

Featured Article

Gift Giving to Seniors

It's that time of year again. What do we get for Grandpa or Great Auntie who are in a nursing home? They are in their own small home but it's full of stuff! What can we get them that they can use and will enjoy? Another tie or scarf? They have drawers full of those already and don't go out and have the opportunity to wear them very often. So what to get...When thinking about gifts for seniors, take a moment to look at their lifestyle and how they spend their time. Think about things that will make their life more comfortable and enjoyable. Most are past accumulations of "stuff" and are more concerned with down sizing and getting everything organized.

Your time is the greatest gift you can offer but when we are all so busy, sometimes this isn't possible. Consider gift certificates for care giving, taxis, hair dressers, food and other delivery services. Pedicures and home visits from a trained foot nurse are very good for both sexes as feet can be troublesome for older folks. Massage therapists will also travel to their homes and treat them to a massage. Think about the challenges your seniors have and what may help them. If buying books, be sure to check the print size and the weight of the book so that it will be comfortable for them to enjoy. If purchasing music, be sure that they have the equipment to play it and are confident in using it.

If your senior is struggling with a home computer, consider a gift certificate for in home lessons. Many seniors would enjoy the new technology available but are nervous to get it home and have to install it. Offer your help in doing so or hire a professional for them. Telephones are important tools for seniors and the ability to have handsets in every room (including the bathroom) would be a wonderful gift for not only their peace of mind but for yours as well. Just be sure that help is offered to install and program any equipment given.

Almost every business offers gift certificates so think about something they may want or a service they can use and inquire about a gift card or certificate. Many seniors don't want to indulge themselves as they are concerned about how long their money will last - so if you can help them enjoy those indulgences, they will be very grateful. Although many don't think of it - cash discreetly tucked into a card gives the senior the opportunity to choose something for themselves or help with costs for medication or daily living.

As with giving a gift to anyone, just acknowledging them and their importance in your life is the greatest gift that you can share. Slow down and appreciate the moment with them, the lessons you will learn will be their greatest legacy and gift to everyone. Happy Holidays, everyone.

Article by, Laila Pera, CPCA, www.northgatesupportservices.ca

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Ask Dr. John

Aging and Itching!

From time to time, questions are asked about aging and itching. The first thing to clarify is that when seniors experience itching of the skin, this is NOT part of the 'normal' aging process. If it was, ALL seniors would itch. And we know this is not true.

A couple of things to keep in mind - - The skin is the largest organ in the body. It is the 'envelope' in which we live; it is the outside 'wrapping' covering the exterior

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of all our tissues; it provides the initial 'contact' with our 'environment' (air, light, heat, cold, humidity, dust and irritants); it has a very important role in the regulation of body temperature; it is a barrier to infection; its layers are complex in structure and function; it contains millions of specialized, sensory nerve endings (receptors) variously designed to transmit to the brain sensations of heat, cold, pressure, pain, and, yes - - ITCHING.

There is no widely-accepted method of measuring (i.e. quantifying) itch. (As there is for blood pressure, for example.) We tend to use adjectives such as "mild, intensive, firey, painful, annoying, irritating, persistent, intermittent." In many such cases we are actually talking about itching as a SYMPTOM of some pathological process. The causal pathology may be LOCA, on the skin itself, or SYSTEMIC, as part of an underlying disease (e.g. Diabetes).

Just as the aging process makes us more susceptible to age-related diseases, so also it must be said that the age-changes in some organic functions of the skin can make us more likely to experience itching as we grow older. For instance, skin tends to become drier and less elastic with age because the sebaceous glands in the skin diminish in number and function, discharging less sebum (oil) needed for lubrication and moisturising. Dry skin becomes cracked and scaly, and allows infectious organisms to penetrate causing inflammation and/or itching.

As our immune systems decline functionally with advancing age, the risk of ITCHING as a symptom of allergies, underlying medical conditions and skin conditions of all types (e.g. rashes, eczema, dermatitis) increases. Frequently, these itch-related disorders are investigated and treated by a dermatologist

In ALL age groups (but particularly in old age), skin hygiene and care is important in preventing itching. Cleansing of the skin and scalp removes dead cell debris and microscopic, environmental impurities, which accumulate in daily living and interfere with the healthy, organic functions of the skin. From the skin care and hygiene perspective, the soap, cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries are constantly advising us how to "be comfortable in our own skin" via their products. (Some of which are useful in skin care - - exaggerated claims about "rejuvenation" notwithstanding!)- Take the advice of your dermatologist.

