

Aging Well

Legislator Maintains Health with the Help of Healthy Aging Project

Carolyn Tomei wanted to stay slim during her term as a state legislator living in Salem for the next several months.

“... the food in the House Lounge is wonderful. I’ve heard that some people gained 40 pounds by the time the session was over.

I didn’t want that to happen to me. Plus, there’s so little time for exercise. I’m healthy and I wanted to stay healthy,” Tomei, 65, Milwaukie, said.

As the former Mayor of Milwaukie, she found that she was even busier in her new role. Her days and most evenings are packed with meetings and other work. “It’s like a three-ring circus. So many people want your time. It’s extremely stressful,” Tomei said.

She had planned to take walks at noon, but that time was quickly consumed by meetings. Her regular routine of working out at a Milwaukie gym was impossible because she’s only home on weekends. She is 5 feet 5 inches tall and she wanted to maintain her 114 pounds.

She found help shortly after the November election when she joined Oregon Health & Science University’s Healthy Aging Project. She was among the first group of participants to sign up for this 15-month, proactive approach to health care.



Carolyn Tomei

Participants receive personalized, coordinated care from a team of health professionals. The team includes a primary care provider, a nurse practitioner and nurse coaches skilled in health promotion and wellness. With the team’s help, participants develop their own health

goals, and receive ongoing education and support to reach those goals. Tomei had three face-to-face meetings with members of the Healthy Aging team to learn about the program and to work with a nurse coach to design health goals that would fit her lifestyle.

“Our job is to get a better understanding of each patient. It’s not a cookie cutter approach,” said wellness coordinator Michael Brody,

R.N., Tomei’s nurse coach. He follows up regularly with Tomei by telephone and e-mail.

“A lot of people say that I’m their conscience. It’s important for people to have someone to whom they are accountable,” Brody said.

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FEATURED SUPPLEMENT

St. John’s Wort

St. John’s wort once was thought to rid the body of evil spirits. More recently it has been used to treat problems such as depression, anxiety and sleeplessness. When steeped in oil and applied to the skin, it is thought to help heal wounds and burns. Research suggests it may also be useful in treating viral infections.

Plant Description

St. John’s wort is a shrub with clusters of yellow flowers and blooms around June 24, the birthday of John the Baptist. Both the flowers and leaves are used as medicine. The best-studied active components are hypericin and pseudohypericin, found in both the leaves and flowers. There has been recent research to suggest that these best-studied components may not be the most active in the plant.

Available Forms and Recommended Dosages

- Capsules — look for products that are standardized to contain 0.3% hypericin, the active ingredient. The usual dose is 300 to 500 mg at 0.3 percent, three times a day, with meals, for a minimum of four to six weeks.

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SPECIAL TOPIC

Herbal Supplements

Herbal Supplement and Drug Interactions

At least 40 percent of all Americans take some type of herbal or dietary supplements. Although people usually take supplements to improve their health, some people may actually endanger their health by using these products — especially if they also take other medications. Some dietary supplements may alter or interfere with the effectiveness of prescription or over-the-counter

medicines, and can cause side effects even when taken alone. For example, people with heart disease or irregular heart-beats who are taking herbal supplements are especially vulnerable to interaction with some commonly used prescription drugs, such as blood thinners and other cardiac medications. Older people taking ginko biloba and the blood thinner, warfarin or Coumadin, expose themselves to possible increased risk for bleeding. The table below lists some selected herbal supplements,

their actions and interactions.

Not all herbal supplements are dangerous, but all herbs should be viewed as significant medication. To reduce the risk of drug-supplement interactions, be sure to tell your primary care provider about all of the dietary supplements that you are using or considering using.

St. John's Wort

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- Tea — steep 1 to 2 teaspoons of dried St. John's wort in a cup of boiling water for 10 minutes. Drink 1 to 2 cups a day for four to six weeks. Keep in mind that the dose you get when you make tea may not be consistent.
- You can also buy chopped or powdered forms of the herb as well as oil-based skin lotions.

