

Live Healthy Georgia – Seniors Taking Charge!

August 2009 Newsletter



Get Checked!

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When was the last time you spoke to a doctor about your health? Have you started “playing the trombone” when trying to read the newspaper? Is it getting harder to hear your favorite television show? As we age, our bodies do not always perform as well as they did when we were younger. The normal wear and tear of life increases our risk for many health problems—specifically those affecting the heart, eyes, and ears—but it is possible to stay healthier longer and maintain our independent lives through prevention, early detection, and management of health problems. One way we do this is to receive regular checkups. This *allows your physician to catch problems early on*, increasing the chance of a better outcome.



HEART

Heart disease is the leading cause of death of men and

women in the United States. Heart disease is a broad term used to describe a range of diseases that affect the heart and its surrounding blood vessels, and it is used interchangeably with cardiovascular disease (CVD).

CVD is caused by the narrowing, blocking, or stiffening of your blood vessels so that parts of your body do not receive the blood it needs. *Without regular checkups to see your doctor, CVD might not be diagnosed until the condition worsens into a chest pain, heart attack, stroke, heart failure, or sudden cardiac death.* Hypertension (HTN) or high blood pressure can lead to CVD by damaging the heart and blood vessels. The longer it goes uncontrolled, the greater the damage. *Have your blood pressure screened at least every two years.* High blood cholesterol can also increase your chance of developing CVD by increasing fatty deposits in your blood vessels, obstructing proper blood flow to your body. *Have your blood cholesterol screened every five years.* Your Local Senior Center may provide free screens for HTN and high blood cholesterol:

<http://www.retirementcommunity.com/Cate-gory/Senior-Centers/Georgia-senior-centers/>



EYES

The American Optometric Association recommends that *adults get their vision*

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checked AT LEAST every two years, even if no eye problems are suspected. The frequency of checkups should be increased when there is the presence of any health condition that may complicate eye health, such as diabetes. According to new guidelines set by the American Academy of Ophthalmology, *you should see an ophthalmologist* (a medical doctor who specializes in eyesight) *at least once by age 40.* This creates a baseline and allows them to track your eyesight for any age-related problems. Presbyopia is the diminished ability to focus on objects nearby, and this is a normal change that occurs in everyone starting around ages 40-50. Impaired vision can range from partial sight to total blindness. The most common conditions that impair eyesight in the elderly are macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy. Receiving regular checkups can detect these conditions early and result in better outcomes. Learn more about common causes of age-related vision loss:
<http://www.lighthouse.org/medical/the-aging-eye/>



EARS

An estimated 25% of Americans between the ages of 65 and 75 and around 75% of those older than 75

have some degree of hearing loss. Those that notice any change in their hearing should have their hearing checked. Those exposed to hazardous noise should receive an annual hearing checkup. Both the amount of noise and the duration for which you are exposed determine whether the noise is hazardous to your ears. To read more about hazardous noise: <http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/disorder/s/noise.htm>. *Those with healthy ears that are not exposed to hazardous noise should receive a checkup every three years.* To find out where you can get a hearing test: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/faq/faq.html#test>. Your local senior center may also be able to provide a free hearing test: <http://www.retirementcommunity.com/Category/Senior-Centers/Georgia-senior-centers/>

Take Charge of Your Health!

Receiving regular health checkups is part of an overall healthy lifestyle. Catching problems early can result in better outcomes. Get an annual physical and talk to your doctor about any concerns you have. *The frequency of visits may need to be increased with certain health conditions.* For recommendations for specific health conditions: <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm#Recommendations>