

ABC Home Healthcare
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ABC in Action, Supporting the Community

ABC Sponsors Benefit Performance to Support MVES Gap Fund

We are pleased to be sponsoring the upcoming musical *And Now Ladies and Gentlemen, Miss Judy Garland* which will be held at the Stoneham Theatre on June 6th. All net proceeds from the event will go toward MVES's Gap Fund. To learn more about The Gap Fund or the benefit performance, please call MVES Director of Development Jenny Vanasse at 781-324-7705 ext. 175.

A Trio of Team In-Service Training Sessions

ABC provides regular ongoing In-service training to all staff. Our team recently received training on Patient Safety at Home, Emotional Losses, and Hearing Disorders. These are three important topics that our staff and clients face on a regular basis. The program highlights are noted below.

This winter was a challenge for us all, but even more so for the elderly. On January 21st we learned about patient safety at home during the winter months. The ABC team learned what they could do to prepare their clients how they could teach them to keep themselves safe at home during the cold winter months. See page 5 for additional information on home safety.

On February 24th Louise Enoch, PhD, LICSW, from Jewish Family & Children Services presented a program on Emotional

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the ABCs of Homecare

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Welcome to the Spring issue of the ABCs of Homecare.

May is National Stroke Awareness Month and we've dedicated much of this issue to supporting the National Stroke Associations efforts. It's hard to believe that over 780,000 people suffer a stroke each year. But more importantly, up to 80% of all strokes can be prevented! Be sure to check out the 10 tips to help prevent a stroke on page 3. Inside you'll also find details not only on stroke and stroke prevention, but also recovery resources. It was great to learn that many stroke survivors are regaining the use of limbs and skills they feared were lost for good.

After our long, cold winter it seemed the warmer weather might never arrive. But with the summer just around the corner we want to be sure you stay safe and take extra care of yourself. It's more difficult to stay cool as we get older. To help, we've pulled together some ways to stay cool when the weather heats up along with heat related illnesses to consider.

We appreciate having you as a reader and want to help keep you safe in your home. That's why we've finished this issue with simple tips to protect you and your loved ones in your home. Following some simple changes will help ensure you and your loved ones are safe for years to come.

With all good wishes for a safe and wonderful summer,

Jeannette Sheehan, MSRN
 Board Certified Family Nurse Practitioner
 President and CEO

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Losses **ABC** in Action

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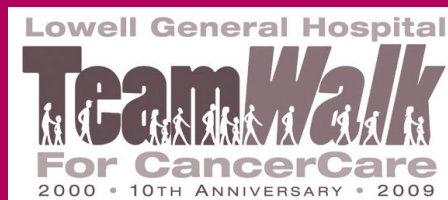
in the Elderly and Understanding Depression. The JF&CS developed this program specifically for caregivers of seniors. We learned about depression, how to detect it and how to talk with our clients.

We became more aware of the symptoms of depression, how to differentiate it from fatigue and when to reach out for additional support.

Hearing loss is common in the aging population and it can often be embarrassing and frustrating for seniors. On March 19th, Sue Santosuosso, MassEDP Outreach Manager from Verizon educated us on Hearing Disorders and Communication Devices. We learned about the assistance special communication devices can provide to clients in need. We were introduced to telephones Verizon can provide for the hearing impaired as well as programs and other services available to help those with hearing loss.

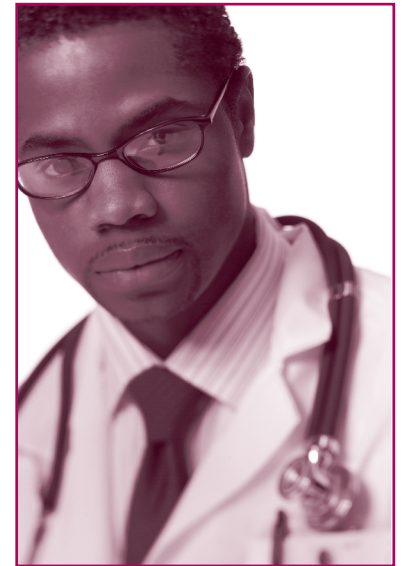
ABC Sponsors Team Smile in the Lowell General Cure for Cancer Walk

We are pleased to sponsor Team Smile on behalf of Maureen Boenis, cancer survivor. The 6-Mile walk benefits current and future cancer patients at Lowell General Hospital.



STOP Stroke • Act F.A.S.T. • Spread HOPE

May is National Stroke Awareness Month and National Stroke Association is urging you to join us in our efforts to raise awareness about the full continuum of stroke. By managing stroke risk factors, better understanding of stroke symptom recognition and response it will greatly improve the quality of life during stroke recovery for millions of stroke survivors in the United States.