This section of our newsletter gives you an opportunity to send in questions and receive answers from one of Canada's leading and founding gerontologists! Following his retirement as a professor of gerontology at Simon Fraser University, Dr. John Crawford continues to share his expertise and wisdom by serving as the VP of Education for the Canadian Academy of Senior Advisors. Take advantage of your access to this remarkable resource by e-mailing your questions to: drjohn@AgeFriendlyBusiness.com

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Heart Healthy Recipe

Banana Walnut Coffee Cake

This banana cake is moist with lots of walnut and cinnamon flavour. A great cake for a potluck brunch. Makes 14 servings.

Ingredients

Filling

- ½ cup (125 mL) chopped walnuts
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) brown sugar
- ½ tsp (2 mL) ground cinnamon

Cake

- 1 cup (250 mL) mashed ripe banana, about 2 to 3 bananas
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) lemon juice
- 2 eggs
- ¼ cup (50 mL) brown sugar
- 2 cups (500 mL) whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp (5 mL) baking powder
- 1 tsp (5 mL) baking soda
- ½ cup (125 mL) skim milk

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350° F (180° C). Place the walnuts on a baking sheet and toast

in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes. Watch carefully to prevent burning. As soon as you can smell them, they are done. Remove from the oven and set aside until cool. Don't turn the oven off.

2. In a small bowl, combine all the ingredients for the filling. Set aside.

3. In a large bowl, combine the banana, lemon juice, eggs and sugar with a whisk.

4. In a second bowl, combine the flour, baking soda and baking powder. Mix into the wet ingredients alternating with the skim milk.

5. Grease a bunt pan with cooking spray. Add ½ of the filling mixture to the pan. Top with ½ of the cake batter. Add the rest of the filling mixture and top with the remaining batter.

6. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until cake tester comes out clean. Let cool completely before removing from the pan. Cut into 14 slices.

Nutritional Information Per Serving

(1 piece - 50 g / 1.5 oz)

Calories: 137, Protein: 4 g, Total fat: 4 g, Saturated fat: 1 g, Dietary cholesterol: 27 mg, Carbohydrate: 23 g, Dietary fibre: 3 g, Sodium: 125 mg, Potassium: 199 mg

Developed by Nadine Day, RD. © The Heart and Stroke Foundation

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Joke or Quote of The Month

Self-Awareness

Learn to be aware

"You can live a lifetime and, at the end of it, know more about other people than you know about yourself."

Beryl Markham

"To be authentic is literally to be your own author, to discover your own native energies and desires, and then to find your own way of acting on them."

Warren G. Bennis

"Self-knowledge is the great power by which we comprehend and control our lives."

Vernon Howard

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Did You Know?

Physical Activity and Seniors

Despite the important role played by physical activity in preventing chronic disease and dependence and enhancing mental health, most seniors are still physically inactive. In fact, this situation has not changed since the 2001 Report Card. In 2005, the rate of inactivity among seniors was 62%. Among men, the rate of inactivity actually increased from 53% to 55% between 2000-01 and 2005. Women's rate of inactivity was even higher (67% in 2005).

*This is based on responses to questions about the frequency, duration and intensity of participation in leisure-time physical activity.

Source : Seniors in Canada, 2006 Report Card, National Advisory Council on Aging

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Seniors Tip

Travel Insurance Tips

1. Get an insurer with live assistance, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Even the Canadian government recommends that Canadians purchase travel insurance plans with this feature. A toll-free 800 number is another great feature to have so that you can call for assistance without paying long distance fees from wherever you are.

2. Check that your insurer pays your bills upfront so you're never out of pocket. Reimbursement may take time and if you don't have the money available immediately when you need it, you could have problems getting the care you need in an emergency.

Source : www.seniorsgotravel.com

Happy Holidays from all of us at Age-Friendly Business!

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This newsletter was created by the Certified Professional Consultant on Aging team, a proud member of the Age-Friendly Business™ International Group of Companies.

Jennifer Legge, Newsletter editor, Age Friendly Business™

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