

healthkeys®

Winter 2012/13

The power of silence

by Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

There's a verse that comes down to us from Mikao Ushi, the creator of Reiki, the practice of energy healing:

Just for Today ...

Be thankful for all blessings.

Do not be anxious or worry about anything.

Treat all living things with respect.

Be kind.

Given the frenetic world we live in, we might add, "*Just for today I will spend some time in silence.*"

Silence may not come easy. There is little in our restless world to support being alone in a quiet place. Some homes have the television on constantly as a way of escaping silence.

We're familiar with the conflicting complaints, "It's just too quiet" and "Oh for some peace and quiet."

Noise impacts us. It affects our nerves as many harried mothers can attest. But beyond the home, street sounds in the form of boom boxes and construction drilling have negative health effects on our nerves and even hypertension. Exposure to the loud sounds of video games and music can affect hearing. One survey showed that children between the

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Know how much you weigh? The answer may surprise you

Many of us like to think we're at a healthy weight—or that we've always been overweight.

According to a new survey of 775,000 adults, Americans tend to underestimate the amount of extra weight they gain. On average, adults gained weight between 2008 and 2009, yet reported weight losses.

When participants were asked what their weight was at the time of the survey and what they weighed a year prior, many



people surveyed said they lost weight within that year despite actually gaining weight. Researchers also found that women and younger people were more aware of their weight fluctuations than men and older adults.

With obesity a growing problem for Americans, it's important to properly track your weight and be aware of gains to help limit the effects that extra weight can have on your body.

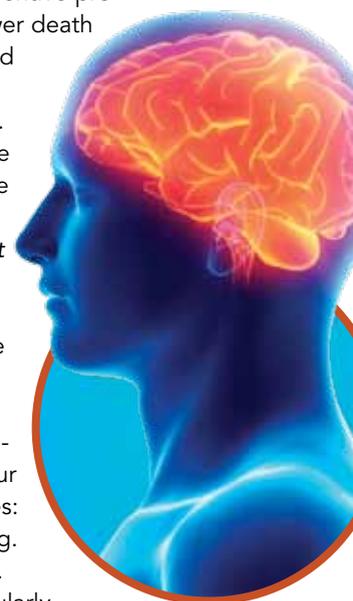
4 steps to lower your stroke risk

Living a healthy lifestyle can reduce your risk of many conditions. Now researchers have concluded that proper preventive care may lead to reduced death rates and less need for long-term care.

Researchers followed about 4,000 people ages 55 and older who focused on reducing their risk for stroke and dementia through healthier diets, more exercise and treatment of conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. After comparing the participants with 13,000 people in a different community who received usual care without the focus on stroke and dementia prevention, they found that those following the preventive program had a lower death rate and needed long-term care 10 percent less. The results were published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*.

In order to help reduce the risks of stroke and dementia, researchers suggest making four lifestyle changes:

1. Stop smoking.
2. Eat healthier.
3. Exercise regularly.
4. Lower high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels by following the treatments prescribed by your doctor.



Take care of your bones as you age

As we age, we become increasingly concerned about heart health and cancer risk, but your bones deserve just as much attention. Poor bone health can lead to osteoporosis, which can increase your risk of fractures. Try these tips to help increase your bone health and fend off osteoporosis:

- Consume enough calcium and vitamin D every day with food or supplements. Women ages 31 to 50 should consume 1,000 mg a day while those older than 50 should increase their intake to 1,200 mg per day, according to the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention. Excellent sources of calcium include dairy products such as cheese and low-fat milk; dark, green leafy vegetables like broccoli; and nuts such as almonds.

- Participate in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day.

Your doctor may conduct a bone density test, which uses X-rays to measure how many grams of calcium and other bone minerals are in a bone segment, to help determine whether you have osteoporosis. Talk with your healthcare provider about bone health and ask when you should be tested.



Are you a candidate for joint replacement?

