

OPTIMIZE HEALTH, FUNCTION AND  
INDEPENDENCE THROUGHOUT LIFE'S JOURNEY

# Healthy Aging

## Notes & News

December 2017



## Talking About Health Prognosis and Advance Care Planning Helps Meet Your Needs

Source: *Health in Aging* <[info.amger@americangeriatrics.org](mailto:info.amger@americangeriatrics.org)>

“Prognosis” is the term for the most likely outcome of a medical condition. When it comes to health care, talking about your prognosis can be difficult.

However when living with a chronic or terminal illness; advance care planning is crucial to assist health care professionals in meeting your future needs, preferences and expectations.

Advance care planning is an ongoing process. You can get started by having early conversations with our Advance Care Planning facilitators about your care needs, preferences, and expectations.

Please call the Aspirus Customer Contact Center at 715-847-2380 or 800-847-4707 to learn more about available FREE Advance Care Planning appointments in your area.



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Passion for excellence.  
Compassion for people.

## Fast Facts on the Veteran's Aid and Attendance Pension

- The aid and attendance benefit is currently received by about 543,000 people.
- That number represents only about 5% of those who could be eligible.
- Assisted living options cost an average of about \$3,300 a month.
- Nursing homes typically cost upwards of \$6,200 a month.
- Some veterans and their spouses can get more than \$2,000 a month from the aid and attendance pension to help cover those costs.

Sources: [VeteranAid.org](http://VeteranAid.org), [LongTermCare.gov](http://LongTermCare.gov)

The amount senior veterans are able to get with the aid and attendance pension varies according to many details. The Department of Veterans Affairs will look at what your income is now in comparison to your required health care costs to determine what your level of need is.

The many particulars involved in calculating the pension make it difficult for us to provide you a specific number. To learn more, contact your local VA office.

**In Marathon County:** Veterans Service Center  
212 River Drive, #1  
Wausau, WI 54401  
715.261.1141

Not everyone who applies will be eligible for those amounts, but even if the number you're provided comes out to less, every little bit counts when it comes to getting the care you need.

## Pumpkin Eggnog

*Here's a lighter version of a holiday favorite. The pumpkin gives added flavor plus nutrients without high calories.*

### Ingredients:

5 cups light vanilla soymilk	1 tsp. rum extract
One small (4-serving) package sugar-free fat-free instant vanilla pudding mix	1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
6 no-calorie sweetener packets (i.e. Splenda)	1/2 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
2/3 cup canned pure pumpkin	1/4 tsp. cinnamon
	Optional Topping: additional cinnamon

### Directions:

In a blender, combine all ingredients and blend on high until mixed thoroughly. Refrigerate for a few hours to allow it to thicken. If you like, top each glass off with a sprinkling of cinnamon. Enjoy!

Makes five 1 cup servings.

Calories: 110 Fat: 2g Sodium: 344mg Carbs: 16g Fiber: 2g Sugars: 6.5g Protein: 6g

*Hints: If you track Weight Watcher points, one serving is equal to 3 PointsPlus®. If you prefer less sugar, you can cut back on the sweetener packets and gradually add a little sweetener at a time to your liking. This recipe was found at [Hungry-Girl.com](http://Hungry-Girl.com).*



## It's Not "Just the Flu"

Source: Health in Aging <info.amger@americangeriatrics.org>

**Influenza**, or the "flu," is a **contagious respiratory illness**. It can cause mild to severe sickness, and at times it can even be fatal. Older adults, young children, and people with certain health conditions are at high risk for serious flu complications, including bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, and dehydration.



### Don't Let the Flu Get to You

The best way to prevent the flu is by **getting a flu shot every year** in the late summer or early fall. Other ways to stop the spread of flu viruses include:

- Washing your hands with soap and water, especially after you sneeze/cough.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throwing the tissue in the garbage when you've finished using it.
- Avoiding close contact with people who appear to be sick.
- Staying at home and avoiding contact with others if you get flu-like symptoms yourself.

