Dear Friend,

Here at Visiting Neighbors, we are focused on helping you maintain your independence and enjoy the fulfilling life that you have made for yourself. In order to help you achieve this goal, we must acknowledge that your health is of utmost importance. We have put together this comprehensive health binder in order for you to keep all of your pertinent medical information in one place where you can always find it. In this binder you will find several tools that will help to organize your medical information, make trips to the doctor more worthwhile, and prepare for emergencies.

The following is a comprehensive list of what we have included in this binder in order to keep you happy and healthy:

- Two Emergency Medical Cards. One for you to hang up on your refrigerator and one to keep in your wallet.
- A Medical Information section including a form to help you keep track of your medical information, both past and present.
- A Medication section including forms to assist you in keeping track of your medications and tips for using medications safely. 
  
  Note: Wallet sized medication cards are available at the Visiting Neighbor’s office. If you would like a one please contact Steve Gould at (212) 260-6200.
- A Doctors’ Appointments section with information to assist you in preparing for the appointment, forms to keep track of new information obtained during the appointment, information on your rights as a patient, and tips for talking with your doctor.
- A Hospitalization section including a form for listing items you would need in case of an overnight medical stay, information on preparing for a hospital stay and a discharge checklist.
• A Wellness section including fun daily goals and ways to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

We know that this binder may be filled with a lot of information that you may, or may not, have seen before. Our volunteers here at Visiting Neighbors are ready to help you with any questions you may have when organizing your medical information, and will teach you what situations each of the forms have been created for. We hope that this binder fulfills its mission of helping you stay as healthy as possible in your own home. Completing the necessary forms and utilizing the resources in this binder will help you to stay active and organized in taking care of your own health, giving you greater freedom to be able to take care of yourself at home!

We are always here if you need us,

Your Friends at Visiting Neighbors
(212) 260-6100
Medical Information

Name: ____________________________  DOB: ____________________

Allergies & Reactions: ____________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Current medical conditions: ____________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Past medical conditions (Example: “Past history of cancer currently in remission.”): ____________________________

____________________________________________________________________

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Past surgeries: ____________________________

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Medications: (see separate medication sheet)

Health insurance: ____________________________  Member #: __________

Advance directives (please circle):    Yes    No
If yes, please specify (ex. Healthcare proxy):
____________________________________________________________________
Emergency contact name: ________________________________

Emergency contact number: ________________________________

Primary care physician name: ______________________________

Primary care physician number: ______________________________

Additional Notes: _________________________________________

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<tr>
<td>Name of Medicine</td>
<td>Include over-the-counter, vitamins and herbal supplements</td>
<td>Physical Characteristics of Medicine</td>
<td>Reason for Taking</td>
<td>Days Per Week</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
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<td>Dosage (how much?)</td>
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Check Your Medicines

Tips for Using Medicines Safely

Bring a list or a bag with ALL your medicines when you go to your doctor’s office, the pharmacy, or the hospital.

Include all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements that you use. If your doctor prescribes a new medicine, ask if it is safe to use with your other medicines. Remind your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to any medicines.

Ask questions about your medicines.

Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers. Choose a pharmacist and doctor you feel comfortable talking with about your health and medicines. Take a relative or friend with you to ask questions and remind you about the answers later. Write down the answers.

Make sure your medicine is what the doctor ordered.

Does the medicine seem different than what your doctor wrote on the prescription or look different than what you expected? Does a refill look like it is a different shape, color, or size than what you were given before? If something seems wrong, ask the pharmacist to double-check it. Most errors are first found by patients.

Ask how to use the medicine correctly.

Read the directions on the label and other information you get with your medicine. Have the pharmacist or doctor explain anything you do not understand. Are there other medicines, foods, or activities (such as driving, drinking alcohol, or using tobacco) that you should avoid while using the medicine? Ask if you need lab tests to check how the medicine is working or to make sure it doesn’t cause harmful side effects.

Ask about possible side effects.

Side effects can occur with many medicines. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what side effects to expect and which ones are serious. Some side effects may bother you but will get better after you have been using the medicine for a while. Call your doctor right away if you have a serious side effect or if a side effect does not get better. A change in the medicine or the dose may be needed.

Simple checks could save your life!

Visit:
www.ahrq.gov/consumer/
www.fda.gov/ucme/medicinesafely/
Preparing for doctor’s visits:

Before your appointment:
- Write down any questions you have for your doctor
- Prepare the items you are bringing to the appointment:
  - Your health binder with completed information
  - Photo identification
  - Insurance card
  - Other:___________________________________

During your appointment:
- Present your most important symptoms first
- Give the provider your health binder
- Ask questions when you don’t understand
- Have medical staff review prescriptions
- Write or have medical staff write new prescriptions on your medication form in your health binder
- Write down your new appointment information

After your appointment:
- Call the physician if you have any questions or concerns
- Make any additional appointments if necessary
The Emotional Side of Healthcare: Six Tips for Talking to Your Doctor

It is important to know what to do before, during and after a doctor appointment. Talking to the doctor can be stressful. There often isn't much time so you may feel rushed. You may be scared, confused, anxious, worried, tired and sick. How can you prepare yourself emotionally to talk to the doctor, whether the conversation takes place in an office, in the hospital, or over the telephone?

Here are six empowerment tips:

- When it comes to your body, you are the expert.
- Open up about what is bothering you.
- Make sure your doctor takes your concerns seriously.
- Trust your instincts, know your worth and speak up.
- Remind yourself what you need to know, and why.
- Don't be afraid to ask, "Is there anything else this could be?"