Joint replacement is one of the most common orthopedic surgeries performed today, with the hip and knee being the most frequently replaced joints. In fact, knee replacements have doubled in the past decade, and not just among seniors. People ages 45 to 64 were 2.5 times more likely to be hospitalized for knee replacement surgery in 2009 than in 1997. But joint replacement may not be the best solution for everyone. Many factors will determine whether trading in your aching joint for a stronger, better, faster replacement is the right step for you.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF JOINT REPLACEMENT

Joint deterioration has a number of causes. Injuries, autoimmune conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and the general wear and tear that occurs over time may all take a toll on the body's joints, causing pain and inhibiting motion. Joint replacement surgery exchanges the deteriorated joint with a prosthesis made of plastic, metal or a combination of both. With successful

outcomes in more than 90 percent of cases, patients who've had a joint replaced may enjoy better quality of life; relief from pain, stiffness or swelling; and improved range of motion. But no surgery is without risks and, although the complication rate in joint replacement is low, patients are susceptible to infection, blood clots and loosening or dislocation of the joint.

WHEN IS JOINT REPLACEMENT THE RIGHT CHOICE?

The severity of your condition will likely be a significant factor in the decision to have joint replacement surgery. If aching and

stiff joints cause constant pain, limit your ability to walk or climb stairs and affect your quality of life, you may be a candidate for joint replacement.

In addition to the extent of your pain and lost mobility, your doctor will consider:

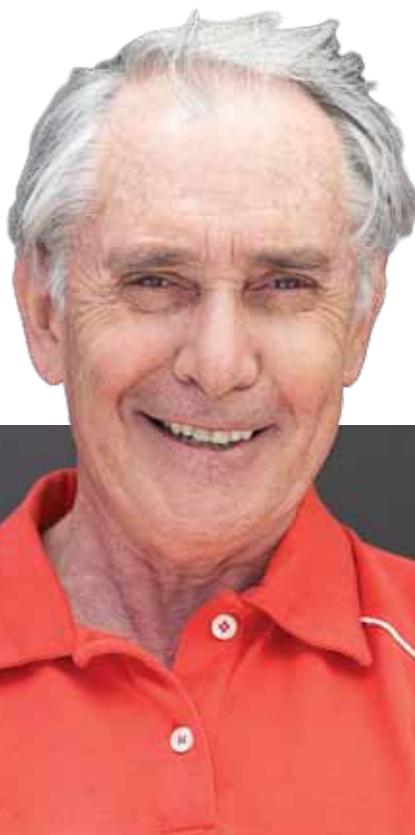
- **Alternatives to surgery.**

Depending on the cause of your joint pain, medications, physical therapy or aids such as a brace may be effective treatment options.

- **Your age.** Prosthetic joints typically last only 10 to 15 years, making younger candidates more likely to need additional surgeries to have the prosthetic joint replaced.

- **Your general health.** Certain diseases, such as high blood pressure or heart and lung disease, increase the risks associated with surgery. Osteoporosis and bone or joint deformity may affect the success of joint replacement.

- **Your weight.** Obesity can prolong recovery and affect the durability of the new joint. 



Getting help when grief takes hold

“The house is so quiet.”
“My heart feels empty.”
“Why did this have to happen?”



Losing someone close to you—whether it’s a family member, friend, pet or other loved one—is painful. The reaction you have to a major loss is called grief. Grieving is a highly personal process. It starts with recognizing the loss and continues until you reach a feeling of acceptance.

GOING THROUGH EMOTIONS

As you grieve, you may experience a range of emotions that can pop up often during the acute phase of grief (the first two months) and even years later (such as on your loved one’s birthday or the anniversary of his or her death).

Emotions you may feel during grief can include:

- denial and emotional numbness
- anger
- guilt
- sadness and depression

You may have crying spells, loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating and trouble sleeping. You may isolate yourself from others, or you may want to discuss your situation openly. Everyone is different.

If you expected the death, such as if your loved one had a terminal illness, you may have gone through anticipatory grief before your loved one died. But that doesn’t mean your grief after the death is less difficult, even if you feel some relief that your loved one is no longer suffering.

Your emotions are not a sign of weakness. You feel this way because

you lost someone important to you. Grieving is an act of love.

