

# SENIOR CONNECTIONS



## Healthy Aging

5 SMART WAYS  
to ACHIEVE IT

**M**EDICAL CONDITIONS SUCH AS ARTHRITIS and high blood pressure are common as we get older. At least 80 percent of seniors have one chronic medical problem, and 50 percent have two, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports.

But you don't have to accept poor health and loss of independence with the passage of years. The CDC offers these suggestions to help you achieve healthy aging:

**Live well.** People who are physically active, eat a healthy diet, avoid tobacco and practice other healthy behaviors reduce their risk for chronic disease and have half the rate of disability of those who do not.

**Get screened.** Early detection and treatment of some diseases can save lives. Talk to your doctor about tests for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, obesity and vision changes.

**Immunize.** Ask your doctor about vaccinations. An annual flu shot and a one-time immunization against pneumonia provide some protection against these infectious diseases.

**Prevent injuries.** Falls are the most common cause of injuries to older adults. Check your home for hazards that might cause a fall, such as loose rugs or poorly lit stairs. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, can't see well or have other physical problems that might cause you to fall. There are solutions.

**Learn self-care.** Ask your doctor about self-management techniques for chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and arthritis. Take classes at your hospital or through an organization such as the Arthritis Foundation.

**3** NEW DOCTOR OFFERS  
HELP FOR DEPRESSION

**4** HEART DISEASE:  
A WOMAN'S PROBLEM

**6** INTERNAL BLEEDING:  
WHAT IT COULD MEAN



## Steady as you go

**Y**ou need to stay steady on your feet if you want to avoid falls and fractures.

To improve your balance, the National Institutes of Health suggests this daily exercise:

- First, hold on to the back of a chair, sink or countertop.
- Now practice standing on one leg for one minute.

Once you can do this, you're ready for variations.

Gradually add to the time you stand on one leg. Try balancing with your eyes closed. Or even try balancing without holding on to any surface.

## Implants set off airport alarms

**D**o alarms sound when you go through airport security?

For people who have surgical implants, it's not uncommon, a study shows.

British researchers found that implant detection at airports around the world increased as security was tightened. Certain devices almost guaranteed that a traveler would set off alarms. For example, replacement hips containing cobalt chrome were always found by the detector.

## How would you spend extra years of life?

**I**f you could live to be 120, what would you do with your extra years?

Forty-one percent of men and women in a national survey would spend more time with family and friends.

Thirty-nine percent would travel and go on more vacations.

Among other ideas for enjoying a longer life span:

- 20 percent would pursue hobbies, such as reading, writing, fishing and gardening.
- 14 percent would get involved in charity or volunteer work.
- 10 percent would do things to be healthy.
- 6 percent would work full- or part-time.
- 4 percent would

devote more time to religious activities.

- 2 percent would do nothing different.

Percentages exceed 100 percent because some people gave more than one answer.

People who took part in the survey were 18 and older. The survey was commissioned by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.



## Don't let weight gain take you out of the game

**Y**ou're middle-aged and comfortable with yourself. You eat a little too much and exercise too little. And you're not worried about collecting a few pounds here and there.

But maybe you should be concerned. Gaining extra weight now could make it more difficult to lead an active, independent life in the future.

In a study of more than 4,000 men and women 70 and older, researchers at the University of Michigan found that:

- 37.2 percent were overweight, and 13.5 percent were obese.
- Overweight seniors had more difficulty doing things like dressing, bathing, eating and getting out of bed than normal-weight seniors.
- Obese seniors were twice as likely as their normal-weight peers to have trouble walking a block, climbing stairs and getting up from a chair after sitting for a long time.



NEW PSYCHIATRIST HELPS SENIORS

# Overcome Depression

**F**LORICA ROSARIO OCHOTORENA, M.D., has opened a private practice in downtown Rome to help people who struggle with depression, anxiety and other behavioral health problems. Her expertise is in treating geriatric patients. She is the medical director of Rome Memorial Hospital's senior behavioral health unit and is board-certified in geriatric psychiatry.

