

A publication for **AvMed Medicare** Members

ASPIRE

Summer 2023



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Pressure Myths**

Home Safety Tips

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ASPIRE

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AvMed, one of Florida's largest not-for-profit health plans, provides quality health benefits throughout the state.

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AvMed *ASPIRE* is published by AvMed.

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1-800-782-8633 (TTY 711)
October 1-March 31,
8 am-8 pm; 7 days a week.
April 1-September 30
Monday-Friday, 8 am-8 pm and
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OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Dear Valued AvMed Medicare Member:

Summer is the perfect time to embrace better health and get a jump-start to a healthier you by heading outdoors, staying active, and soaking up some sun (with proper protection of course).

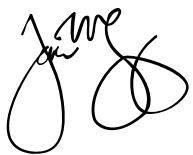
In this issue, you'll learn how to spot the signs of dehydration while enjoying your summer activities and prepare for hurricane season. We also share important announcements about the end of the public health emergency for COVID19. Finally, we have put together safety tips to minimize risk on a big issue that affects older adults: falls.

Every Aspire issue is full of information focusing on what really matters – living a WELLfluent life. Being WELLfluent is all about embracing better health through fitness, nutrition, emotional well-being, and healthcare access.

Have a WELLfluent™ story to tell us?

Share it at **ASPIRE@AvMed.org**. You could be featured in a future issue. As always, thanks for your continued support.

Be well.



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Share Your WELLfluent™ Life! How are you joining the WELLfluent? Email us at ASPIRE@AvMed.org with your story and photo or share it on Facebook – tag AvMed and use the hashtag **#JoinTheWELLfluent**. You could be featured in an upcoming issue of the magazine.

4 High Blood Pressure Myths

With high blood pressure affecting one in three American adults, it's no surprise that the "silent killer" gets a lot of attention. But with so much information out there about HBP, it can be difficult figuring out what's accurate and what isn't. Here are four common HBP myths and the truth about them.

MYTH #1: If I had high blood pressure, I would notice symptoms.

FACT: High blood pressure is often symptomless until it's a medical emergency, but it can do permanent damage to major organs like your kidneys.

MYTH #2: If I have a family history of high blood pressure, I can't avoid it.

FACT: While you are at an increased risk of developing it, lifestyle modifications may help you prevent or delay it.

MYTH #3: I should only worry about the first number (systolic) in my blood pressure reading.

FACT: The second number (diastolic) is just as important. If either of these measurements is consistently higher than normal, discuss it with your doctor.

MYTH #4: Lifestyle changes are enough to control high blood pressure after a heart attack.

FACT: If you've had a heart attack, your doctor will most likely put you on a beta-blocker to reduce your risk of a second episode. These medications are designed to lower your blood pressure, slow down your heart rate, and reduce your chance of another heart attack.



Schedule your wellness visit, get rewarded



Summer is a great time for an annual wellness visit, make sure to talk to your doctor about any needed preventive screenings, chronic care testing, and immunizations, especially flu, pneumonia and COVID-19. Also discuss any concerns about urinary incontinence, pain, depression and fall prevention and exercise plans. AvMed's Healthyperks program has rewards available for many healthy activities, such as having your annual wellness visit.

PROTECT YOURSELF AT HOME AND ON THE GO WITH THESE SMART FALL PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Falls are all too common among older adults. In fact, 1 in 3 older adults will fall this year. That's a big concern because bouncing back isn't always easy. Among seniors, falls are the top cause of injuries, including head injuries, fractures, and even spinal cord injuries, warns Dr. Cynthia J. Brown, director of the division of gerontology, geriatric, and palliative care at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Fortunately, some simple steps can safeguard your home and protect you on the go.

Your first step: Know the top home hazards. While a fall can happen anywhere, certain places invite more danger. One of the top places for concern: The bathroom. "I ask my patients to tell me one soft place they can land in their bathroom if they fall," says Brown. "All have answered that there aren't any." Dr Brown recommends

installing grab bars in the shower or beside the toilet. It's also smart to use a nonslip mat in the shower.

Stairs are another place where a fall can lead to a significant injury. Having handrails on both sides and using them can reduce the risk of a fall, says Brown.

Don't let the fear of falling prevent you from walking, gardening, golfing, exercising and enjoying other activities. Here are some additional tips.

- Add good lighting and night lights.
- Remove loose rugs, electrical cords, and other obstacles that cross pathways, especially between the bed and bathroom.

Ask your doctor for a personalized fall prevention plan based on your risk factors and then put it into action!



For more home safety tips, visit
www.healthinaging.org/tools-and-tips/tipsheet-home-safety-tips-older-adults

Hurricane Season: How Can You Be Prepared?