Remember that the Federal Drug Administration does not regulate the consistency of herbal supplements. It is difficult to know if the amount of active ingredient listed on the label is actually the amount found in the pills.

Precautions

- Depression is a serious condition that requires careful evaluation and monitoring. If your depression is severe or if you feel like hurting yourself or someone else, see a health care professional before using St. John's wort. A health care professional can help you decide whether St. John's wort is right for you.
- If you are taking another antidepressant medication, do not take St. John's wort without first consulting with your physician.
- Do not take St. John's wort if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- St. John's wort may make your skin unusually sensitive to sunlight. Although this reaction is rare, you should be careful about sun exposure if you have fair skin or if you are taking St. John's wort in large doses or over a long time. Use a sunscreen with a skin protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, and do not use sunlamps, tanning booths or tanning beds.

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SELECTED HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS — ACTIONS AND INTERACTIONS

Herb	Actions	Clinical applications	Interactions
Echinacea	antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, immune stimulating	acute respiratory infection, colds, skin ulceration, flu, viral or bacterial illness	Do not use with medications that suppress immune system such as prednisone.
Garlic	prevents hardening of arteries and blood clots, lowers blood sugar/fat levels, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial	elevated cholesterol, inflammation of mouth and pharynx, respiratory tract infection	May interact with anti-coagulant drugs.
Ginkgo Ginko biloba	antioxidant (preventing build up of plaque in arteries), anti-inflammatory	decreased blood flow to legs, pelvis and brain; ringing in ears	May cause bleeding when combined with ibuprofen, aspirin and anticoagulants.
Ginseng (Asian) Panax ginseng	antidepressant, aphrodisiac, appetite stimulating, hormone restorative, immune stimulating	Cancer, diabetes, edema, fatigue, elevated cholesterol, ulcers, viral illness. May increase effect of stimulants.	May increase effect of phenelzine.
Ginseng (Siberian)	Increases body's resistance to stress and infection, diuretic, stimulant	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, decreased appetite, hardening of arteries, BP disorders, fatigue, infection, stress, decreased white cells from leukemia or radiation	May increase effects of caffeine or other stimulants. Should not be taken with corticosteroids such as prednisone or hormones.
Kava Kava	Sedative	Anxiety	Should not be combined with benzodiazepine type medications.
St. John's Wort	Mild antidepressant, anxiety reducing, sedative	Anorexia, anxiety, apathy, depression; fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis,	Interacts with most antidepressant medications including MAOIs. Interferes with antiviral medication, birth control pills and immunosuppressive drugs like cyclosporin.
Saw Palmetto	Antiandrogenic	Stage I and II non-malignant prostate enlargement	Some experts claim that it may interfere with hormonal therapies.

Source: Modified from *Patient Care for the Nurse Practitioner*, October 2000.

St. John's Wort*(continued from page 2)*

Side effects of St. John's wort are usually mild but may include:

- abdominal pain, bloating, constipation
- nausea, vomiting
- dizziness
- dry mouth
- itching, hives, skin rash
- sleep problems
- elevated blood pressure
- unusual tiredness
- increased risk of bleeding if taken within 2 weeks of surgery
- headache

Possible Interactions

People taking the following medications should not take St. John's wort:

- antiviral agents like indinavir and other protease inhibitors
- antidepressant medications that are used to treat depression or other mood disorders.
- the heart medication digoxin
- immunosuppressive medications like cyclosporin
- birth control medications

**There's Still Time to Join the Healthy Aging Project**

If you are interested in joining the Healthy Aging Project, you need to act quickly as this phase of recruitment will soon be drawing to a close. To participate in the project, you should be at least 60 years of age, have medical insurance that covers services at OHSU, and choose a primary care provider from the Healthy Aging Project provider panel. For more information about the project or to request an application packet, please call Jill at 503 494-7757.