For your visit:

Date:____________________

Physician Name:_____________ Specialty:_____________

Current symptoms:_________________________________________________________

Questions for doctor?
1.________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

2.________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Information to remember from visit:_____________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

Next appointment:

Date:________
Time:________

Purpose:________________________________________________________

Prior preparation needed:__________________________________________
For your visit:

Date:____________________

Physician Name:_____________ Specialty:_____________

Current symptoms:____________________________________
_____________________________________________________

Questions for doctor?
1._______________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

2._______________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

Information to remember from visit:________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

Next appointment:

Date:_________
Time:_________

Purpose:________________________________________________

Prior preparation needed:__________________________________
For your visit:

Date:_____________________

Physician Name:______________ Specialty:________________

Current symptoms:________________________________________

Questions for doctor?
1._______________________________________________________

2._______________________________________________________

Information to remember from visit:_________________________

Next appointment:

Date:_________
Time:_________

Purpose:_________________________________________________

Prior preparation needed:___________________________________
For your visit:

Date:_____________________

Physician Name:_______________ Specialty:_______________

Current symptoms:________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Questions for doctor?
1.___________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

2.___________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Information to remember from visit:____________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

Next appointment:

Date:__________
Time:__________

Purpose:__________________________________________________________

Prior preparation needed:__________________________________________
Visiting Neighbors’ Volunteer Policy:
For Medical Appointments

• Visiting Neighbors’ volunteers will help you get to and from a medical appointment. They MAY NOT provide any homecare, housekeeping, personal/nursing care, repair services, cooking, laundry, check cashing, etc.

• We provide our clients with up to 2 appointments per week.

  • Please call at least one week (5 business days) in advance to schedule your appointment.

• If you have a regular, weekly appointment you must call to schedule it each week, or, you can schedule all of your appointments for the next month at the end of the previous month. If you decide to do this you must call 2-3 business days before your schedule appointment to confirm it each week.

• Do not make appointments directly with volunteers. You must call the office to schedule appointments.

• There is no guarantee that we will be able to schedule you for a particular volunteer. We have different volunteers available each day and we cannot reserve a particular person for you. You may request a particular volunteer, but we cannot assure you that he/she will be available to take care of your appointment. All of our volunteers are well trained and conscientious. Please be willing to work with any volunteer we send.

• While we strive to provide prompt service, occasionally a volunteer gets lost or is running late. If you decide to go to your appointment without your schedule volunteer, please call our office to let us know that you are leaving.

• Volunteers are available Monday through Thursday from 9am to 5pm. To ensure that volunteers escort you home by 5pm, we cannot accommodate medical appointments after 2pm.

• A volunteer may NEVER accompany you into an examination room or help you dress or undress. Please help explain this policy if a nurse or doctor requests help from this volunteer.

• After a doctor’s appointment a volunteer may not escort you anywhere else, except to the pharmacy to fill a prescription.
How to have safe and successful health care at the hospital

Whether you were admitted to the hospital because of an illness or injury, or have planned a hospital stay for surgery or testing, being in any hospital can be an overwhelming experience for you and your family.

But no matter your level of anxiety or concern, there are a number of things you can do to participate in your care and to help achieve the health care outcomes you desire.

Don’t Hesitate to Communicate
First and foremost, talk to your doctor and all members of the hospital staff. Tell them how you feel and if you are experiencing any pain or other symptoms.

Let them know about all the medicines, vitamins, or other remedies you take. Tell them about all the illnesses you currently have or have experienced in the past as well as anything that might keep you from following your prescribed treatment plan.

Be a Team Player
Every team assigns specific responsibilities to team members. As a member of your health care team, it is your role to ask the doctor and hospital staff about your illness or injury.

It is your responsibility to learn about your diagnosis, know what you need to do about it, and understand why it is important to follow the treatment plan.

Don’t be afraid to ask questions, to ask the staff to repeat the directions, or to provide written directions for you. And, if you have a specific concern or problem, tell a member of your health care team.

Although this information does not include every question or topic you may need to discuss with your health care team, it can help you play an active role in your care at the hospital and understand what you may need to do after you leave the hospital.

Remember, you are the MOST important member of your health care team!
STEP 1: PREPARING FOR YOUR HOSPITAL STAY

- Review with your doctor why you are being hospitalized — your diagnosis, any planned tests, and who will be in charge of your care while you are in the hospital.
- If you need or want a family member, caregiver, or friend to act as an advocate for you while you’re hospitalized, ask the person in advance and inform your doctor and admitting health care professionals.
- Take these items with you to the hospital:
  - Personal identification with your photo (such as a driver’s license).
  - Health insurance card(s) and, if needed, referral form.
  - A up-to-date list of all medications you are currently taking, including prescription and non-prescription medicine, supplements, vitamins, herbs, etc.
  - Give the list to the hospital.
  - A list of allergies or sensitivities to any medicine.
  - Results for tests done six weeks or less prior to hospitalization.
  - Advance directive, if you have one (if you do not, it is strongly recommended that you complete one).
  - Health care decision-makers you may have appointed, or who you desire to make decisions for you if you are unable to make them for yourself.

STEP 2: WHILE YOU ARE IN THE HOSPITAL

- Ask your health care team the following questions:
  - Who can I talk with if I have questions about my treatment—for example, if I don’t understand my treatment plan, who will direct my care, what will happen next, or when it will happen?
  - What can I do if I feel my health concerns are not being handled in a timely, respectful manner—for example, if I do not feel my pain is being controlled? (Note: The hospital should provide a list describing your patient rights. Many hospitals also have patient advocates.)
  - How can my loved ones and I reduce risks (such as falls, medicine mistakes, and infections) while I am in the hospital?
- If your health insurance is provided through Medicare, did you receive the document “An Important Message from Medicare”?
- Moves within the hospital (transitions of care) require cooperation among you, your loved ones, and your health care team. Be sure to ask where you are moving (for example, from ICU to a Step Down Unit), when, why, and who will be in charge of your care during and after the move.