"Together, psychotherapy and medications are the most effective treatment to help people reconnect with themselves and with their families," Dr. Ochotorena says. "I enjoy developing a rapport with my patients to create a therapeutic alliance. It's very satisfying to be involved in helping people



**Florica Rosario Ochotorena, M.D.**

careers in medicine. Dr. Ochotorena earned her medical degree at the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines. After completing her internship in internal medicine at the Metropolitan Hospital Center in New York, she received her residency training in general psychiatry at St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center of New York, where she also completed her fellowship in geriatric psychiatry.

Since she started her training in psychiatry, Dr. Ochotorena says the social stigma of mental health problems has declined, as more

people recognize depression, anxiety and dementia as medical illnesses. "The media has actually done a good job shedding light on psychiatric problems so more people are coming forward for help," she says.

She says that seniors with mental health

problems are more likely to go undiagnosed because they often have other chronic diseases. "Often the symptoms are disregarded as a normal part of aging," she says. About 20 percent of seniors experience mental health disorders that are not a part of normal aging.

Signs that a loved one may be experiencing serious emotional difficulties include:

- Insomnia or too much sleep.
- Loss of interest in regular activities.
- Crying spells.
- Poor appetite or overeating.
- Disregard for personal appearance.
- Agitation or aggression.
- Sad or blank look on the face.
- Thoughts of suicide.
- Forgetfulness or confusion.
- Withdrawal and isolation.

On the hospital's second floor, the 11-bed senior behavioral health unit is a secure, therapeutic environment for seniors with depression, anxiety, dementia or other behavioral health problems. Call **338-7399**.

Dr. Ochotorena's private practice is located in downtown Rome at 117 W. Liberty St., Suite 2. Call **337-2582**.

*To make an appointment with Dr. Ochotorena, call 337-2582. ~ ~*

by stabilizing their moods, reducing their agitation and improving their overall functional ability."

Dr. Ochotorena comes from a family of doctors. She and her three sisters followed in the footsteps of their parents and chose

## Rome Memorial Hospital Welcomes New Internist

Restituto B. Acosta, M.D., a specialist in internal medicine, has joined the medical staff at Rome Memorial Hospital.

As an internist, Dr. Acosta provides comprehensive primary care for adults. He is trained in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer; infections; and diseases affecting the heart, blood, kidneys, joints, and digestive, respiratory, and vascular systems.

Dr. Acosta earned his medical degree from the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines and completed his residency in internal medicine at the Metropolitan Hospital Center in New York City. Before moving to the Rome area, he was an attending physician at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow.



**Restituto B. Acosta, M.D.**

Dr. Acosta gained an appreciation for the medical profession while growing up in a small village in the Philippines. "The nearest doctor or health care facility was over 45 miles away," he says, noting that his brother also decided to become a physician.

The specialty of internal medicine appealed to Dr. Acosta because it is primary care that addresses the whole person. "As a generalist, there's the opportunity to focus on prevention to help people avoid or delay the onset of chronic disease," he says. "Education is the key to help patients make the right lifestyle decisions."

He's learned that there are many ways to ask questions to get to know his patients and truly understand their health status. "Building good relationships with patients is something you can't learn in books. It comes with experience," he says.

Dr. Acosta's office is located in downtown Rome at 117 W. Liberty St., Suite 2. Walk-ins are welcome, or call **337-2582** for an appointment. Dr. Acosta is accepting new patients.



Heart attack symptoms in a woman may include nausea, abdominal pain, dizziness, heart flutters, clammy sweats, fatigue or difficulty breathing.

# Women and HEART DISEASE

**B**Y AGE 65, ONE IN THREE WOMEN will have some form of heart disease, the nation's No. 1 killer.

If you haven't considered the danger that heart disease poses, consider this. Even if you haven't been diagnosed with heart disease, you may have it or be at risk for it.

But you might be able to lower your risk and perhaps prevent a heart attack from occurring.

That's the message behind prevention guidelines from an expert panel of the American Heart Association (AHA). According to this group, you can do a lot to protect yourself from heart disease—at any age.

"The data we have clearly indicate that women over 65 are just as likely—and in many cases more likely—to benefit from prevention efforts as younger women are," says Lori Mosca, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the AHA panel that developed the guidelines.

