



CONSCIENTIOUS CARE

Have you gotten a Flu shot?

The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious respiratory illness that affects 10-20% of Americans each winter. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 225,000 people are expected to be hospitalized, and over 35,000 people will die this winter because of the flu. According to Mary Doepke, RN, Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs, “getting a flu shot is one the best forms of prevention. For those of you who have not already gotten the vaccination, the months of October and November are considered the best time to do so.”

People at above average risk for complications due to the flu include:

- People 50 years of age and older.
- People with a chronic health condition such as diabetes, asthma, bronchitis, heart disease, kidney disease, lung disease, and HIV.
- People who are hospitalized for an extended period of time.
- People who live in a nursing home.
- Health care workers.
- Caregivers of people with a chronic health condition.

The flu virus enters a person’s body through the nose, mouth and eyes. When a person who has the flu coughs or sneezes, germs pass through the air to other people. Germs also live on surfaces such as a table, shopping cart, handrail, and door knob for up to 48 hours. To help minimize your chance of getting the flu, in addition to getting a flu shot, you are encouraged to washing your hands frequently with warm water and soap. Also, try not to rub your eyes or touch your mouth or nose, and whenever possible, avoid coming in contact with someone who has the flu.

When the flu is passed from one person to another, it typically takes about 2 days before symptoms appear. While a flu shot is not 100% effective in preventing the flu, it can reduce your chance of getting the flu and minimize the severity of the symptoms if you get the flu.

Contact your health care provider or pharmacy for more information or to schedule an appointment for a flu shot.

According to the CDC, you can not get the flu from a flu shot. However, people often report mild side-effects such as a low-grade fever, muscle aches or a headache the day after getting the vaccination. If over the course of the winter you feel under the weather and wonder if you have the flu or a bad cold, the following are common symptoms of the flu:

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|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Chills | Dry Cough | Fatigue (can last for weeks) |
| Fever – moderate to high | Headaches | Listlessness |
| Loss of appetite | Muscle aches | Runny nose |

For more information about the flu visit the website for the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases – www.niaid.nih.gov/factsheets/flu.htm.

PREVENTION

Falls and Fall Prevention

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), "Falls are the leading cause of injury death for Americans 65 years and older." Falls are also the fifth leading cause of death in older adults behind cancer, cardiovascular and pulmonary conditions and stroke. Each year, more than one-third of adults age 65 and older fall at least once. The occurrence of falls is considerably higher for people ages 80 and older, and for frail older adults living in a nursing home.

While over half of all falls result in minor injuries that do not require medical treatment, injury resulting from a fall is a major cause of hospital admissions for older adults. Falls often result in a bone fracture, head injury, and a serious cut which can lead to long-term disability, chronic pain, and an inability to live independently.

The fear of falling can also be a challenge for many people. People with a fear of falling often limit their level of activity. Self-imposed activity restrictions tend to lead to social isolation, depression, functional decline and feelings of helplessness.

The good news is that there are many ways older adults can minimize their chance of falling and injuring themselves. The following are just a few of the many fall prevention techniques.

- **EAT WELL** – skipping meals and not eating a healthy balanced diet can cause weakness and fatigue.
- **EXERCISE** – dancing, swimming, walking and other forms of exercise can help people maintain muscle, bone strength and flexibility.
- **HOME SAFETY** – getting rid of clutter is a great way to prevent tripping. Other home safety measures include installing grab bars in the bathroom, making sure handrails are secure, switching on lights before entering a room, and using aids such as a raised toilet and bath/shower seat.
- **OUTDOOR** – making sure sidewalks and other surfaces are cleared and being extra careful when walking on wet or slippery surfaces.

For more information on falls and fall prevention, the CDC offers many helpful Fact Sheets on their website – www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/preventadultfalls.htm.

Outsource or Outrage – You make the call

In the August 3 edition of The Seattle Times was an article entitled Outsourcing the elderly: Low-cost care, made in India. The article told of a frail older couple, ages 89 and 93, with a number of health complications. After years of being cared for in a Florida retirement home, their 56 year-old son was reportedly "exhausted and faced with spending his family's last resources." So, he outsourced his parents to Pondicherry India where everything they need is provided for about \$2,000 month.

Mary Doepke, Owner of Home Helpers in Western Springs says "this move seems a bit drastic. What many people do not realize is that with proper planning, home health care can be an affordable option that provides them with the comfort, quality of life, convenience and familiar surrounding most people want and expect. You make the call."



IN THE NEWS – *2008 Medicare Premiums*

On October 1, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced the 2008 premium amounts for Medicare services.

- Hospital Insurance – PART A: Only 1% of Americans pay a Part A premium. Those who pay are required to do so as they have not worked for the 40-quarters required by law.
- Medical Insurance – PART B: Effective January 1, the average recipient of Part B coverage will pay a monthly premium of \$96.40 for Part B – more than double the amount paid in 2000. Of the over 45 million people who are Medicare beneficiaries, approximately 5 percent will pay a higher premium for Medicare Part B based on having higher than average annual income.
- Prescription Drug Coverage – PART D: The average monthly premium for Part D basic coverage will increase from \$22 to \$25. The premium amount, based on the level of coverage and plan provider, ranges from a low of \$5 a month to about \$100 a month.

For people not already receiving Part D coverage, the 2008 open enrollment period is from November 15 through December 31, 2007. The CMS indicates that each month, over 100 million Part D prescriptions are being filled and that beneficiaries are saving an average of \$1,200 on their medications.

Any increase in Social Security for 2008 is expected to off-set the higher premiums. The percentage increase and average Social Security figures are typically announced in mid-October. For people receiving a monthly Social Security award payment, Medicare premiums are automatically deducted.

For more information on Medicare, plan options, enrollment, premiums and coverage benefits, contact the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid by calling 800-633-4227 or visit their website at www.medicare.gov.

CONTACT INFORMATION



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HOME HELPERS – *Making Life Easier*[™]

Home Helpers' offers personalized care services similar to the care and support that is often provided by family members. We tailor our services and schedules to address our clients' needs.

Home Helpers begins with a consultation, preferably at the care recipient's residence. This gives us the opportunity...

- To meet the client and assess the situation.
- To make sure the requested services can be properly and safely performed.
- To ensure the caregiver(s) assigned possesses the personality, skill set and passion that best meet your loved one's needs.

Home Helpers' experienced and compassionate caregivers are bonded, insured and thoroughly screened. Our caregivers are employees, not subcontractors, thereby minimizing client liability.

To learn more about Home Helpers give us a call at 708-783-1220 or visit us on the web at www.MaryandMikeCare.com.
