



NEW VENTURES

A newsletter for YHP Medicare Participants

Published by Yale Health Plan

Winter 2006

Winter Water Intake

We need adequate fluid intake all year round - not just during the hot summer months. While the average sedentary adult male needs about 12 cups of fluid daily, and the average sedentary adult female needs about 9 cups, anyone who is even slightly active should consume more. We may be less thirsty in the winter, but thirst does not provide a good indicator of fluid needs, as humans often do not perceive thirst until significant water is lost. So make a conscious effort to drink enough water in winter.

Wear sneakers, stay standing

Sneakers may be a fashion statement for the younger set, but for those 65 and over, athletic footwear can be a lifesaver. In a study conducted in Washington state and published late last year in the Journal of the American Geriatric Society, nearly 1400 adults in that age group were monitored for falls over a two-year period. Those who wore mostly sneakers experienced fewer falls (and thus fewer broken bones and other health problems) than those who tended to wear lace-up oxfords, heels, or other kinds of footwear. Going barefoot or walking around in stocking feet was most likely to lead to a fall. The moral, especially for those over 65: Keep your sneakers on.

Cold Got You Down? Listen to Grandma

The common cold is a viral illness of the upper respiratory tract. While generally more annoying than dangerous, colds may increase susceptibility to sinus infections, bronchitis, or other secondary infections. The best defense is to prevent colds by eating right, drinking enough non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated fluids, getting enough rest, thorough hand-washing and taking other common-sense measures. But, if despite your best efforts, you succumb to a cold, some of grandma's home remedies may bring significant relief.

Forget the soul. Chicken soup for the nose.

Chicken soup helps keep you hydrated by replacing fluids lost from a runny nose or from sweating when you have a fever. The steam from a bowl of soup helps to clear a stuffy nose and sinuses, as do (optional) hot and spicy ingredients such as cayenne or chili peppers. Homemade is best, but good quality prepared soup works well, too. Add chopped garlic and/or onion and a pinch of cayenne pepper (helps open sinuses) to taste. Serve hot.

Water, water anywhere

Most people don't drink enough when they're sick, and even mild dehydration can make you feel worse. Drink plenty of water to replace the fluids you've lost. Aim for ten 8-oz glasses a day, flavored with a little fruit juice, if you like. Herbal tea (but not black tea) counts as water too. If your throat is achy, try gargling with warm salt water. Use a thoroughly cleaned humidifier to add moisture to your bedroom. And soak in a tub of cool (not cold) water to counteract a fever.

All steamed up

Bacteria flourish when mucus gets stuck in the nose, sinuses, or chest. Inhaling steam helps get mucus moving. Steam up the bathroom with a warm shower or bath and breathe deeply. Wrap yourself warmly before leaving the bathroom and follow up with a cup of hot tea or soup (see below for more on soup and tea), breathing in the steam from the beverage.

Lemon, honey?

If you're a tea drinker, add honey and lemon to your tea. Even without the tea, honey and lemon can help a dry, scratchy throat. The thickness of honey helps coat and soothe an irritated throat and lemon squeezed onto your teaspoon of honey stimulates the salivary glands, pulling fluid into the mouth and making swallowing easier.

A dash of cinnamon

Cinnamon has been used medicinally for thousands of years because it was thought to be a fever reducer and an anti-inflammatory. Try some cinnamon tea with honey: Add 1 tablespoon powdered cinnamon or some cinnamon sticks to 8 oz of boiling water. Cloves can also be added. Steep, covered, for 20 minutes, then uncover and allow to cool to room temperature. Add honey and lemon to taste. Fever and inflammation should bring you in to see the doctor, but a dash of cinnamon won't hurt.

And a pinch of ginger

Many grandmas have used ginger ale to settle upset stomachs. But ginger can also help with cold and flu symptoms. If possible, use fresh grated ginger root to make ginger tea. Steep about one tablespoon grated ginger in a cup of boiling water, covered, for 10 minutes, then strain the tea into another cup and, if desired, add honey to taste. If fresh ginger is not available, you can use powdered ginger. Consult your clinician if symptoms are severe or don't improve after 5 to 7 days, or if you have an underlying medical condition, especially heart disease or a chronic respiratory illness such as asthma.

From the YUHS Pharmacy . . .