**HOW TO RECOGNIZE YOUR RISK.** Your risk for having a heart attack or dying of heart disease within the next 10 years may be low, intermediate or high. Here's how the risk is measured:

- Low risk—less than 10 percent.
- Intermediate risk—10 percent to 20 percent.
- High risk—greater than 20 percent.

High-risk people have risk factors such as diabetes, stroke, kidney disease, peripheral artery disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm and certain inherited cholesterol problems.

Your level of risk also can be affected by age, non-inherited high cholesterol and blood pressure.



Rate your risk for a heart attack. Go to [www.romehospital.org/hlthck/quiz1/index.htm](http://www.romehospital.org/hlthck/quiz1/index.htm).

**HOW TO REDUCE YOUR RISK.** No matter what your risk, a healthy lifestyle is bound to reap rewards. And it will probably improve your quality of life as well, Dr. Mosca says.

That's why the AHA panel recommends that all women avoid smoking, get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day, eat a healthful diet and maintain a healthy weight.

In addition, different levels of risk require different treatment approaches. For example, women who have been treated for heart disease should take part in a rehabilitation program to reduce their risk.

Ask your doctor to assess your level of risk, then take the following steps based on the AHA panel's recommendations.

**HIGH:** At this level of risk, you need to take bold action.

**Control blood pressure.** Ideally, your blood pressure should be less than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). When blood pressure is slightly elevated, lifestyle changes may help bring it down. But you may need medicine if your blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or higher, or 130/80 mm Hg for people with diabetes or kidney disease.

**Keep cholesterol in check.** For women, recommended blood cholesterol levels are:

- Total cholesterol, less than 200 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL).
- LDL cholesterol, less than 100 mg/dL.
- HDL cholesterol, more than 50 mg/dL.
- Triglycerides (a type of fat in the blood), less than 150 mg/dL.
- Non-HDL cholesterol, less than 130 mg/dL. This number represents total cholesterol levels without HDL.

Lifestyle may help you achieve these goals. You may need medicines as well.

**Manage diabetes if you have it.** Your hemoglobin A1C level is established by a blood test. It measures your long-term blood sugar control. Your A1C level should be less than 7 percent. Proper diet, exercise and medication are key to managing diabetes.

**Take medicines if needed.**

- Aspirin is good for most people, but not for everyone. Talk to your doctor about whether you should take aspirin and, if so, how much.
- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors expand blood vessels. An alternative drug may be recommended if you have side effects from ACE inhibitors.
- Beta-blockers are recommended for women who have already had a heart attack or have ongoing chest pain.
- Omega-3 fatty acids and folic acid supplements may also be helpful.

**INTERMEDIATE:** At this level of risk it's important to make lifestyle changes and control your blood pressure. Your doctor may recommend cholesterol-

lowering medicine if your LDL cholesterol is 130 mg/dL or higher and lifestyle changes don't help bring it down. Medicine may also be needed if you reach your LDL cholesterol goal, but your HDL cholesterol remains low or your non-HDL cholesterol remains high.

You may benefit from aspirin therapy.

**LOW:** If you have no risk factors or only one risk factor, your doctor may recommend cholesterol-lowering drugs if your LDL cholesterol is 190 mg/dL or higher.

If you have several risk factors, medicine may be considered when

*Know your numbers. Get a free blood pressure check at Rome Memorial Hospital. Call 338-7143. ~ ~ ~*

(1) LDL cholesterol is 160 mg/dL or higher, (2) HDL cholesterol is low or (3) non-HDL cholesterol is high after you reach your LDL cholesterol goal.

You can work with your doctor to address any other risk factors you might have.

Aspirin therapy is not recommended for women at low risk. Bleeding and other possible side effects may outweigh potential benefits.

## *Warning Signs of Heart Attack Not Always Typical in Women*

Feeling tired?

It might be nothing more than fatigue from overexertion or lack of sleep. Or it could be a heart attack in the making.

A study reported by the American Heart Association found that women can have symptoms a month or more before a heart attack occurs. The most common early symptoms were unusual fatigue, sleep problems, shortness of breath, indigestion and anxiety.

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms. Medical attention might help you head off a heart attack.

If a heart attack is in progress, symptoms may be similar for men and women. However, women are less likely to experience chest pain, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* reports.

