



Hospital to Home Care Program Reduces Avoidable Hospital Readmissions



One of the leading causes of hospital readmissions is the lack of adequate support following a hospital discharge. To help make a patient's transition home smooth and successful, Home Care Assistance is committed to educating seniors and their loved ones about post-hospitalization care through our Hospital to Home Care program, a comprehensive set of resources for families managing the sometimes difficult transition home after hospitalization.

Hospital to Home Care gives families the resources they need to prepare for a loved one's discharge and manage the unique process of recovering at home. Home Care Assistance hopes that patients and families who are armed with this knowledge will be able to better manage each step of the process, alleviating some of the anxiety associated with the stress of hospitalization and discharge.

The Hospital to Home Care program is founded upon the belief that patients can recover in the comfort and familiarity of the home environment following a hospitalization. Research suggests that recovering at home versus a facility can also benefit patients psychologically and emotionally. In addition, patients avoid the infection risk associated with care facilities and enjoy greater freedom outside of the institutional setting. With the help of a caregiver, patients also benefit from dedicated one-on-one support while loved ones enjoy peace of mind knowing that trained professionals are on hand.

For more information about the Hospital to Home Care program visit www.HospitaltoHomeCare.com. There you



Letter from the Editor:

Although the recent snow storms and plunging temperatures across the U.S. and Canada may suggest otherwise, spring is right around the corner! Our offices have been hard at work ensuring that caregivers get to their clients' homes safely during such severe weather conditions – we hold to our commitment to be there when you need us! I am sure that I speak for most of us when I say I am ready for spring and everything that comes with it—warmer weather, fragrant flowers and less layers.

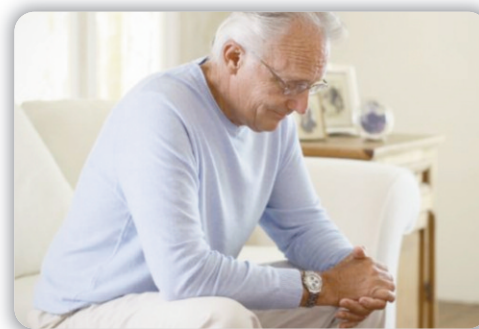
In this issue of our CareNotes Newsletter, we share the results of a new Boston University School of Medicine study that found that higher physical fitness levels in your 40's are correlated with higher levels of cognitive functioning in your 60's. These findings build on previous research that indicates that healthy lifestyle behaviors can help prevent age-related cognitive decline. We also discuss our **Hospital to Home Care** program, which includes a comprehensive set of resources for families managing the transition home after a medical incident, and 5 tips for staying active to reduce the risk of disability later in life. Last, but not least, I would like to congratulate our caregiver of the month, Erica Hines, from **Home Care Assistance of Cleveland**, Ohio! Erica is a shining example of the high standard of care that Home Care Assistance strives to provide to every client, every day.



will find tips for discharge planning and home recovery, who is involved in the discharge process, a thorough guide of the best options for post-hospitalization care and resources available for download. The third book in our popular senior wellness series, *From Hospital to Home Care: A Step by Step Guide to Providing Care to Patients Post Hospitalization* also provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and resources associated with each step in the transition from hospital to home, explaining the discharge process from an inpatient hospital stay, common issues associated with specific medical conditions, the unique needs of recently hospitalized patients and the importance of home care in patient outcomes and quality of life.

Home Care Assistance hopes to help make the transition from hospital to home smooth for you or a loved one by offering the knowledge required to navigate the discharge process and post-hospitalization care with ease. Our goal is to provide high-quality, in-home care to reduce hospital readmissions, increase independence in our clients and give families peace of mind.

Are You Sitting Too Much? 5 Tips to Reduce Sedentary Habits



Research has shown time and time again that our daily choices impact our long-term health—habits that promote a balanced diet, low stress levels and physical activity help extend our lifespans and healthspans, or number of healthy years. Now, a new study from the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine suggests that regardless of exercise, sitting for extended periods of time increases the risk of disability later in life. Disability is defined as any condition that limits one’s ability to do basic activities such as eating, dressing, ambulating or bathing; in the United States alone, disability affects more than half of those aged 65 and older and is a leading source of health care costs.

The study used data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, which recorded the health of over 2,000 adults aged 60 and older from 2003 to 2005. The participants also wore accelerometers for seven days to assess each person’s amount of sedentary time and moderate physical activity (e.g., walking briskly). Researchers found that, on average, people spend nine out of their 14 waking hours sitting and every additional hour spent sitting on a daily basis increased the risk for physical disability by about 50%. For example, when comparing



two 60-year-old men, one who is sedentary for 8 hours a day and another who is sedentary for 9 hours a day, the latter is 50% more likely to be disabled. In addition, this study is the first to suggest that a sedentary lifestyle can negatively impact everyone regardless of the amount or intensity of their physical activity.

Exercise is beneficial; it is proven to increase the release of feel-good endorphins, improve balance, which helps prevent falls, ease joint pain caused by arthritis and boost cognitive health. However, it does not counteract the effects of sitting. Here are 5 tips that we recommend to reduce sedentary habits:

- 1. Stand up while talking on the phone or better yet, take a walk while doing so.**
- 2. When running errands, park in a spot furthest from the store's entrance. This will give you more walking time after sitting while driving.**
- 3. While at home or at the office, take short 10-15 minute breaks to walk around after you've been sitting for an hour or so.**
- 4. Take the stairs instead of the elevator.**
- 5. If you have the extra time, try walking instead of driving to your destination.**

Although these findings demonstrate that leading a sedentary lifestyle is associated with an increased risk of physical disability, they do not prove a causal relationship. Dorothy Dunlop, professor of medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and lead author of the study, is planning a longitudinal study to more definitively assess whether sedentary behavior results in disability.