Healthy Aging Q & A

Do I need to have my hearing evaluated by a specialist? The following questions will help you determine if you need to have your hearing evaluated by a medical professional:

1. Do you have a problem hearing over the telephone? Yes No
2. Do you have trouble following the conversation when two or more people are talking at the same time? Yes No
3. Do people complain that you turn the TV volume up too high? Yes No
4. Do you have to strain to understand conversation? Yes No
5. Do you have trouble hearing in a noisy background? Yes No
6. Do you find yourself asking people to repeat themselves? Yes No
7. Do many people you talk to seem to mumble (or not speak clearly)? Yes No
8. Do you misunderstand what others are saying and respond inappropriately? Yes No
9. Do you have trouble understanding the speech of women and children? Yes No
10. Do people get annoyed because you misunderstand what they say? Yes No



If you answered "yes" to three or more of these questions, you may want to see an otolaryngologist (an ear, nose and throat specialist) or an audiologist for a hearing evaluation.

The material on this page is for general information only and is not intended for diagnostic or treatment purposes. A physician or other health care professional must be consulted for diagnostic information and advice regarding treatment. For more information, contact the NIDCD information clearinghouse.

Source: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

State Legislator Maintains Health*(continued from page 1)*

Tomei's plan includes having a big salad and the entree in the House Lounge restaurant in the Capitol, keeping sweets to a minimum, taking a walk or exercising at least once during the week, and working out at her Milwaukie gym on Fridays and Sundays. To help ease tension, Brody gave Tomei some stretching and breathing exercises. When Tomei was the Milwaukie Mayor she could stand up and stretch during long meetings. "I can't do that in these meetings. So, I do my neck exercises in some of the meetings, and I do some of the other exercises here in my office between meetings. "I now wear comfortable shoes and walk as much as I can" she said.

Even with her busy schedule, she has kept her weight steady. "The Healthy Aging Project has been a lifesaver to me. It's made me conscious about the choices I make about my health," Tomei said.

Supplement Your Knowledge

If you would like more information on herbal supplements, the Healthy Aging Team has identified the following Web sites:

- for information on ginkgo biloba, www.alz.org/he/treatment
- for information on melatonin, www.familydoctor.org/handouts/258.html;
- for information on complimentary and alternative medicine, nccam.nih.gov/fcp/;
- for information on dietary supplements, vm.cfsan.fda.gov/%7Edms/supplmnt.html;
- for information on glucosamine, www.quackwatch.com, then search for "glucosamine."

OHSU includes the Schools of Dentistry, Medicine and Nursing; OHSU Hospital and Doernbecher Children's Hospital; numerous primary care and specialty clinics; multiple research institutes and centers; and several outreach and public service programs.

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Staying Healthy — for Women Ages 65 and Older

It is a fact that most healthy women can expect to live beyond 80 years. By having routine screening tests and making healthy lifestyle choices, women can lead active and fulfilling lives well into their later years.

Routine Health Services

All women age 65 and older should have a yearly physical exam. The exam should include the routine tests listed on the table at right. Your primary care provider (PCP) may also suggest other tests depending on your risk factors and health history.

Health Concerns

Medications

For older women, staying healthy may include taking prescription medications. You should give your primary care provider a list of all medications, vitamins and natural remedies you are taking. The list will help your PCP identify any potentially harmful combinations of medications.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

After menopause, hormone replacement therapy may be prescribed to you. These medications replace the estrogen that your body is no longer making. When taking estrogen, women who have a uterus also take progesterone.

The benefits of hormone replacement therapy may include prevention of osteoporosis and heart disease and reduced risk of urinary tract infections and cancer of the uterus. It also may improve memory in some women.

Like most treatments, hormone replacement therapy is not free of risks. If estrogen is used without progesterone, the risk of cancer of the uterus maybe increased. Also, there is a slight chance that use of hormone replacement therapy may increase the risk of breast cancer.

