

Senior Services News

“Your Pills Do Not Age With You!”

Mrs. P, age 75, was in the emergency department with dizziness, poor balance, vomiting, thirst, and mental confusion that had started three days before. She had been stressed, caring for her husband, who was recovering from major surgery, over the prior three weeks. She herself was on five prescribed medications, but had been perfectly well until this sudden change. A CT scan of her brain was negative, but a blood test detected that her serum sodium was very low. Her two blood pressure medications were withheld in hospital and she made a steady recovery after that. One of the two medications, a diuretic, has now been stopped permanently, even though she had been taking it with no difficulty for several years.

Thirty percent of seniors are taking more than five prescription medications, and almost fifty percent of seniors are taking at least one over-the-counter medication regularly.

If you receive a prescription from your doctor, the assumption is that this medication is safe and effective. It is, after all, approved by the US Food and Drug Administration. But prescribing for seniors is, in many ways, uncharted territory for any physician. Before a drug gets to market, it undergoes testing, mainly in younger subjects. Also, testing subjects are usually not on very many other medications, so information on drug interactions when the drug gets to market, is sparse.

Older individuals' bodies are much lower in muscle mass and consequently higher in fat content, making the dynamics of drug distribution and elimination different from a pre-market research population. Also, seniors tend to have slower liver and kidney function, causing slower drug elimination. As a result, lower doses of medication are often just as effective, and normal doses are more likely to result in toxicity.

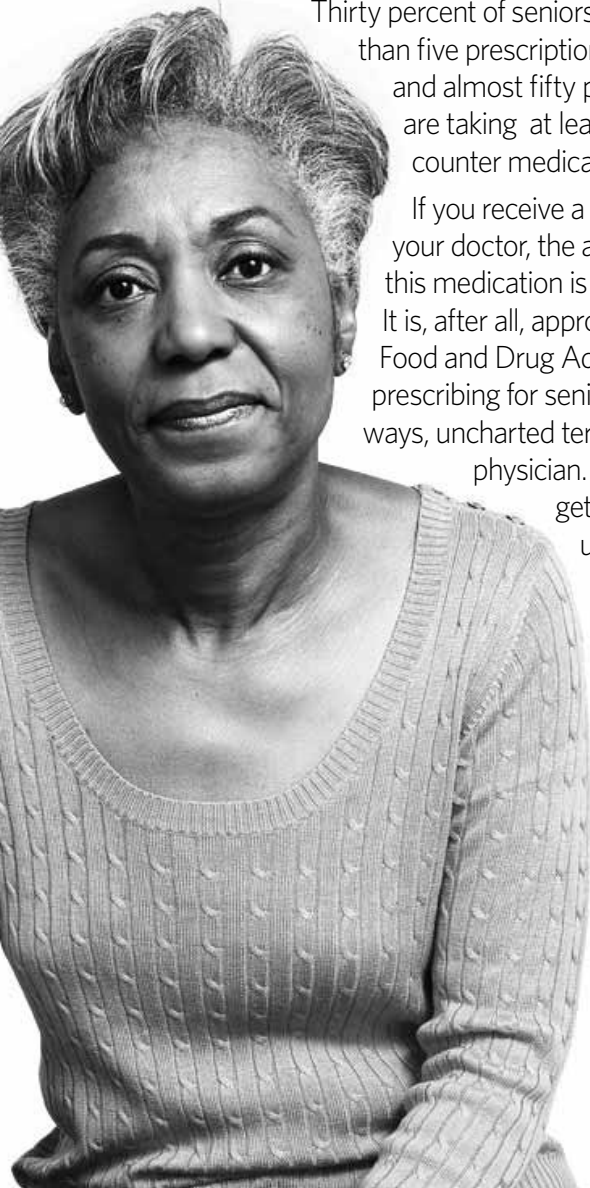
Sometimes, the problem is the reverse. Doctors may not be aware that a medication is not being taken as often as prescribed, either due to expense or forgetfulness. A stronger dose of medication might then be prescribed. If the patient then starts to take the medication more regularly, an overdose may be the consequence!