Vial of Life offers security in medical emergencies

The YHP Pharmacy is introducing its own version of the "Vial of Life" for distribution in 2006. Some of you may have seen or read about this innovation that allows medical or emergency personnel access to essential medical history when you are too ill to speak or too anxious to provide accurate information.

The "Vial of Life" program, as noted by the Alameda County (California) Fire Department: "is designed to speak for you when you are unable to speak for yourself. The information contained within the vial will provide pre-hospital and hospital providers with essential details that will aid in providing appropriate medical treatment."

The kit contains the vial or bottle for storage of information, a reusable zip-lock plastic bag, a medical information sheet that is filled out in advance, a sticker for an entry door and a magnet for the refrigerator. Each person in the household should have a separate vial holding their medical information. A completed medical information sheet is tucked inside each labeled vial, placed in the zip-lock bag and put on the top shelf of the refrigerator. The magnet indicating that the vial (or vials) is (are) inside goes on the refrigerator. Emergency personnel will see the magnet on the refrigerator and be alerted to look inside for the important medical information. The sticker can be placed on an entryway as an additional alert.

"Vial of Life" kits come with complete instructions and are free of charge. They may be obtained from the Pharmacy.

information provided by Martha L. Asarisi, RPh

REMINDER

YUHS Pharmacy processes pharmacy charges into the Medco system. Each year starting January 1st a \$100 deductible must be paid by the patient for prescription expenses. After the \$100 deductible is paid out of pocket, eligible retirees pay 20% of the cost of their medications when they pick them up at the pharmacy. There is no reimbursement on that 20%, so these receipts should not be sent to the Yale Retiree Processing Center.

Pharmacy Hours of Operation

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday	8:00 AM - 6:30 PM
Thursday	8:30 AM - 6:30 PM
Saturday	8:30 AM - 3:30 PM

Survey your medicine chest

Most of us use more over the counter medications during cold and flu season, making winter the ideal time for checking your medicine cabinet.

Remove all expired medications; they can degrade over time and become ineffective. Degraded medications can also cause health problems.

Restock essential items in adequate quantities, but do not purchase so much that you run the risk of having even more expired items sitting around next year.

And note: Moisture hastens the breakdown of medications, making the bathroom medicine chest one of the worst places to keep them. Instead, keep medications in a place that is dry, away from sunlight, and out of the reach of children and pets - such as an upper shelf of a hall closet. Use the bathroom cabinet for items that are used up quickly like soap or for non-perishables like bandaids.

New Laboratory Hours at YUHS

In our continued effort to provide convenient services to our patients, the Laboratory at Yale University Health Services (YUHS) has extended its hours of operation. The Lab now opens at 7:30 am and closes at 5:15 pm daily. EKGs will continue to be offered by appointment only.

Other Laboratory Information

Clinical Laboratory Partners (CLP) has recently closed the Branford location. Please review the list enclosed for another location which may be convenient.

Laboratory tests ordered by physicians outside of YUHS

Medicare Participants of YUHS are reminded that when you have a consultation with an outside physician and laboratory testing is ordered, it is not necessary that those tests be done here at YUHS. Many of these specialists have lab facilities available in the building where you see them. If that is the case you should have the testing done at these convenient locations.

You should inform the staff at the lab that you wish to have a copy of the results sent to your provider here at YUHS and give them the name of your physician. The facility will collect your Medicare information which they need to bill for the services. Please make sure that they are aware the **Medicare is your primary insurance.**

From the Desk of Paul Genecin, MD

The start of our 35th year is an appropriate time to reflect on our rich history as well as our bright future. YHP was the 'brain child' of creative and visionary members of the Yale faculty and administration who, in the 1960s, planned YHP as the first staff-model health care organization in this region. Designed along the lines of the Kaiser-Permanente health care organizations in California, YHP was conceived as a health center and insurance plan for Yale's faculty, staff, retirees, students and dependents. By combining these groups, Yale was able to offer care to students as well as benefits for faculty and staff that have proven to be both far more generous and much more affordable than those available through alternative plans.

At its opening in July of 1971, YHP had 15,000 members, and 18,000 by early the following year. Now, with our patient population in the range of 35,000, we have outgrown our original home at 17 Hillhouse Avenue. The growth in numbers, changes in technology and expansion of services over the years translate into a need for more space, updated facilities, greater privacy and a more hospitable environment. Planning for our new YHP facility is proceeding on schedule and we look forward to offering our members and staff significant enhancements when our new health center opens in 2009. The vision of a clinician-led, non-profit health plan remains strong - with emphasis on prevention, wellness and primary care, backed up by an outstanding network of specialists and specialized facilities for advanced medical diagnosis and treatment.