If you decide to take hormone replacement therapy, you should take it consistently in the dosage prescribed for you. If you choose to stop taking it, you should let your PCP know.



Some women choose not to take hormone replacement therapy or have medical reasons that prevent them from taking it. Talk to your health care provider about options to decrease your risk of osteoporosis and heart disease.

Diet

Malnourishment can be a significant problem among older adults. Poor nutrition and extra weight increase the risk of vitamin deficiency and other health related problems.

Though it may be hard to eat a healthy diet all the time, a well-balanced diet is key to good health. It is important to limit the amount of foods high in fat and sugar that you eat. You should include foods high in fiber in your diet and drink eight glasses of water a day (even more in hot weather) to prevent constipation.

Your PCP may also suggest you take a supplement to ensure you are getting enough of certain essential vitamins and minerals.

Exercise

Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do to promote better health. Its effects can be like a “fountain of youth.”

Exercise can help to:

- Lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level.
- Lower your risk of heart disease, stroke and type II diabetes.
- Strengthen your heart, lungs and bones.
- Keep a healthy weight.
- Keep your joints flexible and muscles strong.
- Give you more energy.
- Reduce stress, anxiety and depression.
- Improve balance.

It's never too late to begin an exercise program! This is true even if you've never exercised before. Before you begin any exercise program, check with your health provider.

A physical therapist can design an exercise

program for you if you have been injured, ill, have physical limitations or a balance problem. Exercise is important for everyone, even those who use a wheelchair or walker.

Harmful Things

Just as exercise is beneficial at any age, quitting smoking and cutting back on drinking alcohol also has benefits for women. Heavy drinking (more than two drinks a day) can:

- Worsen existing health problems.
- Damage the liver over time.
- Lead to vitamin and mineral deficiencies.
- Increase risk of falls and accidents.
- Increase risk of depression or cause it to worsen.
- Cause harmful interactions with prescribed medications.

Using tobacco increases a woman's risk of chronic health problems and premature death. Tobacco use in women increases the risk of:

- Cancer.
- Heart disease and stroke.
- Emphysema.
- Bronchitis.
- Pneumonia.

When older smokers quit, they increase their life expectancy, and even skin tone and color improve!

Mental Health

As people age, they go through life changes that can affect their mental health. Sometimes this can lead to depression.

Depression is a medical disorder, like diabetes, high blood pressure or heart disease that can be long lasting or related to a major life event. Many women ages 65 and older face situations that can trigger depression.

A social network of friends and activities can promote good mental health. If you're feeling down most of the time, this may signal depression. Talk about it with your health provider. Treatment often can help.

Abuse

Older women can sometimes be the victims of abuse or domestic violence. Abuse may be mental, physical, sexual or financial. Neglect may also be a problem. The source of abuse can be anyone but often is a spouse, caregiver or other family member.

Here are some questions to think about:

- Has anyone at home ever hurt you?
- Has anyone taken anything of yours without asking?
- Are you afraid of anyone?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, seek help from someone you trust or discuss the problem with your health provider.

Injury Prevention

Falls and injuries pose a serious health risk for women and men ages 65 or older. Think about these questions:

- Are there nonskid backings on throw rugs?
- Are rooms well lit?
- Are there handrails by stairs and in the bathroom?
- Is there clutter?
- Should I use a walker or cane to help my balance?
- Have I had my vision checked this year?
- Do others, or I, have concerns about my driving (especially at night)?

Sexuality

Women may enjoy sex more when they're older, but changes brought about by aging or

illness often affect sexual response in both men and women. Lubricants or hormone replacement therapy can help women with vaginal dryness. Medications can help men with impotence.

Some women may have a healthy interest in sex, but lack a partner or the partner may not be able to have sex. Masturbation (self-pleasure) or trying new ways of lovemaking can be good choices as people age.

Keep in mind the need for safe sex doesn't stop. You still need to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. Using a latex condom when you have sex and knowing about your partner's sexual history will help.

Finally ...