STEP 3: BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL

- Ask your nurse when your doctor will be by to discharge you. Be prepared to ask your doctor any questions you want to know, such as:
  - What treatment you received, and why.
  - What recovery may be like (length, how you may feel).
  - What you need to do to take care of your health, such as caring for a wound or incision, changing your diet, limiting activities, and making follow-up appointments.
  - A current list of medicines and their instructions. Expect a clear message regarding specific meds you should continue to take, which meds you should stop taking and any new medications that are important to the management of your disease or injury.
  - Expect information about and ask for explanations of warning signs you might experience after your discharge that warrant contacting your doctor.
  - Upon being admitted, ask your social worker, case manager, or nurse about any help you may need upon leaving the hospital, with such things as bathing, dressing, meals, or medical equipment, and who can help you arrange the services.
  - Notify the medical staff of any responsibilities you may have, such as caregiving or babysitting for others.
  - If possible, have a family member, caregiver, or friend with you when talking with your doctor, nurse, case manager and social worker before leaving the hospital.
  - Review the guide, Taking Care of MY Health Care, available at www.ntooc.org. The questions included there may assist you and/or your caregiver to be an active participant in your continuing health care plan.

STEP 4: WHEN YOU ARE AT HOME

- Review all discharge information, including:
  - When to make appointments with doctor(s), clinics, testing facility, who will be treating you after discharge.
  - What follow-up tests or treatments are necessary and how to arrange them.
  - A list of all the medicines you need to take, including prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine, or vitamins, herbs, or supplements.
  - Understand how the prior medications you were taking fit in with the new medication list; which should be stopped, which continued, which continued but in a different dose or frequency.
  - Report symptoms of disease recurrence or complications of your disease, injury or treatment immediately to your doctor, home health nurse, or pharmacist.
  - Contact your doctor if you have problems managing your illness or questions about your treatment plan, such as needing help at home, making and keeping appointments, and getting your medications.
HELPFUL DEFINITIONS
To Help You Better Understand Your Health Care

Advance Directive:
Legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time.

Case Manager:
Case managers work with people to get the health care and other community services they need, when they need them, and for the best value.

Hospitalist:
Doctor whose primary professional focus is the general medical care of hospitalized patients. Activities include patient care, teaching, research, and leadership related to hospital medicine.

Nurse Practitioner:
Registered nurses who are prepared, through advanced education and clinical training, to provide a wide range of preventive and acute health care services to individuals of all ages.

NPs take health histories and provide complete physical examinations; diagnose and treat many common acute and chronic problems; interpret laboratory results and X-rays; prescribe and manage medications and other therapies; provide health teaching and supportive counseling with an emphasis on prevention of illness and health maintenance; and refer patients to other health professionals as needed. (www.acnpweb.org)

Palliative Care:
Serious illnesses can cause physical symptoms, such as pain, nausea, or fatigue. You may also have psychological symptoms like depression or anxiety. The treatments for your disease may cause symptoms or side effects. Palliative care relieves symptoms without curing your disease. (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/palliativecare.html)

Patient Advocate:
A person who helps a patient work with others who have an effect on the patient’s health, including doctors, insurance companies, employers, case managers, and lawyers. A patient advocate helps resolve issues about health care, medical bills, and job discrimination related to a patient’s medical condition. (American Cancer Society)

A Patient’s Bill of Rights:
Information to let patients know what their rights and responsibilities are while they are in the hospital. Most patient bills of rights stress the importance of strong relationships between patients and their health care providers and the key role patients play in staying healthy.

Pharmacist:
Responsible for interpreting, evaluating, and implementing orders for medications, dispensing medications, and monitoring them for benefit and safety. In hospitals and other health systems, they serve as valuable sources of information on medications and frequently consult with other health care team members to optimize medication use.

Physician Assistants:
Health professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and prescribe medications. (www.aapa.org)

Social Worker:
These professionals help individuals and families cope with social and emotional factors affecting their health and well-being; diagnose and treat mental health problems; and help people obtain services.

Transitions of Care:
Include situations in which a patient moves from a primary care doctor to a specialist, or moves within the hospital; moves from the emergency room to other hospital departments, such as surgery or intensive care; or when a patient is discharged from the hospital and goes home or to an assisted living arrangement or a skilled nursing facility.
“To go” items for hospital stay

I would like for you (friend, volunteer, family member) to bring the following items:

For immediate stay (short term):

Example items include:

- Phone
- Phone charger
- Health binder
- Cash for television use
- Books
- Magazines

Note: It is important to bring items such as eyeglasses and hearing aids but be aware there is an increased risk these items may become misplaced or lost in the hospital. Bring a spare of these items, if possible.
Know Your Rights

- You have the right to be treated equally and to not be discriminated against.
- You have the right to a clean, safe medical environment.
- You have the right to an interpreter, if needed.
- You have the right to a health advocate, if needed.
- You have the right to privacy (of self and of health information).
- You have the right to access your health information and know how your health information is being stored.
- You have the right to make all decisions regarding your care and refuse care at any point.
- You have the right to ask any and all questions about your health.
- You have the right to know who is involved in your care (e.g. their credentials, training, experience, etc.).
- You have the right to request a new care provider.
- You have the right to understand information about your health and for your health information to be explained simply and plainly.
- You have the right to be aware of business relationships in the medical setting that may affect your care.
- You have the right to expect appropriate and timely medical care.
- You have the right to an advance directive (i.e. healthcare proxy, durable power of attorney or living will) and for the hospital/medical organization to honor said directive.¹

Remember…it is your right. It is your decision. It is your health.

