



Hillsborough County
Florida

Senior LIFESTYLE

A Publication by Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services

SPRING 2009

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From Bart Banks, Aging Services Director



The Aging Services staff is working in partnership with many organizations to bring you various events in our community this May to celebrate Older Americans Month. This year's theme is "Living Today for a Better Tomorrow."

We encourage you to prepare early and register in advance for a special needs shelter as this year's hurricane season starts June 1

Bart Banks

Health Literacy Lets You Participate in Your Healthcare

By Cindy Hardy, RN, Florida Department of Health

Being health-literate means you can read, understand and use health information. That is somewhat different from just being literate. How often have you visited a doctor's office or gotten information from healthcare staff but not really understood what they said and were hesitant to ask questions because they were so busy? We all have. When we do not understand or cannot remember all the instructions, we may make mistakes with medications or treatments. These mistakes can make illnesses or conditions worse, or keep us from getting better.

Helpful hints when visiting your doctor, pharmacist or other care providers:

- Keep a note pad handy to jot down questions and take it with you to your next healthcare visit.
- Take a list of all your medications.
- Request printed instructions for medication, treatments, diets, or lab test preparation.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions.
- Ask a family member or friend to be with you for the visit.
- Make a chart to post near your medications so that you always take the correct dose at the right time.

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Assistance Resources

Links to Services, Food and Financial Assistance Resources for Seniors:

1. Government Benefits www.benefitscheckup.org
2. Food pantries <http://feedingamerica.org/>
3. LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocslieheap) Also ask your utilities company for a free energy efficiency evaluation.
4. Free eyeglasses (www.neweyesfortheneedy.org/users/individuals.html)
5. Free dental care for those with disabilities or the elderly (nfdh.org/joomla_nfdh/content/view/24/47/)
6. Housing Assistance HUD (Housing & Urban Development) (<http://www.hud.gov/>), including avoiding foreclosure (www.hud.gov/foreclosure) public housing authority (www.hud.gov/offices/pih/pha/contacts), and section 8 programs (www.hud.gov/progdesc/voucher.cfm)
7. Telephone Assistance (www.lifelinesupport.org/li/low-income/lifelinesupport/browser).

Source cited in this article: National Family Caregivers Newsletter.

Prevent Falls: Be Head Smart, Seniors!

Samantha Haigler Nevins, MPH, CHES
Health and Wellness Consultant

Did you know that...

The brain is similar in weight and texture to JELL-O, and the brain is NOT attached to anything except the spinal cord?

These are just some of the many important facts about Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). This information is used by the Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc. (BIAF) to educate seniors about preventing head injuries and staying safe.

According to Sandra Drecker, Executive Director for the BIAF, an alarming 1.5 million Americans suffer from a Traumatic Brain Injury each year, and at least 5.3 million Americans live with disabilities resulting from TBI.

Traumatic Brain Injury results when the head hits or is hit by a stationary object, causing the brain to collide with the sharp ridges inside the skull. This impact can damage the threadlike nerve connections called axons, which carry messages between the brain and the rest of the body. A person may also sustain an injury to the brain without being hit on the head, such as whiplash or as the result of a fall.

Traumatic Brain Injury can cause problems with:

- Cognition (memory, concentration and judgment)
- Movement (coordination, balance, and strength)
- Sensation (vision, taste and smell)
- Emotion (instability, impulsivity and depression)

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of brain injury among Americans, though oddly enough, individuals ages 15-24 and those over age 75 are the two groups at greatest risk for TBI. Elders are at a greater risk due to sustaining a fall in the home.

There is NO cure for a brain injury, except prevention! Injuries among older adults can be avoided by identifying hazards in the home and making improvements where needed. The following are tips to help prevent falls and ensure safety:

- Remove loose throw rugs
- Keep a flashlight next to the bed
- Install at least one grab bar in the shower or tub
- Have your vision checked at least once a year
- Have your healthcare provider review your medications
- ALWAYS wear a seat belt in the car

For more information about how to prevent a fall related brain injury, visit the Brain Injury Association of Florida's Web page at www.biaf.org or call the BIAF Helpline at (800) 992-3442.

ORGANIC FOODS: TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY?

Lately there has been a surge in interest about eating organic foods. However, many people do not know much about organics. With the proper information, consumers will be able to make good choices with regard to organic foods.

What does **organic** mean?

Organic foods are grown without the use of artificial pesticides, chemically formulated, growth stimulants, or irradiation. Animals raised on organic farms only eat organically-grown feed, are never restrained, and do not receive antibiotics or synthetic growth hormones.

Is organic food healthier than **non-organic** food?

The answer to this question is unclear. Some food scientists believe that both types of food are equally healthy since they both contain the same vitamins and minerals and since washing foods before eating can reduce or eliminate chemicals on non-organic foods. Others believe that organic foods are healthier since they have fewer chemicals, which means that fewer toxins have a chance of entering the body.

Additionally, since organic foods cannot rely on chemicals to kill pests, many of these foods produce their own healthy phytochemicals that serve as pesticides to protect the food from bugs.



What **organic** foods should I buy?