The Atlantic hurricane season lasts from June through November, with peak season from mid-August to late October. Hurricanes are tracked for weeks before they reach land. The storms are predictable. A hurricane watch implies a storm within 48 hours of landfall. A hurricane warning occurs within 36 hours of landfall. Hurricane preparedness is extremely important for the elderly, so we've put together tips on how to best be prepared before a hurricane strikes.

Below are items to make sure you have in your Hurricane Preparedness Kit for seniors:

- One gallon of water per day.
Electrolyte beverages are a good source of hydration.
- Foods ready to eat and not perishable, preferably rich in B12 vitamin and low in sodium. Vitamin supplements can help prevent nutritional deficiencies.
- Blankets, extra clothing and comfortable shoes.
- Spare eyeglasses, catheters, batteries, oxygen systems, etc.
- Cell phone with charger and extra batteries.
- First-aid kit, medical insurance and Medicaid/Medicare cards.
- Prescription medicines and copies of prescriptions that can be refilled for up to six months.
- Medical-alert tags or bracelets with information about healthcare needs.
- An emergency-contact list to reach family and friends.
- Plenty of extra cash, since access to banks and ATMs may be limited.
- Copies of family records and other important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, Social Security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial, insurance and immunizations records — all stashed in a sealed, waterproof bag.
- A battery-powered radio and/or a NOAA weather radio.
- A solar or battery-operated flashlight.
- A whistle to call for help and a small mirror to reflect sunlight in case you have to signal rescue teams.





Preparing your home

- Install valves in your sewer traps. This will stop flood waters from backing up into drain
- Make a list of items to bring inside if there are high winds or flooding. This includes:
 - Patio furniture - Lawn decorations
 - Trash cans - Tools -Planters
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts. Water should drain properly.
- If you live near the water, consider raising your home. This will resist flood waters.
(Check with your town's planning and zoning official for approval.)
- Raise your furnace, water heater and electric panel. Do this if they are in places that may be flooded.
- Seal walls and openings in basements. Use waterproofing compounds to stop seepage.
- Take photos of your home for insurance claims.
- Find a place to store your boat in case of a flood.
- Write down instructions for turning off utilities. This includes electric, gas and water.

If you find yourself needing to move to a shelter during the storm:

- Take what you can carry from your readiness kit.
- Notify management of any needs you may have.
- Let your family and out-of-town contacts know where you are sheltering or where you will be staying during the storm.
- Make arrangements for your pets' care.

Tropical Storms and Hurricanes can be devastating events for the unprepared.

Be sure you and your loved ones are ready when the next storm arrives.

The End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency



Your health is our top priority, so here are a few steps you can take to keep you and your loved ones safe from coronavirus. Remember, variants are much easier to catch and transmit. Comply with all CDC guidance for travel, social distancing, masking, and hand washing.

The government has approved a second dose of the COVID booster for the elderly and immunocompromised. Seniors 65 years and older can now receive the updated booster four months after their first dose. We encourage you to get your COVID-19 vaccine or booster. Talk to your doctor about his or her recommendations.

If you are sick or need relief from Covid like symptoms, or come in contact with someone who has, call your doctor immediately. We are delaying the referral requirement for primary care physician to specialist referrals for Medicare Advantage Members **until August 1, 2023**.

The Importance of Hydration: Know the signs of dehydration and heat stroke

Your risk for heat-related health problems increases with age. So, it's important to know the warning signs.

Dehydration:

When your body loses water faster than you can replace it, you experience mild dehydration. Signs include increased thirst, a dry mouth, and dark yellow urine.

Heat stroke:

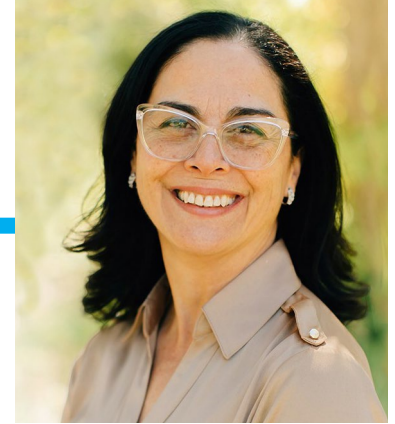
When your body temperature is higher than normal due to the weather, it's known as hyperthermia. Heat stroke is a severe form of hyperthermia that occurs when your temperature is over 104°F. It is a medical emergency. Get help right away if you notice these signs:

- Strong, fast heartbeat
- Dry skin and lack of sweat
- Confusion or staggering
- Fainting or unconsciousness



| AvMed RESPONDS

» MEET ERIKA RUIZ, OUR AGELESS FACE YOGA INSTRUCTOR



What brought you to AvMed?

