escape? These are just a few of the questions that a caregiver must consider in order to arrive at a much-needed safety plan for their loved one. Once a safety plan has been created, it is wise to rehearse it, making sure that there are no other problems that arise during an emergency. It's also a good idea to discuss a finalized evacuation plan with other family members who may not live with you, as well as with neighbors, friends, and any other personal care attendants that may be a part of the in-home caregiving team. .

When devising your in-home, emergency preparedness plan, a good resource to contact is your local chapter of the Red Cross. They can tell you what kind of natural disasters occur in your area, how to prepare for each, and how you will be warned of an emergency. Also, many communities extend special assistance to those who have mobility problems by registering these people with a local fire department or emergency management office. Professional help will then be administered quickly and with priority in an emergency to people with physical limitations and mobility challenges. If you are a caregiver who still must work outside the home, ask your supervisor about any emergency plans that may be in effect at your workplace. For example, some places will not allow employees to leave for home until an "all clear" has been given by local authorities, so caregivers need to take a policy like this into consideration when creating an at-home safety plan for a loved one. If you are the caregiver of a special-needs child who is mainstreamed into the public school or daycare system, ask the teachers or directors about emergency plans for the school, and how it will include and effect your young loved one. Also, if you currently utilize a personal care attendant from an agency, find out whether the agency has special provisions during an emergency; will they continue to provide care and services at another location if your loved one needs to be evacuated from their current environment? It's important to determine what will be needed for each type of emergency.

For example, most people head for their basements during a tornado warning, however, most basements are not wheelchair-accessible. In this case, what modifications will you need to make, or will you be able to utilize an alternative shelter that's easier for your loved one to get to? Another good idea is for you to create more than one exit for a loved one who is confined to a wheelchair, in case the primary exit of your home is blocked in a disaster. In case of a power outage, make sure you know how to connect or start a loved

one's back-up power supply that may be needed for important medical equipment. Make sure to teach others who might assist your loved one in an emergency how to operate this type of equipment as well. It's also good to know which emergency shelters near your home are wheelchair-accessible. If your loved one lives on their own in an apartment complex, be sure to ask the building's management to identify and mark all accessible exits. It's also a good idea to arrange for a relative or neighbor to check on your loved one should they live on their own. Not only should you have emergency phone numbers posted near telephones and/or kept in wallets or pocket books at all times, but it's also a good idea to select one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for you or your loved one to call if you're separated in a disaster. Select one place near your home to meet-up together in case of a fire, and another place to meet outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home after a disaster. If you are at home when a disaster strikes, know how to quickly access and turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main valves or switches. If your loved one is able to do so, it is a good idea that they also know how to turn these things off as well, should they be home by themselves when disaster strikes. Preparing a disaster supply kit is a definite must when you are caring for a loved one whose life may depend upon certain medications and other such items. When appropriate, some of these things can be stored in easy-to-carry containers like backpacks or duffel bags. Larger items like a manual wheelchair or back-up equipment may be stored in a "safe-room" in your house, or at a neighbor's house, school, or workplace.

EMERGENCY CARE LIST

- A battery-powered radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- A first-aid kit, prescription medicines, and an extra pair of glasses.
- A supply of water (one gallon per person per day); store water in sealed, unbreakable containers and replace every six months; a supply of non-perishable food and a non-electric can opener, plus any special foods your loved one may require.
- Include extra products like adult diapers, wipes, lotion, and other hygiene items that don't need water in order to use.
- Have extra wheelchair batteries charged and ready to go.
- Have on-hand full oxygen tanks, extra medications, catheters, food for guide or service dogs, and any other special equipment needed.
- A change of clothing and rain gear for your loved one, and sturdy shoes for you.
- Extra blankets or sleeping bags.
- The list of family physicians, relatives or friends who should be notified if you or your loved one are injured.
- A list of the style and serial numbers of medical devices such as pacemakers or special batteries for essential medical equipment.
- An extra set of car keys.

During a disaster, anything that can move, fall, break or cause a fire is considered to be an added hazard. Before an emergency situation happens, it's a good idea to go around your home and look specifically for items that might pose a danger to you and your loved one during a disaster. Make sure that shelving is securely fastened to the walls, and that any large, heavy objects are placed on lower shelves or on the floor. Also, hang pictures and mirrors away from beds; larger pictures or mirrors should be bolted to the wall.

Observe electrical wiring around your home, and repair any wires found to be defective or

hazardous. Have a shut-off valve or switch for oxygen equipment near your loved one's bed or chair, so they (or you) can turn it off quickly if there is a fire. It's a good idea to secure your water heater by strapping it to a nearby wall in order to keep it from falling over during a disaster. Repair cracks found in the ceilings or foundation and brace any overhead light fixtures. If you have a chimney, have a professional inspect it for any cracks or weak spots, and have the appropriate repairs made. Invest in fire extinguishers and smoke detectors. There are many things that caregivers can do to help themselves and their loved ones prepare for any type of emergency or disaster, but it is best to be ready well in advance, before a dire situation arises. Remember to contact your local fire department or your community's emergency management office for help with your preparations.

Source: Adapted from www.caregiver.com

UK Elder Care is a *free* counseling and resource referral program for UK employees, retirees, and spouses/sponsored dependents. Call and schedule an appointment via phone or in person 323-4600 or visit www.uky.edu/HR/eldercare



Room 155 Seaton Center Building ~ Lexington, KY 40506-0219
www.uky.edu/HR/eldercare ~ (859) 323-4600