STOP Stroke

Every year more than 780,000 people suffer a stroke. Five to 14 percent of those people will have an additional stroke within one year. But the good news is up to 80 percent of all strokes can be prevented! High blood pressure is the number one cause of stroke. Make sure to have yours checked on a regular basis. In addition to high blood pressure, there are many other controllable factors that can contribute to and increase your risk for stroke including high cholesterol, transient ischemic attacks (TIA) or mini-strokes, diabetes, smoking, alcohol consumption, obesity and heart diseases such as atrial fibrillation. Ask your doctor for tips on managing your current health conditions to reduce your risk for stroke or visit www.stroke.org/PREVENT for more information.

Act F.A.S.T.

Despite being the third leading cause of death and the leading cause of adult disability in this country, fewer than one in five Americans can recognize a symptom of a stroke. A stroke, or “brain attack,” occurs when blood and oxygen flow to the brain is interrupted by a blood clot or a broken blood vessel. This kills brain cells in the immediate area, often causing physical and emotional disabilities including speech problems, memory loss and paralysis. Acting F.A.S.T. is key to receiving proper treatment. It is important for people to be able to recognize the symptoms of stroke and immediately seek emergency medical attention upon symptom recognition. For many stroke victims, emergency treatment with a clot-buster drug called t-PA can help minimize or completely eliminate these disabilities, but it must be given within 3 hours of the onset of symptoms. Recognizing stroke symptoms can be easy if you remember to think F.A.S.T.

F ace	Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
A rms	Ask the person to raise both arms evenly. Does one arm drift downward?
S peech	Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence. Are the words slurred or mixed up?
T ime	If the person shows any of these symptoms, time is important. Call 911 immediately. Brain cells are dying.

STOP Stroke continued

Studies show that stroke patients who arrive at the hospital by ambulance receive quicker treatment than those who arrive by their own means. But where are the best hospitals to go to for the treatment of stroke? Mass General Hospital in Boston is one of the numerous hospitals across the country that have been certified as stroke centers, and specialize in the treatment of stroke. This designation goes to hospitals that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care, and whose quality of care is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of stroke patients. To find a stroke center in your area please visit www.stroke.org and click on the emergency stroke center locations.

Spread HOPE

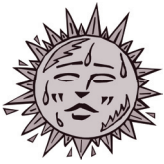
For the six million stroke survivors living in America, many are not aware that recovery from a stroke can be a lifelong journey. In fact, five, ten or even twenty years post-stroke, many stroke survivors are regaining the use of limbs and acquiring skills they thought were lost forever. For more information about life after stroke, visit www.stroke.org/HOPE. National Stroke Association is committed to reducing the incidence and impact of stroke through creative educational programs. By educating people about stroke, we can save lives and preserve quality of life. Working together we can reduce the incidence and impact of stroke. For more information on stroke and stroke prevention, call 1-800-STROKES or visit www.stroke.org



Source: National Stroke Association

National Stroke Association's Stroke Prevention Guidelines

- 1 Know your blood pressure. If it is elevated, work with your doctor to keep it under control.** High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke. Have your blood pressure checked at least once each year – more often if you have a history of high blood pressure or are taking medication.
- 2 Find out if you have atrial fibrillation (AF).** If you have AF, work with your doctor to manage it. Atrial fibrillation can cause blood to collect in the chambers of your heart. This blood can form clots and cause a stroke. Your doctor can detect AF by carefully checking your pulse.
- 3 If you smoke, stop.** Smoking doubles the risk for stroke. If you stop smoking today, your risk for stroke will begin to decrease.
- 4 If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.** Having one drink each day may lower your risk for stroke (provided that there is no other medical reason you should avoid alcohol). Remember that alcohol is a drug - it can interact with other drugs you are taking, and alcohol is harmful if taken in large doses. If you don't drink, don't start.
- 5 Know your cholesterol number.** If it is high, work with your doctor to control it. Lowering your cholesterol may reduce your risk for stroke. High cholesterol can also indirectly increase stroke risk by putting you at greater risk of heart disease - an important stroke risk factor. Often times, high cholesterol can be controlled with diet and exercise; some individuals may require medication.
- 6 Control your diabetes. If you are diabetic, follow your doctor's recommendations carefully.** Having diabetes puts you at an increased risk for stroke. Your doctor can prescribe a nutrition program, lifestyle changes and medicine that can help control your diabetes.
- 7 Include exercise in the activities you enjoy in your daily routine.** A brisk walk, swim or other exercise activity for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve your health in many ways, and may reduce your risk for stroke.
- 8 Enjoy a lower sodium (salt), lower fat diet.** By cutting down on sodium and fat in your diet, you may be able to lower your blood pressure and, most importantly, lower your risk for stroke.
- 9 Ask your doctor if you have circulation problems.** If so, work with your doctor to control them. Fatty deposits can block the arteries which carry blood from your heart to your brain. Sickle cell disease, severe anemia, or other diseases can cause stroke if left untreated.
- 10 If you have any stroke symptoms, seek immediate medical attention.**