Common symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Discomfort, fullness, tightness, squeezing or pressure in the center of the chest that stays for more than a few minutes, or comes and goes.
- Pressure or pain that spreads to the upper back, shoulders, neck, jaw or arms.
- Dizziness or nausea.
- Clammy sweats, heart flutters or paleness.
- Unexplained anxiety, fatigue or weakness—especially with exertion.
- Stomach or abdominal pain.
- Shortness of breath and difficulty breathing.

Call 911 right away if you think you are having a heart attack. While you wait for help, chew and swallow (with water) a full-strength aspirin tablet.

## GASTROINTESTINAL BLEEDING a SIGN of Hidden Trouble

**I**F YOU'RE BLEEDING, there's usually one goal: Find the cause of the blood loss and fix it.

But when bleeding is in the digestive tract, that may be easier said than done. Gastrointestinal (GI) bleeding can happen anywhere along the digestive system, including the esophagus, stomach, small intestine and colon.

Bleeding can show up as:

- Bright red blood on or in your stool.
- Black or tarry-looking stool.
- Bright red blood or a substance that looks like coffee grounds in your vomit.

Even though GI bleeding can be alarming, the cause is very often treatable, according to the National Institute of Diabetes and Di-

gestive and Kidney Diseases.

Ulcers, diverticular disease and cancer are common causes of GI bleeding.

**Ulcers.** Taking aspirin or another nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) increases the risk of ulcers and GI bleeding. However, your doctor can prescribe a different medicine to prevent

these side effects, says Blair Lewis, M.D., of the American College of Gastroenterology. Or you could take a second medicine to protect your stomach and intestine.

Infection with bacteria called *Helicobacter pylori* can also cause

*Common causes of gastrointestinal bleeding are ulcers, diverticular disease and cancer. ~ ~ ~ ~ ~*

ulcers and related bleeding in the upper digestive tract. This problem can usually be fixed with antibiotics.


**Diverticular disease.** Diverticula are pouches that form in the wall of the colon. They form as people grow older and can be a source of severe bleeding. Most times the bleeding stops on its own. Surgery might be needed if bleeding doesn't stop.

**Colorectal polyps or cancer.** You may not notice the blood from a polyp or cancer since it can be occult, or hidden, in the stool. A simple home test can help your doctor find occult blood. If blood is found, additional testing will be needed to find the exact cause.

**SIGNS OF TROUBLE.** If you have noticed even a small amount of blood, see your doctor soon. Most GI bleeding stops on its own, but it's important to find the cause.

Bleeding is a definite emergency if you also feel dizzy or light-headed, or if you pass more than a cup of blood from the rectum.

If you ever vomit blood—no matter how little—seek emergency aid immediately, Dr. Lewis says.

 To find a gastroenterologist, call **338-7140** or visit our Web site at [www.romehospital.com](http://www.romehospital.com) and click on "Physician Finder."



**Gastrointestinal bleeding is a silent warning of hidden trouble.**

### *What to Do About Hemorrhoids*

Hemorrhoids occur when veins in the anal area become swollen and inflamed. This can happen when you strain during a bowel movement or if you have chronic constipation or diarrhea.

Sometimes a person with hemorrhoids has no symptoms. Other times, hemorrhoids can become irritated and painful. The most common sign of the problem is bright red blood on your stool, on toilet paper or in the toilet. Since blood from the rectum can be a sign of more serious problems, see your doctor if you have signs of bleeding.

Treatment for hemorrhoids may include creams or suppositories to relieve symptoms. Soaking in a warm bath for 10 minutes several times a day may also help.

Some cases may need surgical treatment or other medical attention.

You can help prevent hemorrhoids by keeping your stools soft. Talk to your doctor about whether you should eat more fiber and drink extra fluids.

# \$2.75 MILLION RAISED TOWARD a NEW Emergency Department

**R**OME MEMORIAL HOSPITAL Foundation's "Building a Better Tomorrow" campaign and its plans for a new hospital emergency department are making headway. The campaign is at nearly 90 percent of its \$3 million goal. According to Rome Memorial Hospital foundation executive director Joelle Taylor, more than \$2,752,000 has been raised to date.