Note: This list highlights some patient rights but is not a comprehensive list of all patient rights.

Your Discharge Planning Checklist:

For patients and their caregivers preparing to leave a hospital, nursing home, or other care setting
NAME: 

Reason for admission: 

During your stay, your doctor and the staff will work with you to plan for your discharge. You and your caregiver (a family member or friend who may be helping you) are important members of the planning team. Below is a checklist of important things you and your caregiver should know to prepare for discharge.

Instructions:

- Use this checklist early and often during your stay.
- Talk to your doctor and the staff (like a discharge planner, social worker, or nurse) about the items on the checklist.
- Check the box next to each item when you and your caregiver complete it.
- Use the notes column to write down important information (like names and phone numbers).
- Skip any items that don’t apply to you.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTION ITEMS</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What’s Ahead?</strong></td>
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<td>□ Ask where you will get care after discharge. Do you have options (like home health care)? Be sure you tell the staff what you prefer.</td>
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<td>□ If a caregiver will be helping you after discharge, write down their name and phone number.</td>
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<td><strong>Your Health</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Ask the staff about your health condition and what you can do to help yourself get better.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Ask about problems to watch for and what to do about them. Write down a name and phone number to call if you have problems.</td>
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## ACTION ITEMS

- Use “My Drug List” on page 5 to write down your prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
- Review the list with the staff.
- Tell the staff what drugs, vitamins, or supplements you took before you were admitted. Ask if you should still take these after you leave.
- Write down a name and phone number to call if you have questions.

## NOTES

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- 
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- 

## Recovery and Support

- Ask if you will need medical equipment (like a walker). Who will arrange for this? Write down where to call if you have questions about equipment.
- Ask if you’re ready to do the activities listed below. Circle the ones you need help with and tell the staff.
  - Bathing, dressing, using the bathroom, climbing stairs
  - Cooking, food shopping, house cleaning, paying bills
  - Getting to doctors’ appointments, picking up prescription drugs
- Make sure you have support (like a caregiver) in place that can help you. See “Resources” on page 6 for more information.
- Ask the staff to show you and your caregiver any other tasks that require special skills (like changing a bandage or giving a shot). Then, show them you can do these tasks. Write down a name and phone number to call if you need help.
- Ask to speak to a social worker if you’re concerned about how you and your family are coping with your illness. Write down information about support groups and other resources.
- Talk to a social worker or your health plan if you have questions about what your insurance will cover and how much you will have to pay. Ask about possible ways to get help with your costs.
**ACTION ITEMS**

- ☐ Ask for written discharge instructions (that you can read and understand) and a summary of your current health status. Bring this information and your completed “My Drug List” to your follow-up appointments.

- ☐ Use “My Appointments” on page 5 to write down any appointments and tests you will need in the next several weeks.

**For the Caregiver**

- ☐ Do you have any questions about the items on this checklist or on the discharge instructions? Write them down and discuss them with the staff.

- ☐ Can you give the patient the help he or she needs?
  - ☐ What tasks do you need help with?
  - ☐ Do you need any education or training?
  - ☐ Talk to the staff about getting the help you need before discharge.
  - ☐ Write down a name and phone number to call if you have questions.

- ☐ Get prescriptions and any special diet instructions early, so you won’t have to make extra trips after discharge.

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**More Information for People with Medicare**

If you need help choosing a home health agency or nursing home:

- Talk to the staff.
- Visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to compare the quality of home health agencies, nursing homes, dialysis facilities, and hospitals in your area.
- Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

**If you think you’re being asked to leave a hospital or other health care setting (discharged) too soon:**

You may have the right to ask for a review of the discharge decision by an independent reviewer called a Quality Improvement Organization (QIO) before you leave. To get the phone number for the QIO in your state, visit [www.medicare.gov/contacts](http://www.medicare.gov/contacts), or call 1-800-MEDICARE. You can also ask the staff for this information. If you’re in a hospital, the staff should give you a notice called “Important Message from Medicare,” which contains information on your state QIO. If you don’t get this notice, ask for it.

For more information on your right to appeal, visit [www.medicare.gov/appeals](http://www.medicare.gov/appeals). To view or print the booklet “Medicare Appeals,” visit [www.medicare.gov/publications](http://www.medicare.gov/publications).

If you have Medicare and limited income and resources, you may qualify for Extra Help to pay for your Medicare prescription drug coverage. For more information about Extra Help, visit [www.medicare.gov/publications](http://www.medicare.gov/publications) to view the booklet “Your Guide to Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage.”
Resources

The agencies listed here have information on community services, (like home-delivered meals and rides to appointments). You can also get help making long-term care decisions. Ask the staff in your health care setting for more information.

Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs): Help older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. To find the AAA/ADRC in your area, visit the ElderCare Locator at www.eldercare.gov, or call 1-800-677-1116 weekdays from 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Ask Medicare: Provides information and support to caregivers of people with Medicare. Visit www.medicare.gov/caregivers.

Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program: Advocate for and promote the rights of residents in LTC facilities. Visit www.ltcombudsman.org.

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Programs: Work with seniors to protect themselves from the economic and health-related consequences of Medicare and Medicaid fraud, error, and abuse. To find a local SMP program, visit www.smpresource.org.