As we design our new building, we are planning for improved clinical access with many more examination rooms and clinical spaces. In the interim before our move in 2009, we are working on initiatives to get the most out of our Hillhouse Avenue facility. We are improving our radiology capacity. We are working on better ways to serve our members in our Pharmacy, our lab and, above all, in our clinics. We never forget that our core business is our members' visits with their clinicians. Some of the most important work we are doing involves recruiting clinical staff and improving our telephone and appointment scheduling systems.

We welcome your input. Check out our website (www.yale.edu/uhs), where you can click on "services" to find lists of departments and of clinical staff members and departmental chiefs and managers - any of whom are glad to assist you. You can also use our web site to keep track of our many programs and events. If you have not already signed up, be sure to enroll in Yale Health On-line (www.yalehealthonline.yale.edu), our confidential email system for contacting your clinicians, obtaining results and scheduling appointments.

Our managers, clinical department chiefs and our Medicare/Retiree Coordinator, Margaret Hionis (203-432-8134 or margaret.hionis@yale.edu), as well as my colleagues in the Director's office (203-432-0076) are eager to help - so contact us if we can assist you in any way. I wish you a healthy and happy 2006!

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Yale Health Plan*

EDITORIAL STAFF

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Important phone numbers

Medicare/Retiree Coordinator	203-432-8134
Yale Retiree Prescription Administrator - Medco	1-800-230-0508
Yale Retiree Major Medical Administrator - Yale Health Plan	203-432-7513
YUHS Toll-Free Number (U.S./Canada)	1-877-947-2273
Member Services	203-432-0246
Internal Medicine	203-432-0038
Pharmacy	203-432-0033
Yale Benefits Office	203-432-5550
Social Security	1-800-772-1213
Medicare (enrollment/replace card)	1-800-772-1213
ITT Hartford* (billing/claims issues)	1-800-368-3653
American Financial Services* (to replace ITT Hartford cards)	203-949-1738

*Identify yourself as a Yale Retiree, group AGP-1816

Alzheimer's Information

The Alzheimer's Association, Connecticut Chapter is dedicated to compassionately impacting the community and the lives of people with dementia. The Chapter provides support and information to those with dementia and their caregivers. It is easy to contact them; call the Connecticut Chapter at 1-866-3MEMORY (1-866-363-6679). For more information you may also visit our website www.alzct.org.

Connecticut Chapter Annual Education Conference

SAVE THE DATE: April 6th
Crowne Plaza, Cromwell, CT

New to the program this year is a series of educational sessions tailored to family caregivers. The purpose of the conference is to allow family caregivers and professionals the opportunity to interact with leaders in the field of dementia in learning and discussing best practices, models and resources related to Alzheimer's disease.

The keynote address, "Culture Change in Dementia Care: What Will Getting It Right Look Like?" will be presented by Marilyn Hartle, MSW, LCSW and LaDonna Jensen, R.N., from Jentle Harts Consulting. This session will discuss what a person-centered model looks like and why it is different from current models along with a discussion of culture change.

A panel discussion will be given exploring the perspectives of a physician, attorney and family caregiver on legal and medical issues. Twenty-one breakout sessions for family caregivers and professionals are also offered, including, but not limited to:

ABC's of Alzheimer's disease & related dementias;
The importance of attending support groups;
Palliative care for individuals with advanced dementia as well as hospice services.

The Connecticut Chapter's quarterly newsletter is distributed to over 15,000 readers statewide, which includes professionals, caregivers and families. The publication includes:

- Statewide Affiliated Support Groups
- Calendar of Events
- Articles spotlighting community outreach activities
- Meet the Experts column answering frequently asked questions from caregivers
- Fundraising efforts
- Legislative updates

Are you, a family member or friend taking care of a loved one with confusion, memory loss or dementia?

The Alzheimer's Association Safe Return®

is a nationwide identification, support and enrollment program which assists in the safe return of individuals with Alzheimer's or a related dementia who wander and become lost locally or far from home. Assistance is available 24 hours, everyday, whenever a person is lost or found.

Call the CT Chapter (1-866-363-6679) for further information on all of the above.

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Free parking is available both in the lot right next to 17 Hillhouse Avenue and in lot 37, just across Trumbull Street.