TURNING SADNESS AROUND

“How can I feel happy when they are gone?” This is a common thought for someone who has experienced a loss. While it may take time to feel happy or even “normal” again, finding ways to turn your pain around can help.

• **Talk with family and friends.** If they experienced a loss, too, they likely share some of your feelings.

• **Put your thoughts in writing.** Journaling about your feelings or writing a love letter to the person or animal you lost can help release feelings

You feel this way because **you lost someone important to you.** Grieving is an **act of love.**

you have bottled up inside.

- **Consider one-on-one counseling or a support group.** Your doctor, hospice, religious organization, school or veterinarian may have resources.

- **Take care of yourself.** Although you may not feel like it at first, try to eat right, exercise and get back to doing things you enjoy. You may want to plan things to look forward to, such as dinner with a friend or a trip.

WHEN MOVING ON BECOMES DIFFICULT

For some people, grief can be overwhelming and lead to clinical depression or other health problems. If grief gets worse over time or interferes with your daily life, don't be afraid to seek professional help. Talk to your doctor for more information. 

Remembering your loved one

Turning the pain of losing someone into something productive may help ease grief. The memory of your loved one can live on in many ways:

- **Make a donation in your loved one's name.** You may wish to donate to charity or start a scholarship fund.

- **Volunteer.** Helping raise funds for a cause close to your loved one's heart or giving time at an animal shelter can be a great way to help others in memory of your loved one.

- **Plant something.** Having a tree, plant or garden to nurture can fulfill your desire to care for something. It's OK to talk to it, too!

The power of silence

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ages of 6 and 19 evidence hearing problems as a result.

Can we deliberately create silence? It may mean turning off the "talking heads" on television or radio or taking no telephone calls. Imagine the discipline it would take to put off that first cup of coffee or refrain from television for the first 12 minutes of our day. Janet Luhrs, pioneer of the simplicity movement, suggests this in her books "The Simple Living Guide" and "Simple Loving." The joy of emptying the mind has relaxed people from time immemorial. No talk or noise to disturb our being alone without fear of a soundless few minutes. You might receive answers to important questions or ideas for a project just by being in a listening mode.

If possible, take a walk in the park attuned only to natural sounds. The natural world is a wonderful place to experience a silence where we don't analyze, remember or plan.

Acoustic Ecologist Gordon Hempton suggests that silence is an endangered species. He defines real quiet as presence, not an absence of sound but an absence of noise. He is the author of "One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Quest to Preserve Quiet."

From time to time, how sweet it is to hold oneself in a lone cocoon or stand with arms outstretched, ears alert and heart ready to be soothed by the sounds of silence. 

healthkeys®

Keep active at Isabella during the winter

We offer a variety of exercise and support programs. For more information, contact Marilyn Pacheco at **212-342-9224**.



Quick quiz

Test your health savvy

When it comes to your health, the more you know the better. Test your knowledge with this quick quiz.

1

Vertigo is characterized by:

- A. a spinning feeling
- B. nausea
- C. an inability to speak
- D. extreme tiredness

2

Shingles is caused by a reactivation of the virus that causes:

- A. measles
- B. influenza
- C. chickenpox
- D. fifth disease

3

An estimated ____ of adults ages 65 and older are affected by dementia.

- A. 3 percent
- B. 10 percent
- C. 18 percent
- D. 30 percent

4

If you notice your sense of taste changing, it may be caused by:

- A. taking certain medications
- B. wearing dentures
- C. smoking
- D. all of the above

5

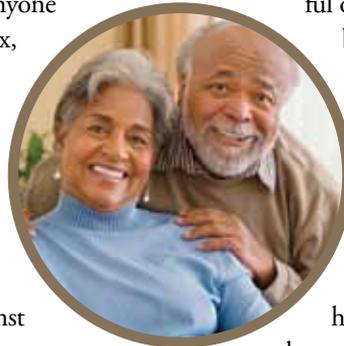
Eating a diet rich in whole-grain foods—those made from the entire seed of a grain—provides the following health benefits, except:

