

Family Caregiver Newsletter

Newsletter Date January 2015

The Powerful Caregiver

This column is named after the class "Powerful Tools for Caregivers," a six-session workshop on helping caregiving families thrive (not just survive). It is offered in Racine County several times a year.

Germs: Those Little Things That Get Us Down

Ellen cares for her husband Jack. Last winter was terrible for them. Jack caught a cold and then developed pneumonia. He was in the hospital for a week, and Ellen, after driving through snow and ice each day and getting precious little sleep, ended up with "walking pneumonia" herself. It was awful being sick and exhausted and cooped up. Jack has not regained his former strength. Ellen wonders how they can avoid such a predicament again. There may be some helpful hints below.

During the winter months, caregivers and those you care for are prone to infectious conditions. The weather is cold and damp; people tend to get less exercise and fresh air; fresh foods are more expensive; and it's difficult to

drink enough water when indoor air is so dry. Stress levels soar as we deal with snow, cold and isolation. Neglect of healthy habits and effects of stress hormones on a person's immune system are marks of an ideal "host" to a germ!

Germs are microscopic organisms that cause disease (bacteria, viruses, yeast molds and fungi). A host is the body

where a germ takes up residence. Most germs consist of just one cell, and each one can quickly and easily double itself. Germs have nothing to do but eat and replicate themselves day and night. This takes place in our bodies much more than we might imagine! In healthy circumstances our body defenses can conquer the



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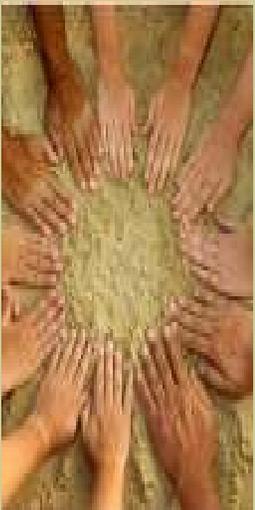
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invaders; however, when those defenses are impaired, germs invade body tissues, causing disease.

Germs enter the human host through normal body openings and breaks in the skin. The mouth and respiratory tract are often open doors for these winter rascals. In their quest to find new hosts, germs have some efficient but unknowing allies: hands; food and beverages; body fluids (coughs, sneezes, saliva, elimination, etc.); surfaces e.g. appliances, counter tops or dirty laundry; doctors' office waiting rooms; and, bless their hearts, children! Here are some "coats of armor" for you and the person who needs your care:

- **Good health habits** – nutritious meals, plenty of water, good rest and sleep, exercise (even one minute at a time!), and meaningful interaction with people.
- **Intact Skin** – our first defense against infection. Cover cracks and open sores. Prevent pressure areas on a person with compromised mobility by making sure skin surfaces are clean and dry and by changing position often to prevent pressure. Cover any open sores, and use lotion after hand washing.
- **Immunizations** – such as

those for flu, shingles, and certain types of pneumonia. These introduce the immune system to a tiny dose of certain germs, triggering the production of "designer cells" to fight those organisms. Immunization is recommended for people at high risk for infectious conditions, and that includes you and the person you care for!

- **Hand Hygiene:** Probably the strongest armor we have is knowing how to remove germs from human hands! Please look over the enclosed flyer that describes the most effective ways to send those germs into oblivion. Wearing exam gloves during cares cuts down on the risk, but does not replace good hand washing.
- **A safe, effective cleaning solution** – one teaspoon of bleach to one gallon of water is a simple, inexpensive solution. **Important Note:** It should be used within 24 hours of mixing.
- **Antibiotics properly prescribed and used** -When bacterial infection does occur, an antibiotic is often needed to assist the body's defense system. It's important to understand some particulars about an antibiotic: whether or not it should be taken with food; foods to avoid while

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taking it; what times of day it should be taken; and how the antibiotic, along with extra rest and fluids, can usually put a person on the road to recovery in a few days.

There may be some bumps in that road, though. Antibiotics may deplete the digestive system of the “good bacteria” that aid normal digestion, and diarrhea may result. Probiotics help replace the “good bacteria,” and are found in over-the-counter medications and some foods e.g. yogurt with special cultures added. Ask the doctor, pharmacist, or a

nutritionist what is best for you.

Another complication is when an invading organism mutates and becomes immune to the antibiotic. This is especially a risk if the medication is not taken exactly as directed. The ill person may not get better or may take a turn for the worse. Your health care provider needs to be kept informed, so necessary changes can be made.

Germs!! So small that a multitude can fit on the head of a pin, but my, what gigantic effects they can have on humans!



*May I have...
Serenity to
accept the things
I cannot change,
Courage to
change the things
I can, and
Wisdom to know
the difference.*

Community Resources

This column highlights some of the many resources in our community. For more, see the Community Resource Directory available from the Aging and Disability Resource Center (262-833-8777) or www.adrc.racineco.com.

Upcoming Classes for Caregivers and others

Please note there may be additions or changes.

Living Well

Sealed Air YMCA
Feb 5th – March 12th
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Aurora Wellness Center, Burlington
March 25th – April 29th
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Stepping On

Aurora Wellness Center, Burlington
June 30th – Aug 11th
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Sealed Air YMCA
Sept. 3rd – Oct. 15th
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Powerful Tools for Caregivers

Aurora Wellness Center,
Burlington
April 13th – May 18th
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Mark your calendar and call Ruth with questions or to find out how to register- 262-833-8762





14200 Washington Ave
Sturtevant, WI 53177

Caregiver Opportunities

Need help with information about a disease or condition?

You can contact the ADRC, but you can also contact one of the non-profit Associations or Foundations that assist patients with those conditions with info and other resources. See the Community Resource Directory beginning on page 29. A few examples:

- Alzheimer's Association
800-272-3900
- American Diabetes Association
800-342-2383
- Wisconsin Parkinson's Assoc.
800-972-5455



Support Groups for Family Caregivers

First Friday *10:00 -11:30

January 2nd

Alzheimer's Association Group

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer's and other Dementias

***NEW Time/Location this Month Only: 14200 Washington Ave**

First Friday 12 Noon-1pm "Caregiver Connection"

Telephone Group

January 2nd

Call 262-833-8762 to pre-register

Second Tuesday 1:30-3:00 pm

January 13th

Yorkville United Methodist Church

17645 Old Yorkville Rd. (3 Miles West of I-94, Just N of Highway 20)

Second Saturday 10:30 am-12 Noon

January 10th

Atonement Lutheran Church

2915 Wright Ave

Park and enter in back of building (on South side)

Third Wednesday 1:30-3:00 pm

January 21st

Burlington Senior Center, Eppers Room

209 N Main St

Third Thursday 6:00-7:30 pm

January 15th

Alzheimer's Association Group

For Families Dealing with Alzheimer's and other Dementias

Atonement Lutheran Church, 2915 Wright Ave

Park and enter in back of building (on South side)