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**Special points of interest:**

- Learn how exercise can help keep you healthy and keep your memory sharp
- How can PPC help you enhance your health through diet
- Find out what is new with drug and supplement safety
- Aggressive medical care in the elderly can be more harmful than beneficial.

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## IS IT EVER TOO LATE TO START EXERCISE?

**Exercise and socialization can enhance longevity and sense of well being at any age.**

A recent study looked at a cohort of modestly older people and measured whether an enhanced exercise program and improved socialization could impact any outcomes. The study looked at people in their mid-70's and mid-80's. Dietary counseling was initiated and an exercise program was started.

The study results were fairly dramatic. Both groups in the intervention group had improvements in life span; those

who started a program at age 75 lived on average 5.4 years longer than the control subjects.

Other articles in this letter talk about exercise and diet, and it is clear from this and many other studies that exercise has a dramatic impact on aging. Increased energy, fewer falls, decrease in stroke and heart attack, and significantly improved mental function are all possible with a half hour of exercise a day. Exercise improves and delays dementia better than any other treatment.

Diet is important too. Adhering to a low glycemic diet high in fruit, vegetables, fish, and nuts can help delay mental and physical aging.

Exercise can be as mild as walking a half hour a day. Diet need not be overly restrictive. At PPC we can set up visits to help create a program that works for you (see page 2).

Before you say you are too old to change your diet or to exercise, and before you reach for medicines to help problems, know that it is very simple to stay younger: exercise!

## HOW TO HELP THE AGING BLADDER

**Drugs are not the answer to the overactive bladder that occurs with aging.**

Urinary incontinence is increasingly more common with age. The bladder stiffens and does not hold as much, it will empty without much warning, and the sphincter that prevents leaking weakens.

Multiple drugs and procedures have been pushed to cure this problem, and at least on TV commercials the results seem promising. But good studies have shown otherwise. A recent study

showed that behavioral therapy for incontinence was as effective as drug therapy without having any side effects.



Behavior therapy consists of several modalities:

- Kegel exercises to help strengthen the sphincter and prevent leaking.

- Biofeedback to keep the bladder empty. This is best accomplished by going to the bathroom on frequent timed intervals before the urge occurs.

Drugs for incontinence are burdened by a plethora of side effects, many of which are severe. Behavior therapy, which can be accomplished easily without excessive effort, had no side effects, no cost, and is equally effective.

Talk to your doctor to set up a bladder program that will work for you.

*Get access to your medical records at home! Sign up for the PPC patient portal. Ask our front desk staff.*

*As you age, the hospital is the one place not to be!*



## PROVEN METHODS TO ENHANCE BRAIN FUNCTION WITH AGE

With both normal brain decline and dementia, enhancing memory and mental sharpness is very important with aging. Many medicines and supplements purport to improve memory, especially in those with dementia. The most common medicines such as Aricept have been minimally effective in recent studies, and a plethora of supplements touted as memory enhancers have never been shown to help.

The most consistent stimulator of brain function is exercise. Physical exercise, usually a half hour a day, improves memory and thinking over the long term, probably

by enhancing the endothelial function of brain blood vessels. People with Alzheimers dementia who exercise have a slower mental decline and improved functional capacity than those more sedentary.

Certain food can also improve brain endothelial function,



and recent studies have shown them to be effective enhancers of brain capacity. These include fish oil, olive oil, nuts (especially walnuts),

and dark chocolate. In fact, a recent study showed that older adults with memory decline who consumed cocoa in any form daily had improved mental capacity. Low glycemic foods (see previous newsletter) and a Mediterranean diet, combined with exercise, will help the brain age successfully.

Beware of drugs and novel supplements that are touted to keep the brain healthy. The studies simply do not support their claims. Stick instead with an easy, cheap, and common sense approach. Diet and exercise work every time.