Propelled early on by significant contributions from leading figures in the community, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised since the public announcement of the campaign on Sept. 13, she reports.

"The support from all facets of our community, including businesses, medical and legal professionals, and individual citizens is truly humbling," Taylor says. "The response to the campaign has proven how strongly the community feels about the need for an improved emergency care facility." Hospital employees alone, excluding physicians, have made more than \$200,000 in personal contributions.

The \$3 million goal will go a long way toward funding a \$10.5 million addition to



The new emergency department is expected to open in 2006.


house the new emergency department. According to Mark Snyderman, assistant vice president of planning and outpatient services, the funding is an important part of an extensive, detailed planning process.

In November, a certificate of need application was submitted to the New York State Department of Health for approval of the new emergency department. Although it seems like a first step, Snyderman explains, the submission of the document was actually the last step in a planning phase that also included meticulous architectural work and

documentation of input from medical staff, emergency department employees, ambulance services, fire and police departments, city officials, and the community.

The planned construction stems from the hospital's facility master plan, which addresses the need for a new emergency department and highlights an overall shortage of space at the hospital.

The master plan also includes more projects that are currently under way at the hospital, such as the construction of a new energy center building. Also, site work on the hospital's entrances will improve access. When the new emergency department is built, it will integrate well with these other recent improvements, Snyderman says.

 Donations to the foundation are tax-deductible and may be sent to the Rome Memorial Hospital Foundation, 1617 N. James St., Suite 950, Rome, NY 13440. For information on multiyear pledges, call the foundation office at 337-5162.

Join us in  
*Building a Better Tomorrow*

Send donations with coupon to:  
Rome Memorial Hospital Foundation  
1617 N. James St., Suite  
Rome, NY 13440

I would like to participate in "Building a Better Tomorrow" the Campaign for Rome Memorial Hospital.

Here is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ made payable to Rome Memorial Hospital Foundation.

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You have my permission to list my/our names among donors to the "Building a Better Tomorrow" Campaign.

The name should read as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish for my donation to remain anonymous.

Please contact me regarding opportunities to donate property, stock, securities or life insurance.



# A Call to Service

YOUR VOLUNTEER SKILLS ARE *in* DEMAND

THEY'RE LOOKING FOR A SPECIAL PERSON at your hospital. The position requires patience, compassion and a generous spirit. This special person won't get a paycheck, but he or she will gain new friends and new skills, as well as the gratitude and respect of colleagues.

This person could be you.

As an older volunteer, you'll bring a lifetime of knowledge and wisdom to your "work." In fact, your skills are in demand, the

AARP reports.

A hospital setting is a great place to share those skills, says Bonnie Boyles, chair of the American Hospital Association Committee on Volunteers.

Older volunteers contribute everything from help with computers to fixing wheelchairs,

Boyles says. "It's amazing to watch these folks in action. Their talents are unbelievable."

Hospitals count on your strong work ethic and your leadership skills. But the asset hospitals value most may be your compassion.

"Many older volunteers have gone through personal health care issues, or their loved ones have," Boyles says. They appreciate what hospitals have done for them, and they want to give something back.

Regardless of why you volunteer, expect to receive as much as you give. Research shows older volunteers live happier, healthier lives. And you don't have to spend a lot of time—just two to three hours a week can relieve depression and improve your sense of well-being.

Boyles started her career as a hospital volunteer more than 30 years ago. She continued even after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and sometimes had to use a wheelchair.

"I honestly think it was the volunteering that kept me so active and involved all these years," Boyles says.



*To volunteer at Rome Memorial Hospital, call Miranda Von Matt at 338-7134.* ~ ~ ~

## More Places to Volunteer

Looking for a place to volunteer that will match your skills and interests? Consider these possibilities:

- Day care centers.
- Community arts organizations.
- Retirement centers and Meals On Wheels.
- Community soup kitchens and food pantries.
- Youth organizations, such as sports teams and after-school programs.
- Shelters for battered women and children.
- Home computer work, such as online consulting or keeping in touch with someone via e-mail.

SOURCE: INDEPENDENT SECTOR (NONPROFIT INFORMATION CENTER)

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