State Technology Assistance Project: Has information on medical equipment and other assistive technology. Visit www.resna.org, or call 1-703-524-5686 to get the contact information in your state.

National Long-Term Care Clearinghouse: Provides information and resources to plan for your long-term care needs. Visit www.longtermcare.gov.


State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs): Offer counseling on health insurance and programs for people with limited income. Also help with claims, billing, and appeals. Visit www.medicare.gov/contacts, or call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to get your SHIP’s phone number. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

State Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Office: Provides information about Medicaid. To find your local office, visit www.medicare.gov/contacts, or call 1-800-MEDICARE and say, “Medicaid.”

The information in this booklet was correct when it was printed. Changes may occur after printing. Visit www.medicare.gov, or call 1-800-MEDICARE to get the most current information.

“Your Discharge Planning Checklist” isn’t a legal document. Official Medicare Program legal guidance is contained in the relevant statutes, regulations, and rulings.

CMS Product No. 11376
Revised January 2012
Women: Stay Healthy at 50+

Get More Information on Good Health

Check out these Federal Government Web sites:
Healthfinder.gov: Guides and tools for healthy living; an encyclopedia of health-related topics, health news, and more. Go to: www.healthfinder.gov.
MedlinePlus: Health information from government agencies and health organizations, including a medical encyclopedia and health tools. Go to: www.medlineplus.gov.

Questions Are the Answer. Information on how to get involved in your health care by asking questions, understanding your condition, and learning about your options. Go to: www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer.

If you don’t have access to a computer, talk to your local librarian about health information in the library.

Sources. The information in this pamphlet is based on research from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The USPSTF, supported by AHRQ, is a national independent panel of medical experts that makes recommendations based on scientific evidence about which clinical preventive services should be included in primary medical care and for which populations.

For information about the USPSTF and its recommendations, go to: www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org.

Get the Screenings You Need

Screenings are tests that look for diseases before you have symptoms. Blood pressure checks and mammograms are examples of screenings.

You can get some screenings, such as blood pressure readings, in your doctor’s office. Others, such as mammograms, need special equipment, so you may need to go to a different office.

After a screening test, it’s important to ask when you will see the results and who you should talk to about them.

Breast Cancer. Talk with your healthcare team about whether you need a mammogram.

Cervical Cancer. Have a Pap smear every 1 to 3 years until you are age 65 if you have been sexually active. If you are older than 65 and recent Pap smears were normal, you do not need a Pap smear. If you have had a total hysterectomy for a reason other than cancer, you do not need a Pap smear.

Colorectal Cancer. Have a screening test for colorectal cancer. Several different tests—for example, a stool blood test and colonoscopy—can detect this cancer. Your health care team can help you decide which is best for you.

Depression. Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. Talk to your health care team about being screened for depression, especially if during the last 2 weeks:

- You have felt down, sad, or hopeless.
- You have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things.

Diabetes. Get screened for diabetes if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medication for high blood pressure.

Diabetes (high blood sugar) can cause problems with your heart, brain, eyes, feet, kidneys, nerves, and other body parts.

High Blood Pressure. Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years. High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher. High blood pressure can cause strokes, heart attacks, kidney and eye problems, and heart failure.

High Cholesterol. High cholesterol increases your chance of heart disease, stroke, and poor circulation. Have your cholesterol checked regularly if:

- You use tobacco.
- You are obese.
- You have a personal history of heart disease or blocked arteries.
- A male relative in your family had a heart attack before age 50 or a female relative, before age 60.
HIV. Talk with your health care team about HIV screening if any of these apply to you:
- You have had unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- You use or have used injection drugs.
- You exchange sex for money or drugs or have sex partners who do.
- You have or had a sex partner who is HIV-infected, bisexual, or injects drugs.
- You are being treated for a sexually transmitted disease.
- You had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.
- You have any other concerns.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Talk to your health care team about being tested for sexually transmitted diseases.

Osteoporosis (Bone Thinning). Have a screening test at age 65 to make sure your bones are strong. If you are younger than 65 and at high risk for bone fractures, you should also be screened. Talk with your health care team about your risk for bone fractures.

Overweight and Obesity. The best way to learn if you are overweight or obese is to find your body mass index (BMI). You can find your BMI by entering your height and weight into a BMI calculator, such as the one available at: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/bmi.

A BMI between 18.5 and 25 indicates a normal weight. Persons with a BMI of 30 or higher may be obese. If you are obese, talk to your health care team about seeking intensive counseling and getting help with changing your behaviors to lose weight. Overweight and obesity can lead to diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

Take Preventive Medicines If You Need Them

Aspirin. If you are 55 or older, you may want to consider taking aspirin to prevent strokes. Your health care team can help you decide whether taking aspirin to prevent strokes is right for you.

Breast Cancer Drugs. If your mother, sister, or daughter has had breast cancer, talk to your doctor about whether you should take medicines to prevent breast cancer.

Estrogen for Menopause (Hormone Replacement Therapy). Do not use estrogen to prevent heart disease or other diseases. If you need relief from symptoms of menopause, talk with your health care team.

Immunizations.
- Get a flu shot every year.
- Get shots for tetanus and whooping cough.
- If you are 60 or older, get a shot to prevent shingles.
- If you are 65 or older, get a pneumonia shot.
- Talk with your health care team about whether you need other vaccinations. You can also find which ones you need by going to: www.immunize.org/cdph/p4030.pdf.

Take Steps to Good Health

Be physically active and make healthy food choices. Learn how at www.healthfinder.gov/prevention.

Get to a healthy weight and stay there. Balance the calories you take in from food and drink with the calories you burn off by your activities.