Physical disabilities can restrict an individual's ability to get out of bed, bathe or even walk. In line with our mission to promote independence in older adults, Home Care Assistance developed the proprietary Balanced Care Method™ based on studies of the elders of the Okinawa region of Japan. The program promotes overall wellbeing through healthy diet, exercise, mental stimulation, socialization, calm and a sense of purpose. If you or a loved one would like to learn more about the Balanced Care Method, please contact 1-866-454-8346 or visit www.HomeCareAssistance.com.



Physical Exercise Keeps Body and Brain in Shape



As we age, our brains experience structural changes, including loss of volume, which can impact cognitive function. Over the years, various studies have shown that adopting healthy lifestyle behaviors can help prevent brain atrophy and thus, stave off age-related cognitive decline. A recent study from the Boston University School of Medicine suggests that it is never too late to harness the benefits of healthy behaviors. In particular, researchers found that a higher physical fitness level in your 40s is directly correlated with higher brain volume and better performance on cognitive tests in your 60s. These findings indicate that the brain health of our aging population needs to be addressed earlier on in order to prevent accelerated brain aging.

The study followed 1,271 individuals who were initially free from cognitive issues and heart disease over the course of two decades. Researchers first assessed physical fitness levels in the 1970s, when the participants' average age was 41. Fitness level was determined based on diastolic blood pressure and heart rate as the participants walked on a slow-moving treadmill (recorded at 2.5 miles an hour). An individual with a lower physical fitness level was more likely to have a higher blood pressure and heart rate during low levels of exercise as compared to those with higher fitness levels.

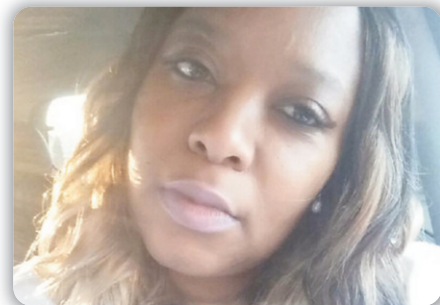
When the individuals were in their 60s, beginning in 1999, researchers took MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) of their brains and conducted cognitive testing to assess their decision-making abilities. Analyses showed that individuals in their 40s with lower fitness levels were more likely to have smaller total cerebral brain tissue volumes and poorer cognitive performance at age 60 than their more fit counterparts.

Researchers also found that a higher resting blood pressure rate at age 40 was associated with a smaller frontal lobe volume and a greater volume of white matter hyperintensity at age 60, both of which result from age-related blood-flow loss. Higher physical fitness levels indicate better oxygen and nutrient delivery to the brain, promoting healthy cognitive functioning.

Findings such as these may change the way we address brain health in our aging population by making physical fitness and cognitive health priorities earlier on in life for positive impacts down the road. No matter your age, physical activity is good for brain and overall health, so make sure that you incorporate exercise into your regular routine.



Caregiver of the Month Spotlight: **Erica Hines**



March's Caregiver of the Month is Erica Hines from **Home Care Assistance of Cleveland** in Ohio!

Erica became a State Tested Nursing Aide (STNA) in the year 2000 and worked for many years in nursing homes before joining Home Care Assistance in June 2014. Since she started, she has been working full-time with Mr. C, a World War II Veteran, who will celebrate his 97th birthday in April. The two enjoy spending afternoons sitting on the front porch talking about Mr. C's youth and wartime experiences. Though he doesn't see or hear very well, Mr. C. enjoys a high quality of life largely due to Erica's companionship. To watch them together is truly heartwarming. Erica shared, "When you are around a man of that age, you learn so much about life."

Erica is very patient and enthusiastically helps Mr. C with his personal care every morning saying, "One for the money, two for the show, three to get ready and up you go." Employing the tenets of our Balanced Care Method™, she prepares his favorite nutritious foods and ensures his safety as he exercises by walking around the table eight times per day with his walker. She also acts as his advocate at doctors' appointments. Mr. C.'s two daughters trust Erica completely and speak very highly of her, which is a true testament to her character.

Not only is Erica a wonderful and compassionate caregiver, but she is also a great trainer and mentor. She has shared her routine with Mr. C. with many caregivers so that they can provide the same high caliber of care. Her dedication and professionalism are evident in her frequent communications with the Cleveland office, as she provides regular updates on Mr. C's daily activities and abilities to ensure he receives the most comprehensive care.

Erica is blessed with three sons, a daughter and five grandchildren. Between working 40 hours per week with Mr. C. and spending time with her family, Erica has a very busy schedule but she wouldn't have it any other way.

Erica is the model caregiver and someone who is compassionate, trustworthy, reliable and diligent. She is a valuable member of the Home Care Assistance team in Cleveland and she goes the extra mile in everything that she does. Erica puts the "care" in caregiver.

Thank you, Erica, for all of your hard work; you are a shining example of the high standard of care that Home Care Assistance strives to provide to every client, every day!