- A. protects against heart disease
- B. lowers stroke risk
- C. improves mental health
- D. lowers diabetes risk

ANSWERS: 1. A, 2. C, 3. B, 4. D, 5. C

Stop shingles before it starts

Have you gotten your shingles vaccination? Shingles, or herpes zoster, is caused by the same virus as chickenpox, and results in painful, blistering rashes on your skin. Shingles can affect anyone who's had chickenpox, but the risk increases with age. If you're older than age 60, ask your doctor about getting vaccinated. To further protect yourself and your loved ones against shingles, here are some questions and answers about the virus that everyone should know.



typically appear on your torso crossing from your abdomen to your spine, but they can also appear on your face. Wherever they appear, these blotches quickly become painful or itchy and develop blisters. While this rash is the most common symptom, it isn't the only one. Other symptoms of shingles include abdominal pain, chills, fever, headache, hearing loss and problems with taste or vision.

HOW IS SHINGLES TREATED?

Shingles is treated with an antiviral drug that reduces the pain and risk of complications, and shortens the length of the outbreak. It works best when started within 24 hours of detection, before blistering occurs.

A shingles outbreak may take a few weeks to clear up. In the meantime, cool compresses, long baths and lotions can help soothe the pain and itching, or your doctor may recommend medications that can help. Bed rest is recommended if you have a fever.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?

People older than age 60 have the highest risk for complications from shingles, including nerve damage in areas of initial outbreak—leading to long-lasting pain—as well as reinfection, blindness, deafness or bacterial infections. HK

WHAT CAUSES SHINGLES? CAN IT SPREAD?

The chickenpox virus never completely leaves your body. Instead, it lies dormant in your system, hiding in certain nerve cells. Shingles occurs when this virus suddenly becomes active again.

Shingles itself isn't contagious. But the virus can be passed on through direct contact with the shingles sores by anyone who isn't immune to chickenpox, causing them to develop chickenpox. For that reason, an infected person should avoid physical contact with others who've never had chickenpox, especially infants and pregnant women, until all the blisters crust over.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SHINGLES?

Shingles first appears as a tingling or burning sensation followed by red blotches on the skin. These blotches

Men: Is prostate cancer screening right for you?

In spring, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force issued a recommendation that surprised many men: It recommended against using the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test for routine prostate cancer screening, stating that the harms of testing outweigh the benefits. Some medical experts agree with this conclusion; others—including the American Cancer Society (ACS) and American Urological Association—disagree.

The ACS recommends that, at age 50 for men who are at average risk of prostate cancer (earlier for those at higher risk), men make an informed decision with their healthcare provider about whether to be screened.

START WITH THE BASICS

The prostate is a walnut-size gland that produces a protein called PSA. If PSA levels in the blood are elevated, it could indicate a prostate problem. The higher the level, the more likely that cancer is present. But many other factors, including age and race, as well as other prostate problems, can affect PSA levels.

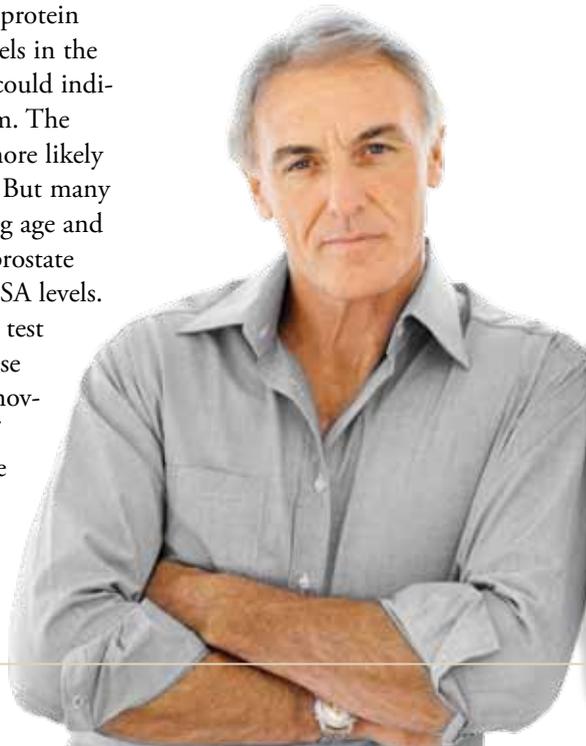
On its own, a PSA test isn't enough to diagnose cancer. A biopsy—removing a small amount of tissue—is usually done after an elevated PSA level. Four out of five men ages 50+