Be tobacco free. For tips on how to quit, go to www.smokefree.gov. To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8769).

If you drink alcohol, have no more than one drink per day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.
Men: Stay Healthy at 50+

Get More Information on Good Health
Check out these Federal Government Web sites
Healthfinder.gov. Guides and tools for healthy living, an encyclopedia of health-related topics, health news, and more. Go to: www.healthfinder.gov.
MedlinePlus. Health information from government agencies and health organizations, including a medical encyclopedia and health tools. Go to: www.medlineplus.gov.

Questions Are the Answer. Information on how to get involved in your health care by asking questions, understanding your condition, and learning about your options. Go to: www.aHRQ.gov/QuestionsAreTheAnswer.

If you don’t have access to a computer, talk to your local librarian about health information in the library.
Sources. The information in this pamphlet is based on research from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The USPSTF, supported by AHRQ, is a national independent panel of medical experts that makes recommendations based on scientific evidence about which clinical preventive services should be included in primary medical care and for which populations.
For information about the USPSTF and its recommendations, go to www.UsPSTF.org.

Use this information to help you stay healthy at ages 50 and above. Learn which screening tests you need and when to get them, which medicines may prevent diseases, and daily steps you can take for good health.

Get the Screenings You Need
Screenings are tests that look for diseases before you have symptoms. Blood pressure checks and tests for high cholesterol are examples of screenings.

You can get some screenings, such as blood pressure readings, in your doctor’s office. Others, such as a colonoscopy, a test for colorectal cancer, need special equipment, so you may need to go to a different office.

After a screening test, ask when you will see the results and who you should talk to about them.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm. If you are between the ages of 65 and 75 and have ever been a smoker (smoked 100 or more cigarettes in your lifetime), talk to your health care team about being screened for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). AAA is a bulging in your abdominal aorta, the largest artery in your body. An AAA may burst, which can cause dangerous bleeding and death.

An ultrasound, a painless procedure in which you lie on a table while a technician slides a wand-like medical device over your abdomen, will show whether an aneurysm is present.

Colorectal Cancer. Have a screening test for colorectal cancer. Several different tests—for example, a stool blood test and colonoscopy—can detect this cancer. Your health care team can help you decide which is best for you.

Depression. Your emotional health is as important as your physical health. Talk to your health care team about being screened for depression especially if during the last 2 weeks:
- You have felt down, sad, or hopeless.
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High Blood Pressure. Have your blood pressure checked at least every 2 years. High blood pressure is 140/90 or higher. High blood pressure can cause strokes, heart attacks, kidney and eye problems, and heart failure.

High Cholesterol. High cholesterol increases your chance of heart disease, stroke, and poor circulation. Have your cholesterol checked regularly.
It’s Your Body!
You know your body better than anyone else. Always tell your health care team about any changes in your health, including your vision and hearing. Ask them about being checked for any condition you are concerned about, not just the ones here. If you are wondering about diseases such as glaucoma, prostate cancer, or skin cancer, for example, ask about them.

HIV. Talk with your health care team about HIV screening if any of these apply to you:
- You have had unprotected sex with multiple partners.
- You have had sex with men.
- You use or have used injection drugs.
- You exchange sex for money or drugs or have sex partners who do.
- You have or had a sex partner who is HIV-infected or injects drugs.
- You are being treated for a sexually transmitted disease.
- You had a blood transfusion between 1978 and 1985.
- You have any other concerns.

Syphilis. Ask your health care team whether you should be screened for syphilis, a sexually transmitted infection.
Syphilis can cause heart disease, brain damage, spinal cord damage, blindness, and death.

Overweight and Obesity. The best way to learn if you are overweight or obese is to find your body mass index (BMI). You can find your BMI by entering your height and weight into a BMI calculator, such as the one available at: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/bmi.
A BMI between 18.5 and 25 indicates a normal weight. Persons with a BMI of 30 or higher may be obese. If you are obese, talk to your health care team about seeking intensive counseling and getting help with changing your behaviors to lose weight. Overweight and obesity can lead to diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

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- Get a flu shot every year.
- Get shots for tetanus and whooping cough.
- If you are 60 or older, get a shot to prevent shingles.
- If you are 65 or older, get a pneumonia shot.
- Talk with your health care team about whether you need other vaccinations. You can also find which ones you need by going to: www.immunize.org/catg/d/p2030.pdf.

Take Steps to Good Health
Be physically active and make healthy food choices. Learn how at www.healthfinder.gov/prevention.
Get to a healthy weight and stay there.
Balance the calories you take in from food and drink with the calories you burn off by your activities.
Be tobacco free. For tips on how to quit, go to www.smokefree.gov. To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669).
If you drink alcohol, have no more than two drinks per day if you are 65 or younger. If you are older than 65, have no more than one drink a day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.
**Nutrition**  
*New Food Guide Pyramid*

**Did you know?**  
The USDA has remodeled the food guide pyramid. It is called My Plate and it looks like this:

![My Plate Diagram](image)

And they have **5 new consumer messages:**  
Make half your grains whole.  
Vary your veggies.  
Focus on fruit.  
Go lean with protein.  
Get your calcium rich foods.²

Nutrition

Recommend daily intake

Recommended daily intake of each food group for men and women 51 years of age and older:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MEN (51+)</th>
<th>WOMEN (51+)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FRUIT</td>
<td>2 CUPS</td>
<td>1 ½ CUPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETABLE</td>
<td>2 ½ CUPS</td>
<td>2 CUPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAIRY</td>
<td>3 CUPS</td>
<td>3 CUPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROTEIN</td>
<td>5 ½ OUNCE</td>
<td>5 OUNCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQUIVALENTS</td>
<td>EQUIVALENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAINS</td>
<td>3 OUNCE</td>
<td>3 OUNCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EQUIVALENTS</td>
<td>EQUIVALENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OILS</td>
<td>6 TEASPOONS</td>
<td>5 TEASPOONS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What counts an ounce equivalent in the protein group?
1 ounce of meat, poultry, fish
¼ cup cooked beans
1 egg
1 Tablespoon of peanut butter
½ ounce of nuts/seeds