### NUTRITION: THE BAG DIET

As doctors we often tell our patients to lose weight, but we either push a diet too complicated to follow or too vague to mean anything. The bag diet is a simpler way to achieve our dietary goals.

The bag diet is a simple approach that relies on two ideas:

- Total calories need to be restricted, and this is best achieved with fewer snacks and smaller portions.
- The best diet is low glycemic and high in fruits/vegetables/nuts.

In the diet people can have a regular breakfast and dinner, but all other foods eaten during

the day must fit in a paper bag. Those foods should be low glycemic, and high in proteins and fruits.

Together we determine how much should go in the bag, the best meals and snacks, and how to cheat when you must. Set up an appointment with us so we can design a custom bag diet for you.

### INFECTION: SINUSITIS & BRONCHITIS

As we move through flu season, many people ask the best way to treat their colds, sinusitis, and bronchitis. They feel miserable, and are looking for some relief.

A recent study of people with sinusitis, both bacterial and viral, found that antibiotics did not help symptoms or time to recovery. In fact, if

anything, antibiotics caused more side effects and harm.

This study echoes similar findings that show that bronchitis and sinusitis are not helped with antibiotics. Also, antibiotics do not impact viral infections at all. You likely have a virus if you ache, have a runny nose, and have a

cough that is either dry or has clear mucus.

Then what does help? Fluids, pain medicines such as Tylenol, antihistamines, and rest are the most effective treatments. Some people have found zinc and vitamin C effective, but studies do not support this. And nothing beats a big bowl of chicken soup.

## NEWS AND NOTES IN THE WORLD OF OVER THE COUNTER MEDICINES

**VITAMIN D:** We already know that vitamin D can improve bone health, reduce fractures, and decrease fall risk. But new studies show that it may do even more. Two studies show that vitamin D deficiency can lead to heart attacks, and that D supplementation reduces that risk. Vitamin D has also been shown to reduce the risk of colon cancer. The most recent D study showed that pre-diabetics on D supplementation are less likely to develop diabetes. Is D the wonder drug? Probably not, but it certainly has useful properties. Although as with all good things, we know that too much D is actually harmful, so use with caution!

**ASPIRIN:** Although aspirin helps prevent strokes and heart attacks in those who are at high risk, a 2012 study showed that daily aspirin did not reduce the risk of death in the general population. Other studies have shown reduction in heart attacks and certain cancers, but there is also an increased risk of bleeding, and thus the death rate is not improved for most people. Aspirin is not for everyone; ask your doctor if it is for you.

**FISH OIL:** Following the typical roller coaster of supplements, fish oil, recently touted as the great heart attack preventer, has been shown by two review studies to be ineffective

in preventing serious heart attacks and death. But the jury is still out. Certainly fish is very healthy, more than just for its oil, so the best bet is to eat fish.

**RESVERATROL:** Like walnuts and chocolate, resveratrol, the active ingredient in red wine, seems to help blood vessel function and may decrease heart disease.

**CURCUMIN:** This Indian spice has been shown in a recent study to decrease the incidence of diabetes. Cinnamon may have similar properties. Many spices seem to help with medical issues, including ginger and hot pepper.

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## HEALTH PROMOTION VISITS AT PPC.

In this issue we talk a lot about diet, exercise, continence, and health prevention. At PPC you can set up specific appointments to discuss an array of health prevention issues. We can have one time visits or ongoing counseling. Such programs include:

- **DIET COUNSELING:** We will design a bag diet, or diet specific to your medical conditions.
- **EXERCISE:** We will set up a custom program for you
- **BLADDER TRAINING:** Learn behavior training
- **SMOKING CESSATION**
- **BONE HEALTH:** We will talk about how to prevent bone loss
- **HEALTH SCREENING:** What is right for you?

Feel free to set up an appointment for any of these or other important issues.

## DRUG CORNER: ARE STATINS SAFE?

Statins such as Lipitor are a type of cholesterol medicine that have been shown in many studies to reduce the incidence of heart attacks and strokes in people who are at high risk. But many people also believe that statins can be dangerous, and their use is controversial.