with an elevated PSA level don't have prostate cancer. These results, called false positives, may lead to unnecessary biopsies.

Prostate cancer often grows so slowly that many men who have it detected might never need treatment. But it's difficult to tell which cancers need treatment, so most men with prostate cancer undergo treatment such as radiation therapy or surgery. Treatment can have long-lasting side effects, such as incontinence and erectile dysfunction.

ON THE FLIP SIDE

Some men value the peace of mind that comes from being found to have a normal PSA level. If testing reveals the presence of prostate cancer, some men would prefer to be treated early, when treatments may be more effective. HK



Health dollars & sense

Want to cut medical expenses without compromising your health? Try the following tips to help keep your costs in check.

Stolen health

Identity thieves can steal more than your credit card or Social Security numbers. They can also take personal information about your health or health insurance and use it to get prescriptions and other medical care. It's called medical identity theft, and it's a growing trend (especially among those with Medicare or Medicaid) that can have consequences ranging from stacks of unpaid medical bills that ruin your credit to inaccurate changes in your medical records—for example, the thief's blood type, allergies or health conditions—that can result in improper treatment for you down the road. According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), if you notice suspicious activity such as bills for medical services that you didn't receive, debt collectors calling about unknown medical debts, unpaid medical debts on your credit report or maxed-out insurance benefits, you may be a victim.

To report this crime, file a complaint with the FTC (www.ftccomplaintassistant.gov or **1-877-ID-THEFT [438-4338]**) and call your local police, sending copies of the police report to your insurance provider and the credit bureaus. Also send a written request to your insurance company to correct errors in your medical and billing records.

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What consumers want in a nursing home

by Angela Menghraj, Contributing Editor

“Don’t put me in a nursing home.” “No, I never will.”

So went the conversation many years before the painful decision was made for the sake of safety and care to place a loved one.

But what does a family expect from a nursing home? It may not pay to ask questions after placement has already occurred. Yet sometimes a family might not be sure exactly what answers will bring peace of mind.

Talking with people who’ve made the choice might offer reassurance.

We’ve gathered the thoughts of family members with relatives living in Isabella and asked this question, “Knowing what you know now about nursing homes, what questions do you think need to be answered about day-to-day living before one makes a placement choice?”

Two relatives of Isabella residents agreed to share their thoughts in answer to this question. What follows are highlights of the interviews with them.

“Is the location easily accessible for families to visit? Does the nursing



Isabella Geriatric Center prides itself on its person-centered environment.

home pass the “smell test”? How is independence encouraged? Do they have access to church services, gardens, birthday celebrations, outings? Are administrators, doctors, social workers and nursing staff available to talk about family concerns? Do residents appear to have a sense of well-being and support? Does staff communicate with relatives about changes in medications, side effects and limits? Observe the attitude of

staff toward residents’ needs and care.”

In the second interview, the family member preceded her remarks with “Wash away prejudice about nursing homes. Keep an open mind and keep your eyes open.”

She spoke about the importance of access and availability. Family members should be able to visit 24 hours a day. Administrators need to be ready to give guidance and directions to families. While expecting staff to have a “servant heart,” she strongly suggested that families be willing to be involved. “Be ready to work with staff. Show you are sensitive to the difficulty of what they do. Connect with the certified nursing assistants and see their value.”

Isabella makes continuous efforts to improve residents’ quality of life. The importance of the observations of family members such as those interviewed cannot be overestimated. It’s by working together that the people we love can experience “Home Again” in a person-centered care environment, the hallmark of Isabella. 