

Senior Care News

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We are in the midst of the annual Spring flurry here, making plans for our Wrangell caregiver conference coming up in May, attending health fairs, and getting the word out to caregivers everywhere we go.

The conference in Wrangell is shaping up to be a great event so if you know a caregiver in Wrangell, pass the word!

April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks Go. ~Christopher Morley, *John Mistletoe*

Julie Dyar

Fall Free Zone

Falling is a subject that reminds me of my father. Falls are why he and mom needed my help. Preventing them became a major focus of the care we provided, and, finally, his last major fall was one of three major events that occurred in the days that led up to his decision to stop dialysis and go into hospice.

The fear of falling is one of the most prevalent concerns among seniors. Falling can be really very frightening. A bad fall on the ice a couple of winters ago has permanently altered how I traverse icy conditions. As scary as the fall itself can be, for seniors the fear is usually about more than just the fall. They may fear ending up in a wheelchair, being put in a nursing home, or, like my dad, they could be facing the very real possibility of dying if they have a bad fall. This fear can lead to isolation, depression, and actually increases the likelihood that they will fall.

When thinking about fall prevention, it's really important that we look at all the factors that put our loved one at risk. Installing grab bars and removing trip hazards are great things to do, but there are other issues at play that also need to be addressed.

In 2010, The American Geriatric Society (AGS) published a clinical practice guideline for fall prevention that offers recommendations on the many factors that affect a persons risk for falling. The guideline breaks these factors out into three areas:

1) A personal history of falls - two-thirds of those who experience a fall will fall again within six months, making

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Upcoming Events

Juneau

Family Caregiver Support Group - the family caregiver support group meets the 2nd Thursday of each month from 12:00-1:00 pm at Resurrection Lutheran Church, 740 W. 10th Street. For questions or more information please call 463-6177.

Family Caregiver Training - we offer training on a wide variety of topics the 4th Thursday of each month from 12:00-1:00pm at the Downtown Juneau Public Library. This month Julie Dyar will be discussing Long Term Care Insurance, what it is, what it can do, and important information about how to use the policy. For questions or more information please call the Senior Information & Caregiver Resource Center at 463-6177.

Spring Health Fair - The annual spring health fair will be held at the Nugget Mall, April 16th from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Hospice 5k & 1 mile Run/Walk - Join the fun at Twin Lakes, April 16th, at 9:00 am and help raise funds for Hospice & Homecare of Juneau. Contact Lori or Tony Yorba at 907-463-3987 or tlyorba@gci.net. www.southeastroadrunners.org

AARP Day - April 30th, 9:00-3:30 at Centennial Hall. This jam packed event will cover topics from financial planning, computer basics, tax law changes, Medicare, stress reduction, and more. Free admission, open to the public with door prizes offered every hour.

Medication Roundup - The Alaska State Medicine Alliance and the USDEA are joining together again to provide safe disposal of prescription drugs statewide. In Juneau you can drop off your old and unused medications at

Ketchikan

Ketchikan Family Caregiver Support Group
Ketchikan Senior Center. Contact Bernice at (907)225-8080.

Sitka

Sitka Family Caregiver Support Group - meets the 3rd Wednesday of each month. For more information please contact Brave Heart Volunteers at (907)747-4600.

it important for early intervention.

2) Physical Condition & Mobility - a persons overall health, strength, flexibility, and motor skills all play into their ability to avoid falls.

3) Environment—one third of all falls among seniors involve environmental hazards in the home.

According to the guidelines, the most effective interventions have these common elements as part of their strategy:

- Exercise, particularly balance, strength, and gait training
- Changes to the home environment
- Reduction in the number and/or type of medications
- Management of postural hypotension
- Management of foot problems and footwear

Other recommendations detailed in the publication include:

- Women who need cataract surgery should have the surgery expedited
- 800 IU of Vitamin D a day for people with a suspected Vitamin D deficiency or are otherwise at risk for falls
- Older individuals should be advised not to wear multifocal lenses (i.e. bifocals) when walking, particularly when going up and down stairs

The statistics speak for themselves; 50% of seniors who suffer falls are discharged to a nursing home rather than returning to their own home, 25% will remain in the nursing home for the rest of their life, and over 7,000 seniors will die this year as a result of a fall. By helping our loved ones prevent falls, we provide a critical element in their ability to age with grace, dignity and independence.

Caregivers-R-US

If you or someone you know is caring for an elderly friend or loved one, we are here for you.

- Need help understanding , tracking down, or accessing resources—we can help
- Need to talk with others who share the experience—we can help
- Want training on the issues and tasks associated with caregiving—we can help
- Having trouble purchasing something that would help you in your role as a caregiver—we can help
- Need a break—we can help
- Just need a friendly ear to listen—we can help



For more information on how we can help **YOU** call 463-6177.

Featured Resource

The National Family Caregivers Alliance and the National Alliance for Caregiving have a fabulous website that is chock full of tools and resources. With checklists, tools for assessing and improving your caregiver skills, as well as information on the stages of caregiving, this website is a must visit for anyone who is a caregiver, is thinking they may be a caregiver soon, or someone who knows a caregiver and wants tips on how they can help.

www.familycaregiving101.org

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To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email seniorinfo@gci.net or call 463-6177 or toll free in Alaska at 1-866-746-6177.

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