Working for more than 25 years in senior care facilities, I saw firsthand an increase in requests for brain health and cognitive care services. Based on this, I became a certified American Senior Fitness Association brain fitness facilitator. Shortly after that I learned about the benefits of therapeutic laughter from Dr. Madan Kataria, ultimately becoming certified by the Association for Applied Therapeutic Humor too.

During my studies, I was able to help my own insomnia through personal laughter and wanted to bring this form of healing to seniors. I started with AvMed during the pandemic. As a tool to cope with isolation, the AvMed Community Outreach & Retention Department created an online activity program to promote socialization among the seniors in the community; that is when I started teaching Ageless Face Yoga, a service which is still being offered by AvMed as part of their wellness program. Together, during Ageless Face Yoga, we offer the participants a moment in which they can make use of therapeutic laughter to relieve stress while exercising and enjoying the connection that laughing together generates.

What is Ageless Face Yoga for Members who may not have taken a class yet?

This is a seated mind and body workout that combines therapeutic laughter with a mixture of dancing, singing, brain fitness and meditation to deliver aerobic and cardio exercise, improved short-term memory, and of course, a better mood!

Laughter yoga may also be a new concept for some Members. Can you tell us more about this?

Laughter yoga is all about giggling like you did as a child. Remember that laughter had no reason but was joyous? This is the same thing. Sessions start with breath exercises and working through breath patterns and laughing to clear the lungs, which is especially great for sedentary Members or those with respiratory conditions. From there we continue laughing during exercises to help release endorphins and lower stress hormones.

What inspired you to use laughter yoga in your exercises?

As we get older, we don't laugh as much. With this comes less expression, less energy, and less happiness. A big laugh changes your week and keeps you ageless. Mother Theresa, for example, people remember her smile and not her age. I am passionate about this practice because of all the physiological and psychological benefits that a good laugh adds to our overall health and wellbeing.

What else would you share with our Members?

I always encourage the seniors I work with to feel the age they want to be and not compare themselves to others. We lose our willingness to have fun as we get older, and I want people to remember how they expressed themselves judgement free when they were children. Real youth comes from the inside, when we are able to laugh for no reason, we are young despite what the calendar says.

THREE WAYS TO SLEEP BETTER

As we age, sleeping habits are likely to change. You may find yourself falling asleep or waking up earlier, or you may need less deep sleep. There are some changes, however, that shouldn't be ignored: Disturbed sleep and waking up tired all the time are two of them.

Insomnia can have a drastic effect on your mental health; it has been linked to depression, anxiety, memory loss and other issues that can affect your quality of life. And let's be honest: The less sleep you enjoy, the worse your mood.

If you're displaying any signs of insomnia, you should visit your AvMed Provider. After the visit, he or she may make recommendations such as:



1. Stick to a bedtime. If you fall asleep at 10 pm, make sure you're always falling asleep at that time (or pretty close to it). That way, your body can get into a routine and isn't upset by sudden changes in sleep habits.
2. Avoid caffeine later in the day. Skip the afternoon cup of coffee – it could be keeping you up at night. Limit coffee or tea to one cup a day in the morning to reduce your chances of sleep disruption into the night.
3. Avoid using smart devices right before bed. The blue light emitted from your phone or tablet could be affecting your ability to fall sleep. Power down at least an hour before calling it a night.

Bruschetta Summer Salad

The best time to prepare this salad is late summer when fresh and vine-ripened beefsteak tomatoes are plentiful.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ pounds large tomatoes (about 3), cut into thin wedges
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
- 3 ounces crusty Italian or French bread, preferably whole wheat, cut into 12 slices (optional)
- ¼ pound arugula
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and halved
- 3 ounces part-skim mozzarella cheese, cubed
- ½ cup thinly sliced basil leaves
- Black olives (garnish)



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place tomatoes in salad bowl, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toss gently. Then drizzle with olive oil, lemon juice and vinegar. Cover and let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Preheat broiler. Arrange bread on a baking sheet and broil 3 to 4 inches from heat for 1 minute on each side, or until lightly toasted. Remove from oven and let cool slightly. Then rub each slice of bread with a cut clove of garlic and cut bread slices in half crosswise.
3. Add mozzarella, basil, and toasted bread to tomatoes, and toss to blend well. Add black olives as garnish.

GOOD SOURCE OF Lycopene, vitamin C

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER SERVING

214 calories; 8.7 g total fat; 3 g saturated fat; 4 g monounsaturated fat; 1.2 g polyunsaturated fat; 4.8 g dietary fiber; 12 g protein; 25 g carbohydrate; 12 mg cholesterol; 544 mg sodium

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