Only you can decide whether you want to buy organic foods. Thus far, no research studies have shown organic foods to be significantly more nutritious than non-organic foods. However, if you do want to buy organic foods, it is important to know which foods may be the most beneficial. You may want to buy organic for the following 12 foods as they have been found to have the most pesticide residues:

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| * Peaches | * Cherries |
| * Apples | * Lettuce |
| * Bell peppers | * Imported grapes |
| * Celery | * Pears |
| * Nectarines | * Spinach |
| * Strawberries | * Potatoes |

By choosing these foods in the organic section, you will reduce the amount of pesticides you eat, which may lead to better health.

Prepared by the Hillsborough County Nutrition Program for education of SCNAP participants – 1st Quarter 2009

Preventing Disease and Infection through Good Hand Hygiene

Infectious diseases, such as the common cold, flu and several gastrointestinal disorders, including infectious diarrhea, are commonly spread through hand-to-hand contact.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent getting sick is by washing your hands. You can spread germs by touching contaminated surfaces, interacting with other people, and being exposed to animals and animal waste.

You can infect yourself by touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you do not wash your hands often enough. You can also spread these germs to others by touching them or by touching surfaces that they also touch, such as doorknobs.

While most people will easily get over a cold, the flu can be a much more serious illness to overcome. Older adults and people with chronic medical problems are at a higher risk of developing pneumonia if they have the flu. The combination of the flu and pneumonia can be deadly, and is the eighth-leading cause of death among Americans.

Food-related illnesses, such as salmonella and E. coli infections can also be a consequence of poor hand hygiene. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as many as 76 million Americans contract a food-borne illness each year. Of these, about 5,000 die as a result of their illness. Others experience the annoying signs and symptoms of nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

When to Wash

- After you use the bathroom.
- Before eating.
- Before, during and after handling or preparing food.
- After contact with blood or body fluids (like vomit, nasal secretions, or saliva).
- After changing a diaper.
- After handling animals, their toys, leashes or waste.
- After touching something that could be contaminated (such as a trash can, cleaning cloth, drain or soil).
- Before dressing a wound, giving medicine or inserting contact lenses.
- More often when someone in your home is sick.



How to Wash

- Wet your hands and apply liquid, bar or powder soap.
- Rub hands together vigorously to make a lather and scrub all surfaces.
- Continue for 20 seconds!

It takes that long for the soap and scrubbing action to dislodge and remove stubborn germs. Need a timer? Imagine singing "Happy Birthday" all the way through – twice!

- Rinse hands well under running water.
- Dry your hands using a paper towel or air dryer.
- If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.

Sources cited in this article:

Mayo Clinic

www.mayoclinic.com/health/hand-washing/HQ00407

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

www.cdc.gov/ounceofprevention

(Healthcare cont. from page 1)

Ninety million Americans have low health literacy, including people with high incomes and educational levels. Most people who are not in the medical field often feel uncomfortable discussing medical and health information. Don't feel embarrassed to ask for repeated or additional information. Statistics indicate that people with low health literacy have more testing and longer hospital stays. The lack of good communication between healthcare providers and patients contributes to those situations.

Many healthcare providers and their staff are beginning to provide simple, easy to understand literature and instructions. If you feel your healthcare provider does not, let them know and ASK for more information.

Be an active participant in your own healthcare or have a family member or friend advocate for you. Your part in maintaining and improving your health is important. Your health is precious!

For more information about the Health Literacy presentations and on-site education, including healthcare staff, call (813) 307-8071.

Westshore Senior Center Computer Classes

Computer classes are being offered every Thursday, 9 a.m.-11 p.m. and 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. at Westshore Senior Center, 4102 W, Spruce St, Tampa, FL 33609.

For more information, call (813) 554-5156.



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Bart Banks, Director

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Older Americans Month Calendar of Events

Since President John F. Kennedy established Older Americans Month in 1963, the month of May is celebrated as a time to officially acknowledge the contributions of older persons for the strength and vitality to our country. This year's theme, selected by the Administration on Aging (AOA), is "*Living Today for a Better Tomorrow.*" The theme reflects AOAs continued focus on prevention efforts and programs throughout the country that are helping older adults enjoy better health as they age and avoid the risks of chronic disease, disability and injury.

Locally, the Hillsborough County Department of Aging Services is collaborating with municipalities and organizations to host various events to celebrate with the seniors in our community. We welcome you to join us at the festivities!

May 8, 2009

Seniors' Day in the Park
MacFarlane Park
1700 N. MacDill Ave.
Tampa, FL 33607



May 15, 2008

Volunteer Recognition Lunch
Call Nekeva Hamilton,
(813) 276-2936, or Agatha
Yoakum, (813) 272-6956 for
more information.
*Invitation Only

May 8, 2009

Seniors' Prom
Brandon Recreation Center
502 E. Sadie St.
Brandon, FL 33510

May 14, 2009

Annual Elderly Affairs Day
Town N' Country Commons
7606 Paula Drive
Tampa, FL 33615
*Invitation Only

May 27, 2009

National Senior Health
and Fitness Day
Special Activities
at All Senior Centers