What counts as an ounce equivalent in the grains group?
1 slice of bread
1 cup of cold cereal
½ cup of cooked rice
1 mini bagel
½ cup cooked pasta³

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Nutrition

Fluid intake and vitamins

Fluid intake:

- Recommended fluid intake for older adults is roughly 12 cups per day for women and 16 cups per day for men unless a medical condition indicates restriction of fluid intake.
- Fluid comes from both food and drinks.
- Examples of foods with a high fluid content are tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, and leafy green vegetables.
- Water is always an important source of fluid intake.

Vitamins:

- Vitamin B12, D and calcium are often lacking in the diets of older adults.
- Food sources high in vitamin B12 are shellfish, fish, meat, cheese, and eggs.
- Sources high in vitamin D are ultraviolet light (i.e. sunlight), fish, organ meats, egg yolks, and fortified foods such as milk and orange juice.
- Food sources high in calcium are dairy, green leafy vegetables, fish (ex. salmon), tofu, almonds, and fortified foods.
- Do not take vitamin supplements without consulting your doctor first because there is a potential for interaction with medications.¹

Nutrition
Empty Calories

What are empty calories?
Empty calories are solid fats and/or added sugars. Some foods contain all empty calories while some others contain a portion of empty calories.

What are solid fats?
These are fats that are solid at room temperature. Examples of solid fats are butter, beef fat, cream, and shortening.

What are added sugars?
These are sugars that are added to food when they are being processed. Examples of added sugars are sodas, sports drinks, and cookies.

Daily allowance:
For men 51 years and older, out of your total daily caloric intake, only 260 of those calories should be from empty sources.
For women 51 years and older, out of your total daily caloric intake, only 120 of those calories should be from empty sources.

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A little *Exercise goes a long way!*

Staying fit does not require a gym!
This sheet lists several exercises for you to try. Give one or two a try each day and you will start feeling stronger and healthier!

The National Institute for Aging has identified
4 Categories of exercise that have proven to be important to helping you lead a healthy life:

1) **Endurance exercises:** walking, jogging, swimming, walk up and down the stairs, cleaning the yard, or dancing (yes, dancing counts as exercise!)
Build up endurance slowly, starting with 5-10 minutes each day, gradually building towards a daily goal of 30 minutes.

2) **Strengthening exercises:** use small weights (bottles of water or soup cans can work too!) or resistance bands to work your arms muscles with exercises such as arm curls, hand squeezes, arm raises, or wrist curls. Wall push-up’s, chair lifts, toe stands, and leg lifts are also fun strengthening activities that do not require any equipment.

3) **Stretching:** Incorporating stretching into your daily routine will give you greater freedom of movement and mobility throughout the day. Choose whichever stretch you like to do and go into the desired position, hold it for 10-30 seconds, then relax, breathe, and do the same stretch again but try to stretch further. Stretches can involve all parts of your body including neck, shoulders, arms, upper body, chest, back, ankles, legs, and hips.

4) **Balance exercises:** Balance exercises can help prevent falls and avoid the disability that may result from falling. Easy everyday balance exercises include: balancing on one foot while holding chair, heel-to-toe walk, knee-raise walk, and toe stands. Always make sure to have a sturdy piece of furniture or person near you when practicing exercises in case you lose your balance!

Always incorporate a 5 minute warm-up and a 5 minute cool-down at the beginning and end of your daily exercise routine!
Tips for Exercising:

- Always listen to your body! If you do not feel well while doing your exercises, sit down! Exercise is supposed to help you, not hurt you.
- Consult your doctor before starting any exercise routine to ensure that you are doing exercises that are suitable for your health.
- Staying active is a key ingredient to a long and healthy life. Little exercises can make BIG differences, so the sooner you start, the sooner your body will benefit!
- Did you know that regular exercise can help to prevent or delay the onset of diabetes and heart problems?
- Did you know that regular exercise can also reduce pain from arthritis, as well as reduce anxiety and depression?
- Daily exercise will increase your energy levels!
- Exercise is a key intervention to help older people stay independent!

Take a moment to set some weekly goals for yourself with regards to what exercise routines you can see yourself incorporating into your daily routine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Sample Strengthening Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Wrist Curl**               | This exercise will strengthen your wrists. It also will help ensure good form and prevent injury when you do upper body strength exercises. | 1. Rest your forearm on the arm of a sturdy chair with your hand over the edge.  
2. Hold weight with palm facing upward.  
3. Slowly bend your wrist up and down.  
4. Repeat 10-15 times.  
5. Repeat with other hand 10-15 times.  
6. Repeat 10-15 more times with each hand. |
| **Overhead Arm Raise**       | This exercise will strengthen your shoulders and arms. It should make swimming and other activities such as lifting and carrying grandchildren easier. | 1. You can do this exercise while standing or sitting in a sturdy, armless chair.  
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.  
3. Hold weights at your sides at shoulder height with palms facing forward. Breathe in slowly.  
4. Slowly breathe out as you raise both arms up over your head keeping your elbows slightly bent.  
5. Hold the position for 1 second.  
6. Breathe in as you slowly lower your arms.  
7. Repeat 10-15 times.  
8. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times. |
| **Wall Push-Up**             | These push-ups will strengthen your arms, shoulders, and chest. Try this exercise during a TV commercial break. | 1. Face a wall, standing a little farther than arm's length away, feet shoulder-width apart.  
2. Lean your body forward and put your palms flat against the wall at shoulder height and shoulder-width apart.  
3. Slowly breathe in as you bend your elbows and lower your upper body toward the wall in a slow, controlled motion. Keep your feet flat on the floor.  
4. Hold the position for 1 second.  
5. Breathe out and slowly push yourself back until your arms are straight.  
6. Repeat 10-15 times.  
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times. |
Back Leg Raise

This exercise strengthens your buttocks and lower back. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance. (See Progressing to Improve Balance.)

