

A PUBLICATION FROM MONMOUTH MEDICAL CENTER SOUTHERN CAMPUS

HEALTHY AGING

DECEMBER 2018

ASK THE EXPERT:
NIGHT VISION

DRUG INTERACTIONS
TO WATCH FOR

THE PROMISE OF
RED PEPPERS

**STAY
ACTIVE!**
INDOOR
EXERCISES
FOR WINTER



I'm having trouble seeing at night. Can anything be done?

Not seeing as well as you used to (especially at night) is often joked about as an unavoidable consequence of getting older, but the truth is it's no laughing matter. "While there are age-related mechanisms at play that may reduce your ability to see at night, there may also be an underlying eye disease that is compromising your vision," explains Richard Angrist, MD, Section Chief of Ophthalmology at MMCSC. "That's why regular eye exams are essential as we get older, especially for those who continue to drive."

OUR AGING EYES: A CLOSER LOOK

- Pupils shrink and lose their capacity to dilate, which reduces the amount of light that the eye can absorb in darkened settings (like driving at night).
- The cornea and lens lose clarity, which causes light to scatter when

it enters the eye. This is what causes glare.

- Other age-related changes to the structure of the eye reduce "contrast sensitivity," or the ability to discern subtle differences in brightness. This makes it more difficult to see objects (other cars, pedestrians, deer) and other hazards on the roads after dark.

- Higher-order aberrations (or HOAs) are imperfections in the anatomy of the eye that can't be remedied with eyeglasses or contacts. Such imperfections worsen over time (with age) and can impede vision, especially after dark.

Changes related to aging can overlap with the symptoms of many common eye-related ailments. But that can be good news, as many of them—including cataracts, nearsightedness, corneal disease, even side effects from medications and vitamin deficiency—are treatable conditions.

SIGHT-THREATENING EYE DISEASES

CATARACT

- Cloudy or blurry vision
- Faded colors
- Glare
- Headlights, lamps or sunlight that appear too bright
- Halos around lights
- Poor night vision
- Double vision or multiple images in one eye
- Frequent changes in your eyeglasses or contact lens prescription

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

- Severe vision loss, even with no initial symptoms
- Blurred vision
- Specks of retinal blood, or spots, affecting your vision; severely blurred vision, severe vision loss

GLAUCOMA

- No symptoms initially
- Gradual decrease of peripheral vision
- Eventual loss of peripheral vision and blindness

DRY MACULAR DEGENERATION

- Blurred vision, which is a common early sign
- Inability to see details clearly at a short distance as disease progresses
- Small, growing blind spot in central vision

WET MACULAR DEGENERATION

- Straight lines appear crooked
- Loss of central vision

Source: National Eye Institute, U.S. National Institutes of Health

» Given the similarities between normally aging eyes and eyes experiencing the early stages of disease, it's imperative to get yours examined regularly—and at the first sign of trouble. If you need an ophthalmologist, please use our physician referral at 1-888-724-7123.

A Prescription for Safety

Have your medications reviewed to make sure you're not taking too much—or the wrong combination.

As we age, we often end up taking multiple medications—and sometimes from multiple physicians. The truth is, some drugs don't mix well with others. If each doctor doesn't have a full and updated list of what the others are prescribing, there could be a potentially dangerous interaction awaiting you in your medicine cabinet.

See the table below for a sample of common drug interactions that older adults should watch out for. Here are some other points to keep in mind:

- Even if your medications stay the same, it's important to notify all

your doctors if the dose changes on any of them.

- Speaking of doses, the way our bodies metabolize medications changes as we get older. It's important to check with your doctor or pharmacist to be sure you are taking an age-appropriate dose.

- Not only can over-the-counter drugs cause adverse reactions with prescription medications, but so can vitamins and nutritional supplements. It's best to check with your doctor(s) or pharmacist before taking anything new.

- Try to keep a clearly written or typed list of everything you're

currently taking (including names of doctors and doses) and bring it with you to every doctor visit. If you don't have a written list, it's better to bring your medications and supplements with you rather than rely on memory so the doctor can review them personally.

- Ask your doctors and pharmacist to make sure the reason you're taking each medication is listed on the label. This will help you keep track of what you're taking, and allow you or your caregiver to watch out for the possibility of being unintentionally overmedicated for the same issue by different doctors.