A recent study followed statin users long term and found no

serious safety concerns. Even the concern about liver function issues has faded, and doctors do not routinely check labs in people who use statins. While many people feel that statins can cause memory loss, that too has not held up in randomized studies.

A 2012 study disproved one concern about statins, that it increases the chance of can-

cer. In fact, statin users had a 31% decline in cancer. And statins help people even if their cholesterol is not very high.

Statins are not for everyone and only have been shown to help people at high risk. Also, they do have side effects, most commonly muscle pain. But for those who would benefit from using a statin, safety should not be a reason to say no.



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## ***PPC PHILOSOPHY: A GROUP APPROACH***

We welcome Phillip Stone, MD and Michelle Klima, CRNP, to PPC! We now are a full practice with two physicians and three nurse practitioners. At PPC we all work together to take care of all of our patients. Even if you are assigned to one doctor and/or nurse practitioner, we will all be involved in your care, and we encourage you to see any of us.

Either Dr. Lazris or Stone are available at the office every day of the week, and you can make an appointment to see either one. While we do encourage you to have a specific primary care doctor, we also ask that you consider both doctors as your doctors. Also, our nurse practitioners are available at the office for acute needs when the doctors schedules are full. When you need care, our group will provide it.

Our nurse practitioners are the primary care providers at our assisted living facilities, and they work in coordination with Drs. Stone and Lazris, who also visit our facilities regularly. We work as a group to assure that every resident of our facilities is well cared for and is seen promptly. At PPC you will get superb care when you need it.

## **THE BACK PAGE: AGGRESSIVE CARE IN NURSING AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES**

Aggressive medical care is dangerous to residents of long term care facilities, and most likely is harmful to all elderly people. Yet we as a culture believe that aggressive care is thorough care, that the hospital is where the sickest patients do best, and that strict management of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension leads to better outcome. That thinking could not be more wrong!

A 2012 study showed that long term care residents sent to the emergency room were 2-4 times more likely to develop serious gastrointestinal or respiratory infections. The hospital is a breeding ground for deadly infection, and patients admitted to hospitals often get more sick than before they arrived. The hospital is also frequently the cause of drug errors, medical mismanagement, harmful overtreatment, and mental/physical decline, all of which can be deadly to the elderly. Many studies point to the very high rates of death and disability caused by hospital

errors. Very little positive can be accomplished in a hospital; not a single study of the elderly has shown any benefit from hospitalization for the vast majority of illnesses.

Aggressive care in the facility can be equally harmful. A recent study showed that elderly diabetics in nursing homes with poor diabetic control (A1C 8-9) has less functional decline than those diabetics who had better control (A1C 7-8). Many studies have suggested that tight diabetic control in the elderly can lead to worse outcomes. Another recent study of heart attack and stroke victims showed that pushing systolic blood pressure below 120 led to a higher risk of subsequent heart attack and stroke. Low blood pressure and sugar in the elderly leads to more falls, more fatigue, and more confusion.

Giving the elderly more medicines is equally harmful. Although it may seem sensible to treat high blood pressure, high

cholesterol, cardiac conditions, osteoporosis, dementia, etc, with a plethora of medicines, every study suggests otherwise. Overtreatment with medication in the elderly, despite the reasons for such treatment, leads to worse outcomes.

Experience and data suggest that the best Rx for elderly residents of Assisted Living facilities and Nursing Homes is to be less aggressive in testing and treatment, to avoid sending residents to the hospital for all but the most onerous conditions (such as a broken hip), and to instead work to increase exercise and socialization while decreasing the stress caused by excessive medical care.

Treating long term care residents similar to hospital patients, like so many families and health professionals think is beneficial, is clearly deleterious. In the elderly, less is more. Our advice is to talk to your doctor and ensure that you do not become a victim of aggressive medical care.