In 1991 a consensus panel of medical experts created a list of medications that were inappropriate to be prescribed in the elderly - the “Beers list”. On that list are sedative and tranquilizer medications such as ativan, valium, risperdal, seroquel, and ambien. The list also includes antihistamines such as Benadryl, and many muscle relaxants and antidepressants. Some diabetes medications are also on the list.

Now, I have to tell you that some of my patients are actually taking some of these medications, but the important thing is that you have a focused discussion with your doctor about the risks and benefits of the medications on this list. Your medication list should be monitored and discussed with your doctor at least annually, and more often if you're on five medications or more. Whenever you feel unwell, you should consider medication side effects or interactions as one of the possible causes.

As I like to tell my patients, “you are getting older, and your medications aren't!” Your body will change over time and your tolerance for medications will also change. Prescribing medication is a dynamic process that requires ongoing monitoring by your doctor as well as vigilance by yourself.

Lawren Hicks, M.D.
Medical Director



Educational Opportunities

There is no charge to attend our health education events unless otherwise noted. Registration is required. Call the listed number to register or on-line registration is available for most offerings at johnmuirhealth.com.

MAY - AUGUST

Importance of Maintaining Good Posture & Balance – Anne Randolph, PT

June 6 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor

Falls can be prevented with a healthy posture and good balance. Using physical therapy techniques, this class will teach you how to improve your balance and posture to be capable of avoiding falls and reducing injury.

Healthy Digestion – Kathy Napoli, M.A., R.D.

June 20 | 9:30 - 11 a.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | 1656 N. California Blvd., Walnut Creek

Your medicine cabinet may be brimming with laxatives, antacids, gas relievers and anti-diarrhea medications in an attempt to relieve the discomfort caused by digestive issues. In this class, you will discover simple but effective nutritional and lifestyle strategies that will help rebalance your body's delicate digestive system in order to relieve your symptoms and restore your health.

Understanding and Preventing Stroke – Ray Stephens M.D.

July 24 | 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

Sudden changes in vision, coordination, numbness or weakness could all be signs of stroke. It is important to identify these early symptoms and seek proper neurological treatment immediately. This class will give you the knowledge to recognize the signs and the confidence to see a doctor.

Dementia- Should I Be Worried – Lawren Hicks M.D.

August 26 | 2:30-3:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek

Learn from a physician's perspective when to be concerned about your memory. We will discuss the differences between normal aging brain function and true memory loss as well as how to talk to your doctor or family about your concerns.

Catch Yourself – Maintain Your Independence

July 7, 14, 21, 28 | 2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor

July 9, 16, 23, 30 | 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek

This four-session class series raises awareness about falls by practicing techniques in class. Learn how to improve your strength and balance, simplify your environment, and identify fall risks. Classes will cover home safety strategies, exercise techniques, medication management, and other ways to decrease your risk of falling. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.

Ongoing Classes

Welcome to Medicare

May 21, June 11, July 9, August 13, 7 - 9:30 p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

This course is for those new to Medicare, or soon to enroll, who want to understand the many benefits available. Learn about health benefits, drug coverage and how to supplement your coverage. Medicare & You 2014 booklet and other materials are provided. Presented by the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) of Contra Costa County. HICAP does not sell or endorse insurance products. Additional class locations listed on HICAP website, www.cchicap.org. Call for reservations.

Advance Health Care Directives – Suzanne Leib, MFT

May 7 | 6p.m. -8p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

June 10 | 6p.m. -8p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

July 9 | 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor

August 20 | 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 941-7900 option 3 | Outpatient Center, Brentwood

All adults, regardless of age, need to understand how they can have control over their own life and death decisions. Learn the choices you or your family may face due to an accident or serious illness. This is an opportunity to clarify your choices and make sure they will be carried out should you become unable to make your own health care decisions. Required documents will be provided.