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly lift one leg straight back without bending your knee or pointing your toes. Try not to lean forward. The leg you are standing on should be slightly bent.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower your leg.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.
7. Repeat 10-15 more times with each leg.

Toe Stand

This exercise will help make walking easier by strengthening your calves and ankles. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance. (See Progressing to Improve Balance.)

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair, feet shoulder-width apart, holding on for balance. Breathe in slowly.
2. Breathe out and slowly stand on tiptoes, as high as possible.
3. Hold position for 1 second.
4. Breathe in as you slowly lower heels to the floor.
5. Repeat 10-15 times.
6. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.
Sample Stretches

**Neck**

This easy stretch can help relieve tension in your neck. Try to stretch after strength training and during any activity that makes you feel stiff, such as sitting at a desk.

1. You can do this stretch while standing or sitting in a sturdy chair.
2. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
3. Slowly turn your head to the right until you feel a slight stretch. Be careful not to tip or tilt your head forward or backward, but hold it in a comfortable position.
4. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
5. Turn your head to the left and hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.

**Shoulder and Upper Arm**

This exercise to increase flexibility in your shoulders and upper arms will help make it easier to reach for your seatbelt. **If you have shoulder problems, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.**

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Hold one end of a towel in your right hand.
3. Raise and bend your right arm to drape the towel down your back. Keep your right arm in this position and continue holding on to the towel.
4. Reach behind your lower back and grasp the towel with your left hand.
5. To stretch your right shoulder, pull the towel down with your left hand. Stop when you feel a stretch or slight discomfort in your right shoulder.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Reverse positions, and repeat at least 3-5 times.
Back

This exercise will help you do activities that require you to twist or turn to look behind you, such as backing out of a parking space or swinging a golf club. **If you’ve had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.**

1. Sit up toward the front of a sturdy chair with armrests. Stay as straight as possible. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly twist to the left from your waist without moving your hips. Turn your head to the left. Lift your left hand and hold on to the left arm of the chair. Place your right hand on the outside of your left thigh. Twist farther, if possible.
3. Hold the position for 10-30 seconds.
4. Slowly return to face forward.
5. Repeat on the right side.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 more times.

Back of Leg

Here’s another exercise that stretches the muscles in the back of your legs. **If you’ve had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.**

1. Lie on your back with left knee bent and left foot flat on the floor.
2. Raise right leg, keeping knee slightly bent.
3. Reach up and grasp right leg with both hands. Keep head and shoulders flat on the floor.
4. Gently pull right leg toward your body until you feel a stretch in the back of your leg.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times with left leg.

Thigh (Standing)

Here’s another exercise that stretches your thigh muscles. **If you’ve had hip or back surgery, talk with your doctor before trying this stretch.**

1. Stand behind a sturdy chair with your feet shoulder-width apart and your knees straight, but not locked.
2. Hold on to the chair for balance with your right hand.
3. Bend your left leg back and grab your foot in your left hand. Keep your knee pointed to the floor. If you can’t grab your ankle, loop a resistance band, belt, or towel around your foot and hold both ends.
4. Gently pull your leg until you feel a stretch in your thigh.
5. Hold position for 10-30 seconds.
6. Repeat at least 3-5 times.
7. Repeat at least 3-5 times with your right leg.
### Sample Balance Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stand on One Foot</strong></td>
<td>You can do this exercise while waiting for the bus or standing in line at the grocery. For an added challenge, you can modify the exercise to improve your balance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                           | 1. Stand on one foot behind a sturdy chair, holding on for balance.  
|                           | 2. Hold position for up to 10 seconds.  
|                           | 3. Repeat 10-15 times.  
|                           | 4. Repeat 10-15 times with other leg.  
|                           | 5. Repeat                                                               |
| **Heel-to-Toe Walk**      | Having good balance is important for many everyday activities, such as going up and down stairs.                                              |
|                           | 1. Position the heel of one foot just in front of the toes of the other foot. Your heel and toes should touch or almost touch.  
|                           | 2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.  
|                           | 3. Take a step. Put your heel just in front of the toe of your other foot.  
|                           | 4. Repeat for 20 steps.                                                                                                                |
|                           | If you are unsteady on your feet, try doing this exercise near a wall so you can steady yourself if you need to.                       |
| **Balance Walk**          | Good balance helps you walk safely and avoid tripping and falling over objects in your way.                                                |
|                           | 1. Raise arms to sides, shoulder height.  
|                           | 2. Choose a spot ahead of you and focus on it to keep you steady as you walk.  
|                           | 3. Walk in a straight line with one foot in front of the other.  
|                           | 4. As you walk, lift your back leg. Pause for 1 second before stepping forward.  
|                           | 5. Repeat for 20 steps, alternating legs.                                                                                              |
|                           | As you progress, try looking from side to side as you walk, but skip this step if you have inner ear problems.                           |