The changes that aging brings are a natural part of life. Take note of the changes in your body and talk with your PCP about them. Have routine health screenings. You are your own best resource in finding and treating problems early.

Your lifestyle plays a large part in keeping you healthy and active. Take care of yourself — mind and body — to stay healthy and active for a long time to come.

Source: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

ROUTINE HEALTH SCREENING TESTS

Test	What It Looks For	Frequency
Pap test (cells taken from the cervix and vagina and examined under a microscope)	changes in cells that could lead to cancer	yearly, less often if low risk and physician and patient agree after three normal tests in a row.
Mammography (X-ray of the breast)	cancer	yearly
Cholesterol (blood test)	levels of lipoproteins, which carry fat through the blood vessels for use or storage in other parts of the body, high levels can lead to heart disease.	every 3 to 5 years before age 75
Fecal occult blood test (stool sample)	blood in the stool that may be a sign of colon cancer	yearly
Immunizations	helps prevent disease	tetanus booster (every 10 years), flu shot (yearly), and pneumonia (every 5 years)
Breast self-exams	lumps or changes	monthly
Sigmoidoscopy (a slender device placed into the rectum and lower colon)	colon cancer	every 5 years
Urinalysis (urine test)	levels of substances, such as glucose, in urine	yearly
Vision and hearing screening	vision and hearing loss, glaucoma	yearly
Fasting glucose test	diabetes	every 3 years

Ageing Well

Oregon Health & Science University
The Center for Healthy Aging
3181 S.W. Sam Jackson Park Road, SN-4N
Portland, Oregon 97201-3098

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Mark Your Calendar

NEW Meditation Classes Offered on OHSU Campus

Thursdays (beginning July 12th), 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Lee Paton, R.N., Ph.D.
OHSU School of Nursing, Room 602
(parking on Gaines Road)
For more information, please call 503 494-7757
There is no charge for the classes, but voluntary donations will be requested.

HAP Participant Social

Tuesday, August 14th, 1:30 to 3 p.m.
OHSU School of Nursing, Room 602

We would like to invite you and a friend to join us for some conversation and support. We will be gathering every other month to share healthy aging success stories and challenges, and offer each other support and guidance.

Admission is free and light refreshments will be served.

Please call 503 494-7757 for parking information and to RSVP.

Meditation Retreat: "Meditation for the Second Half of Life"

November 16, 17 and 18
Menucha Conference and Retreat Center,
Corbett, Oregon

Please join us for a weekend discussion of an eight-point program that can turn your senior years into a time of growth and transformation. The program will cover daily life skills you can use to develop insight, overcome regrets, heal relationships, and discover peace of mind.

This program is nondenominational and open to people of any religious persuasion as well as to those who profess no particular faith or philosophy. It is practiced around the world in every major religious tradition.

The fee of \$275 includes lodging and vegetarian meals. To register, or for more information, please contact the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation at 800 475-2369. Information on the Blue Mountain Center of Meditation can be found on the Web at www.nilgiri.org.

Meditation and Mind, Body, Spirit Discussion Group

Ongoing class, newcomers welcome!
Wednesdays, 2 to 4 p.m. (note new earlier time)
Sellwood Clinic, second floor conference room
6327 S.E. Milwaukie Ave.
For more information or prior to beginning class, please call Dr. Paton at 503 892-9474

Ongoing Exercise Classes

The following classes are held weekly at Town Center Village, 8611 S.E. Causey Ave. (two blocks north of Clackamas Town Center). For more information, please call 503 654-1939.

Strength Building

Monday, Wednesday and Friday; 8 a.m., class fee

Tai Chi/Yoga

Tuesday; 8 to 8:45 a.m., class fee

Fall Prevention Program

Tuesday, Thursday; 10:30 to 11 a.m., class fee

Sit and Be Fit

Monday, Thursday; 9:30 to 10 a.m., class fee

Stretching Class

Tuesday, Thursday; 9 to 9:30 a.m., class fee