AARP Driver Safety Program

May 17 | 1-day, 8 hour class | 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

May 20 | refresher class / 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

June 14 | 1-day, 8 hour class / 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

June 21 | refresher class | 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

July 15 | refresher class / 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

July 19 | 1-day, 8 hour class / 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

August 16 | refresher class / 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

August 19 & 21 | 2-day, 8 hour / 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. | John Muir Medical Center, Concord

This eight-hour Smart Driver classroom course, designed for motorists over age 50, helps drivers refine existing skills and develop safe, defensive driving techniques. Also offered is the four-and-a-half hour refresher course for those who have taken the eight-hour course, or the refresher course, within the last three years. Cost \$15 for AARP members, \$20 for others. Bring AARP ID card or member ID number to class for discount verification. The refresher course can be repeated every three years. Call 947-3300 to register.

Screenings

Memory Screening – What’s Your Memory Fitness?

May 13, June 17, July 15, August 12 | 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. | 947-3300

May 14, June 18, July 16, August 13 | 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. | 947-3300

Outpatient Center, Brentwood

Outpatient Center, Tice Valley/Rossmoor

Outpatient Center, Walnut Creek

Many people notice changes in their memory as they grow older. If you are 65 or older and have a John Muir Health primary care physician, Senior Services, in partnership with John Muir Health Neurosciences Institute, offers a free individual memory screening to help determine if your memory is functioning at a level that is typical for a person your age. This is a screening and not a diagnostic exam. Screenings are offered on the specific dates and times at the three locations listed. Call for a 30 minute appointment.



Senior Services
 1450 Treat Blvd
 Walnut Creek, CA 94597

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

PRSR FIRST CLASS
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 CONCORD, CA
 PERMIT #473

Change in information? If you have a change in address or wish to be removed from our mailing list, please notify us at 947-3300 or seniorservices@johnmuirhealth.com

Free Blood Pressure Screenings

Because high blood pressure lacks specific symptoms, people may not know they are at risk. Please take advantage of these free, drop-in opportunities.

*Asterisk on locations below note sites of monthly blood pressure screenings. Call 947-3300 for information.

Program Locations

* Alcosta Senior Center
 9300 Alcosta Blvd., San Ramon
 (925) 973-3250

* Ambrose Community Center
 3105 Willow Pass Rd., Bay Point
 (925) 458-2662

* Antioch Senior Center
 415 W. 2nd St., Antioch
 (925) 778-1158

* Concord Senior Center
 2727 Parkside Circle, Concord
 (925) 671-3320

* Danville Senior Center
 115 E. Prospect Avenue
 Danville
 (925) 314-3490

* First Presbyterian Church
 1965 Colfax St., Concord
 (510) 512-4032

* Golden Crane Senior Center
 1401 Danville Blvd, Alamo
 (925) 820-0500

John Muir Health Outpatient Center
 Brentwood
 2400 Balfour Rd., Brentwood
 (925) 308-8100

* John Muir Health Outpatient Center
 Tice Valley/Rossmoor
 1220 Rossmoor Parkway, Walnut Creek
 (925) 939-1220

John Muir Health Outpatient Center
 Walnut Creek
 1450 Treat Blvd
 Walnut Creek

1656 N. California Blvd.
 Walnut Creek
 (925) 941-7900

John Muir Medical Center, Concord
 2540 East St., Concord
 (925) 682-8200

John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek
 1601 Ygnacio Valley Rd., Walnut Creek
 (925) 939-3000

* Martinez Senior Center
 818 Green St., Martinez
 (925) 370-8770

* Pittsburg Senior Center
 300 Presidio Lane, Pittsburg
 (925) 252-4890

* Pleasant Hill Senior Center
 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill
 (925) 798-8788

* Walnut Creek Senior Center
 1375 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek
 (925) 943-5851