If you have not already had a flu shot this season, contact your Aspirus provider. If you do not have an Aspirus provider, find one at [aspirus.org](http://aspirus.org) or call the Aspirus Customer Contact Center at 715.847.2380 or 1.800.847.4707.

### What to Do if You Get the Flu

If you or someone you care for has a fever, chills, aches, a sore throat, cough, or other symptoms of the flu, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

A healthcare provider can prescribe medications known as "anti-virals" to help your body fight the virus. These anti-viral medications work differently than vaccines or antibiotics, and they need to be taken according to your healthcare provider's directions. They work best if they're taken early, so call your healthcare provider as soon as you have symptoms of the flu.

### Other "Must Dos" for the Flu

If you think you might have the flu, be sure to take the following precautions, too:

- **Stay home until it's been seven days** since your symptoms began. This helps prevent the spread of flu.
- **Get enough sleep and drink plenty of fluids** to help your body fight the virus.
- **Look out for emergency warning signs and call 911 immediately** if you have a prolonged fever, difficulty breathing, severe or persistent vomiting, or pain/pressure in your chest.



# Delirium & Older Adults: What You Should Know

Source: *Health in Aging.org*

We all have minor problems with memory and understanding as we get older, but some older adults develop more serious concerns like delirium. **Delirium** is a term meaning “sudden confusion,” and it refers to an **abrupt, rapid change in mental function that goes well beyond the typical forgetfulness of aging**. Family members and friends can play a key role in recognizing and preventing delirium. Here’s how...

## Know How Delirium Starts

Some causes of delirium can be reversed. Sometimes, for example, delirium can result from:

- Starting **new medications or changing current medication** doses.
- **Stopping medications** that you may have been on for a long time.
- Stopping regular use of **alcohol or sleeping pills**.
- Experiencing **certain health concerns** that may impact our mental well-being, such as pain, constipation, thyroid problems, infections, dehydration, stroke, and some types of heart problems.

## Know What Delirium Looks Like

Delirium can come and go, and symptoms can change quickly. Be sure to **report any of the following warning signs** right away:

- Confusion
- Frequent mood swings
- Memory loss
- Sudden changes in personality or emotional state
- Decreased attention/concentration
- Hallucinations
- Insomnia or changes in usual sleep patterns
- Slower or unusually restless movements
- Changes in speech (such as saying things that don’t make sense)



## Know What to Do to Manage & Prevent Delirium

In addition to watching for changes in behavior or alertness, you can take the following proactive steps to reduce the risk that you or someone you know might become delirious:

- Stay with an older person as much as possible to offer comfort and familiarity, especially if they are in a hospital or unfamiliar setting.
- Keep eyeglasses, hearing aids, and dentures handy. Not having these can leave an older person disoriented and less able to function.
- Encourage physical activity, games, and conversation. These pastimes can help us stay alert and relaxed.
- Health status and certain treatments can impact mental well-being, so bring lists of your medications and health concerns to appointments and hospital visits.

At the Aspirus Memory Clinic, the focus is not only on the patient, but also the family and caregiver of the patient. Call 715-847-2004 for more information regarding appointments.



## The Unseen Causes of Falls: Beyond Throw Rugs

When a fall occurs, it's not always the throw rug that's to blame. Sometimes older adults fall because of lost muscle tone and strength that's a natural part of aging. Other times, a fall is a complication from an existing condition like COPD, or the result of a stroke or heart attack, or even a consequence of medication errors. Knowing more about the causes of falls, helps you anticipate your needs more effectively.



Approximately one-third of seniors who live at home fall at least once a year. Most of these falls happen when an older adult with a physical or medical condition encounters something like stairs, electrical cords, ice and snow – even a ringing phone!

