



Winter Depression Watch

As the holiday season grows closer, the hours of sunlight grow shorter, and for some, this may lead to an onset of depression. If you are depressed in the winter, but feel fine in the warmer seasons, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Experts are not sure what causes SAD. Symptoms come and go at about the same time each year. For most people with SAD, symptoms start in September or October and end in April or May.



Experts and doctors are not sure what causes SAD. It may be that a lack of sunlight during winter months disturbs our normal sleep cycle and serotonin levels, creating episodes of depression.

Occasional bouts of sadness are not the same as depression or SAD. The most common symptoms are:

- Craving sweets or other starchy foods, or any other sudden change in appetite
- Weight gain
- Oversleeping
- Fatigue
- Social anxiety
- Irritability, anxiety, and concentration issues
- Isolation from activities you normally enjoy

If you have noticed that you or a loved one has had these symptoms during the same season and have improved when the season changes for at least two years in a row, you may be suffering from SAD. Visit with your doctor to discuss treatment options.

Medicare may help pay the bill for a mental health visit if you are enrolled. Medicare will pay 80 percent of its approved amount for an initial visit to a mental health professional to determine your diagnosis. For appointments after your initial visit, Medicare pays 50 percent of its approved amount. You or your supplemental insurer will be responsible for the remainder of the bill.

Watch the Walk and Prevent a Fall



Falls are so harmful to the elderly and so costly to society that if falling were a disease, it would be deemed an epidemic.

More than one-third of people ages 65 or older fall each year. About one fall in 10 results in a serious injury, like a hip fracture. Roughly 20 percent of older people who suffer a hip fracture die within a year.

(Continued back side)

Hospice: Care Near the End of Life

What are the options for care at the end of life? Hospice care has rapidly become a commonplace option for patients and their family members.

Knowing about hospice early on can ensure comfort and dignity for those individuals who are nearing the end of their lives. It can also serve as a tremendous support for families as well.

“Hospice: Care Near the End of Life” is a 1-hour community informational seminar to be held Tuesday, Dec 8 at the Lakewood Library from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

Presenters include a panel of specialists from Franciscan Hospice and Palliative Care.

This free presentation will cover important issues for individuals who want to become more acquainted with hospice: services; how and where hospice is provided; paying for hospice; Medicare, Medicaid and private pay options; the role of the family and graduating from hospice.

Space is limited. RSVP's can be made by calling (253) 798-8787. For more information about this seminar, call the Pierce County Aging and Disability Resource Center at (253) 798-4600.

The estimated economic cost of falls ranges widely, up to \$75 billion a year in the United States, if fall-related home care and assisted-living costs are added to medical expenses.

Researchers are now beginning to apply the digital tools of low-cost wireless sensors in carpets, clothing and rooms to monitor an older person's walking and activity. The continuous measurement and greater precision afforded by simple computing devices, researchers say, promise to deliver new insights on risk factors and tailored prevention measures.



Got Prescriptions?

If you get your prescription drugs paid for by the Medicare Part D program, you probably already know the drill. Every year from Nov. 15 to Dec. 31 it's back to the drawing board. You have to compare plans to see which will give you the best deal.

Each year the Part D insurance plans change premiums, deductibles, co-pays, formularies and the ever-famous "donut hole." Without going back to check, individuals can pay hundreds or thousands of dollars needlessly.

Remember this: the best plan for you may not be the best plan for someone else. It all depends on your financial situation, the drugs you take, the pharmacies you use and other basic criteria.

If you have a computer handy, visit www.Medicare.gov. A prescription drug "planfinder" is available. If you don't use a computer, call the Aging & Disability Resource Center staff at (253) 798-4600 or (800) 562-0223.

Need Help with Medicare?

There's a little known program that is specifically designed for individuals with lower incomes who have trouble paying for their Medicare premiums. It's called the Medicare Savings Program and it can be a lifesaver.

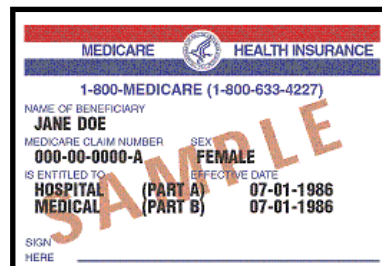
Here is a thumbnail overview for eligibility:

1. Monthly income below \$923 (Couple – \$1,235)*
Help with Part A & B premiums and other costs
 2. Monthly income below \$1,239 (Couple – \$1,660)*
Help with Part B premiums
 3. Monthly income below \$1,354 (Couple – \$1,821)*
Help with Medicare Part D premiums
- *Asset restrictions may apply.

Medicare Savings Programs can help pay for Part A premiums – hospitalization; Part B premiums – outpatient care; and Part D premiums – prescription drugs.

An added benefit to applying is that most people who qualify for Medicare Savings Programs also qualify for Basic Food (which used to be known as "Food Stamps").

Learn more qualifying. Call an ADRC specialist at (253) 798-4600.



Save the Date: Annual Caregiver Conference Scheduled

Every year caregivers have the opportunity to learn more about caregiving and a host of issues related to caring for a loved one.

The 2010 version of the conference will be held Monday, June 7 at the Tukwila Community Center, 12424 42nd Avenue South. It's an all-day event with some top-notch workshops.

Caregivers from Pierce County who are on the Family Caregiver Support Program will be able to request scholarships.

State Legislative Session Upcoming

The Washington State Legislature will meet for a short session starting in January. It will be a very difficult session. Many budget cuts to human services will be on the line.

Make your voice known. Contact your elected representative. A complete list of contact information is available on the web at www.PierceCountyWA.org/ALTC. Or call the ADRC for a printed list of contacts at (253) 798-4600. We will gladly send you helpful information.

Need Help? Please Call.

If you have a question or concern about any issue related to your situation, please call the ADRC (Aging & Disability Resource Center) at (253) 798-4600. We are there for you.