DRUG COMBINATION

POSSIBLE ADVERSE REACTIONS

Warfarin and over-the-counter pain medications (like aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen)	Increased bleeding
Warfarin and phenytoin	Increased or decreased effects of Warfarin; increased effects of Phenytoin
ACE inhibitors and potassium supplements	Elevated potassium levels
ACE inhibitors and spironolactone	Elevated potassium levels; renal failure
ACE inhibitors and over-the-counter pain medications (like aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen)	Renal failure
Digoxin and verapamil	Digoxin toxicity; slow heart rate; arrhythmia
Theophylline and norfloxacin or ciprofloxacin	Theophylline toxicity
Theophylline and norfloxacin or ciprofloxacin	Severe hypotension (low blood pressure)
Ranolazine and phenytoin	Decreased level/effect of ranolazine

It's important to note that not every person who uses these medications in combination will necessarily experience the same adverse reaction. Each person is different, and a lot depends on dose and other factors. Only you and your doctor can weigh the possible benefits against the risks and determine what's right for you.

» **For a comprehensive review and analysis of the medications you're taking, visit your pharmacist or see your primary care physician.**



Moving Right Along!

Avoid the winter blahs with these safe, fun ideas for staying active indoors.

With the days much shorter and nights much colder this time of year, it's very easy to become sedentary. Nevertheless, it's important to stay active during the winter season, especially for seniors, as inactivity can take a toll on both your physical health and emotional well-being. Consider these ideas to keep moving indoors, some at home and others nearby.



MALL WALKING

As a service to their local communities, many indoor shopping malls open their doors early to allow area residents the opportunity to walk in a safe, monitored, climate-controlled environment. Try the "buddy system" and commit to meeting a friend there once a week and enjoy a coffee or tea afterward.



EXERGAMING

Popular systems like the Wii Fit and PlayStation Move combine the fun of video games with required physical participation to get you up off the couch and in motion, playing along with what's happening on-screen.



DANCING

Whether you're an "old pro" or a newbie needing lessons, dancing is one of the most fun and social ways of staying active indoors. It offers an aerobic workout while also honing your stability and balance. And from swing to salsa, there's a genre to suit nearly every taste.



SWIMMING

Swimming is one of the best forms of exercise. It's aerobic, low-impact, go-at-your-own-pace and (if you'd like it to be) social. Check to see if your local community center or YMCA offers discounted passes for seniors.



TAI CHI

Although it's one of the martial arts, Tai Chi is a wonderfully gentle exercise that can improve your lower-body strength, coordination and balance, helping you to prevent falls.

Members of MMCSC's "Better Health" program are eligible to attend free introductory Tai Chi classes on Thursday afternoons at the hospital. Those who have completed the eight-week introductory series may subsequently take a more advanced class for a nominal fee (see Community Calendar, page 7).



YOGA

A discipline that combines breath control, meditation and stretching, yoga is practiced by many people of all ages who want to improve overall health and flexibility and reduce stress. Members

of MMCSC's "Better Health" program are eligible to attend free yoga classes on Friday afternoons at the hospital (see Community Calendar, page 7).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Be sure to clear any new exercise or activity plans with your doctor.
- Choose activities you enjoy so that you're more likely to stick with them.
- Start slowly. Increase the amount of time you spend doing an activity by five to 10 minutes at a time each session.
- Find a buddy. Get a relative or friend to join you in an activity and try to commit to a regular schedule.

ALWAYS STAY SAFE

- Have proper footwear that supports your feet and ankles and has soles that provide good traction.
- Be sure to warm up before you undertake any prolonged period of physical exertion.
- Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water while doing your activities.
- Don't push it. If you're running a fever, have a cold or upset stomach, or just don't feel well, give yourself a break for the day. "Listen" to your body.
- Exercise might tire you out a little bit, but it should never be painful. Stop at the first sign of pain.



The Promise of **RED PEPPER**

Its spicy cousins may win more fame, but this sweet-tasting veggie is packed with disease-fighting nutrients.

In culinary terms, the red bell pepper is a vegetable, but botanically it's actually a fruit—just like a tomato. No matter which bin you drop it in, you've got a nutritional superfood. In fact, red peppers are some of the most nutrient-dense vegetables you can eat, boasting 30 different antioxidants, which protect the body from disease-causing free radicals.

POWER UP

One medium red pepper provides a hefty 253 percent of your daily value of vitamin C and 74 percent of vitamin A. It's also a very good source of B6 (17 percent), folic acid (14 percent) and fiber (10 percent). And it's high (second only to tomatoes) in the antioxidant lycopene, which can help prevent cardiovascular disease, lower your risk of certain types of cancer and lessen the likelihood of chronic inflammation. Red peppers are potent when it comes to eye health, too: They're rich in lutein and zeaxanthin, which combat macular degeneration. Added bonus: One medium red pepper contains just 37 calories, making it an ideal snack for waist-watchers.