### **These physical impairments related to aging or chronic illness further increase the risk of falling.**

- Compromised vision
- Hearing loss
- Tingling or numbness in feet and legs
- Changing blood pressure or heart beat

### **Why Seniors with Cognitive Disorders May Fall**

Seniors with cognitive impairments like dementia or Parkinson's disease are 54% more likely to fall and require a trip to the Emergency room.

- Slow central processing
- Decreased cognition and awareness
- Diminished alertness

### **Why Seniors with Diabetes May Fall**

Diabetic seniors are 30% more likely to fall and require a trip to the Emergency Room

- Light headedness and dizziness
- Impaired vision
- Weakened muscles
- Reduced mobility
- Neuropathy, numbness or sensation in feet

### **Why Seniors Taking Multiple Medications May Fall**

Seniors taking more than four medications are 14% more likely to fall.

- Light headedness and dizziness
- Impaired balance
- Restricted blood flow to brain
- Dehydration
- Drowsiness

*continued on the next page*

### Reduce the Likelihood and Impact of Falls

Empower the seniors you know to get the help they need before and after a fall.

- The Aspirus Lifeline medical alert systems make it easy to request assistance when symptoms felt may lead to a fall.
- Aspirus Lifeline with Auto Alert fall detection notifies response staff when a fall is detected- even if you cannot press your button.

Learn more about the Aspirus Lifeline products that can help you today at [www.aspirus.org/lifeline](http://www.aspirus.org/lifeline)

To learn more visit [aspirus.org/lifeline](http://aspirus.org/lifeline) or by telephone:

- **Aspirus Wausau Hospital Lifeline: 715.847.2781**  
Serving Marathon County and the city of Marshfield
  - **Satellite program – Bell Tower Lifeline serving Lincoln County: 715.539.1401**
  - **Aspirus Langlade Hospital: 715.623.9422**  
Serving Langlade and Forest County, and limited parts of Shawano, Menominee, Oconto and Marathon Counties
  - **Aspirus Grand View: 906.932.6209**  
Serving Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties in Michigan, and Iron County in Wisconsin
  - **Aspirus Riverview Hospital: 715.421.7597**  
Serving Wisconsin Rapids area
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## Healthy Aging Programs

To learn more about upcoming programs in your areas or to register, please call the numbers listed below:

The following free or low-cost programs are currently offered by Aspirus in collaboration with the Aging & Disability Resource Center and other community partners:

- **Honoring Choices (April - December) 715.847.2380 or 800.847.4707** - Get free help to discuss your experiences, values and beliefs and begin the advance care planning process. Help is also offered to complete a written advance directive.
- **Living Well with Chronic Conditions 888.486.9545** - Find practical ways to deal with pain, fatigue, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other symptoms of ongoing health problems.
- **Healthy Living with Diabetes 888.486.9545** - Type 2 Diabetes or pre-diabetes. Learn skills to better manage.
- **Stepping On 888.486.9545** - This fun and interactive program offers simple balance and strength exercises to avoid falls, and gain confidence walking.
- **Senior Fitness 715.847.2827** - Get stronger, become more fit, and improve balance and coordination.
- **Medication Mondays 715.847.2380 or 800.847.4707** - Schedule one-on-one time with a pharmacy staff member to better understand and organize medications, including vitamins, supplements, and over-the-counter pills. Medications will also be evaluated for risk of falling.

## Healthy Holiday Eating Tips

Eat regular meals - skipping meals can lead to overeating. Eat as many colorful fruits and veggies as you can! Go ahead, stuff yourself silly with delicious winter squash, citrus fruits, etc.!

Stay hydrated - drink as much water as you can, plus winter teas (ginger and lemon - YUM), cranberry smoothies, and other fresh concoctions.

Eat a protein-packed snack an hour before your holiday meal.

Your mantra: Eat the best, leave the rest!

No guilt! Enjoy your favorite holiday dishes, in moderation.

Fill up on salad and fresh vegetables first.

Eat mindfully and put your fork down between bites.

Get active! 10 minutes burst of activity boost your metabolism!





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