BUY | STORE | GROW

Choose red peppers with deep color, taut skin and stems that look green and fresh. They should feel heavy for their size and firm enough so that they only "give" slightly to a small amount of pressure. If you'll be eating your peppers in a day or two, there's no need to refrigerate them. Beyond that, unwashed peppers will keep in the fridge for 7 to 10 days. Options for using red peppers are limited only by your creativity: Add finely chopped pepper to soups, stews and tuna or chicken salad; toss sliced pepper into stir-fries and green salads; dip slices into hummus or low-fat ranch dressing for a healthful snack or appetizer.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bell peppers come in a palette of colors—green, yellow, orange, red—and the difference in their hue is, for the most part, a matter of maturity. Crunchy green peppers are harvested before they are fully ripe. When left on the vine, they usually turn yellow-orange and then red. Since red peppers spend more time on the vine before being picked, they're sweeter, have a higher nutritional content and are more expensive.

3X

The vitamin C
of an orange

74%

Of recommended daily
intake of vitamin A
in one pepper

70°F

Temperature
needed for seeds to
germinate

2.5

Grams of fiber
in one pepper
(chopped, raw)



Community Calendar

Unless otherwise noted, all programs are free, held at Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus (600 River Avenue, Lakewood) and require advance registration by calling 888-724-7123.

Tai Chi for Beginners (Better Health Members ONLY)

Thursdays, through Jan. 31, 1 to 2 p.m.

Get a head start on your “Healthy New Year” with Tai Chi! Free for Better Health Members who are new to Tai Chi. Led by expert instructor Kit Lau, Tai Chi can improve balance, coordination and lower body strength. 3rd Floor Conference Room.

All Levels Yoga: New & Returning Students (Better Health Members ONLY)

Fridays, through Dec. 28, Noon to 1 p.m.

This free class is for Better Health Members who are brand new to yoga. Led by Nicole Franchino, E-RYT, the class will move slowly, focusing on all of the yoga basics. Wear comfortable clothing and bring a yoga mat. Class will not be held on Fri, Nov. 23. 3rd Floor Conference Room.

Diabetes Self-Management Series

Thursdays, Dec. 6, 13, 20, and 27, 10 a.m. to Noon

Fee-based. (The course will be billed to Medicare or your insurance carrier.) Learn how to manage your diabetes by attending this four-session diabetes education program focusing on diet, nutrition, glucose monitoring, medications, meal plans, prevention and treatment of diabetes complications, dining out and benefits of exercise. The program is taught by a registered dietitian/certified diabetes educator. A doctor's prescription is required. Held on third floor of MMCSC. For information and to register for classes, call 732-923-5025.

From Saint to Santa: A Better Health Members ONLY Event

Fri, Dec. 7, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Through centuries of art, much of it now in East Coast museums,

we'll explore how a Turkish bishop evolved into one of Christianity's most beloved saints. Then, in American artwork, we'll see Nicholas change again—into Santa Claus. Presented by Michael Norris, Ph.D., art historian and former museum educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Light fare will be served. Conference Room ABC.

West Africa on the East Coast Tue, Feb. 19, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Explore the cultural tapestry of West Africa through centuries of art from within its 18 present-day countries. Included will be sculpture, beadwork, metalwork and ivories from local museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Princeton University Art Museum and the Newark Museum. Presented by Michael Norris, Ph.D., art historian and former museum educator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Conference Room ABC.

THIS IS WHAT IMPACT LOOKS LIKE



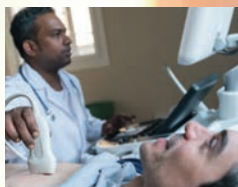
A **grateful patient** paying it forward by starting a healthcare education scholarship in honor of those who gave him care



Giving cancer patients access to the best diagnostic tools and treatments, **close to home**



Improving the **health** and well-being for seniors by supplying free membership to our Better Health Program



Keeping **hearts beating** by purchasing state-of-the-art technology that helps doctors diagnose heart conditions earlier



Providing **seniors** with the **specialized care** they need by funding renovations and equipment to enhance patient comfort and ensure safety

Investment in Monmouth Medical Center Southern Campus is investment in the health of our community.

We cannot thank you enough.

Philanthropy at work

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