Hot Weather Safety Tips for Older Adults

Believe it or not, the summer months are right around the corner. Here is some helpful information to keep you and your family safe during this season. Did you know approximately 200 Americans die of health problems caused by high heat and humidity every year? And most of them are 50 or older. Hot weather is more likely to cause health problems in older adults than in younger ones. This is due to the fact that some of the physical changes that happen as we age making it more difficult for older adults to cool down than younger ones. Just as important, older people may not feel hot when the temperature is dangerously high. They are also less likely to feel thirsty, even when they are nearly dehydrated, meaning their bodies have lost dangerous amounts of water. Heart disease, diabetes and some other diseases that are common among older adults can increase the likelihood that they'll have problems when it's hot. Certain drugs, including allergy and sinus medications, water pills, and drugs for treating depression and nerve problems also compound this problem.

Staying Safe When It's Hot Outside

Temperatures don't have to be that high to cause health problems in older adults. When temperatures are in the low 90's it can be very dangerous for older people. Because older adults may not feel hot, even when it's dangerously warm, they and the people who care for them should monitor the temperature often during the summer.

When temperatures hit 90 degrees Fahrenheit, caregivers should watch on older adults closely, and ensure they abide by the following recommendations:

- Turn on the air conditioner or go where it's air-conditioned, fans are not enough to keep cool. "Cool locations" include the shopping mall, grocery store, senior center, movie theatre, museum, or library. (Fans aren't enough.)
- Do not walk long distances, lift heavy objects, or do other strenuous things.
- Drink lots of water and other clear liquids that don't contain alcohol or caffeine as these can "dry you out."
- If your urine is a light yellow color, you're drinking enough water. If it's darker yellow, you need to drink more!
- Take cool showers, baths, or sponge baths.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. Clothes made of light-weight cotton are a great choice.
- Wear hats and stay out of the sun.

To the right is a list of health problems caused by heat, and what you need to know about each of them.

How to Spot and Treat Health Problems Caused by Heat

It's important to recognize when hot weather is making you sick, and to get help.

Dehydration

What it is: A loss of water in your body; this can be deadly.

Warning signs: Weakness, headache, muscle cramps, dizziness, confusion, and passing out.

What to do: Call your doctor or 911. Meanwhile, drink plenty of water and, if possible, "sports drinks" such as Gatorade, which contain important salts called "electrolytes" that your body loses when you're dehydrated.

Heat stroke

What it is: A very dangerous rise in your body temperature; it can also be deadly.

Warning signs: A body temperature of 103° or higher; red, hot and dry skin; a fast pulse; headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting, confusion, and passing out.

What to do: Call 911 immediately. Move to a cool, shady place, take off or loosen heavy clothes, drink water or drinks such as Gatorade. If possible, douse yourself with cool water, or use cold, wet compresses to help lower your body temperature.

Heat exhaustion

What it is: Illness caused by too much heat and dehydration

Warning signs: Heavy sweating or no sweating, muscle cramps, tiredness, weakness, paleness, cold or clammy skin, dizziness, headache, nausea or vomiting, and fainting.

What to do: Without delay, move to a cool, shady place, and drink plenty of cool fluids, such as water, or drinks such as Gatorade. If you don't feel better quickly, call 911.

Heat syncope

What it is: Fainting caused by high temperatures

Warning signs: Dizziness or fainting.

What to do: Lie down and put your feet up, and drink plenty of water and cool fluids such as Gatorade.

ABC's Hospital Sitter Program

Have you ever felt that you were not getting enough attention? Are you afraid to be alone outside of your home? While you're in the hospital you'll be receiving medical care from the hospital staff. But the medical teams often have many patients to care for. Having a private sitter by your side will not only provide companionship making your stay safer and more pleasant, but also ensures you receive the one-to-one care you need, when you need it, by being proactive on your behalf.



Benefits of Private Sitters:

- Provides your loved one with a dedicated caregiver keeping them safer and ensuring they have their needs met quickly.
- Your sitter serves as a patient advocate, ensuring they get the services they need, when they want or need it.
- Companionship often improves the outcome of the patient's illness.
- Dedicated caregivers reduce the risk of infection and falls.

Why Choose an ABC Home Healthcare Sitter:

- ABC sitters are certified Home Health Aides and/or Certified Nursing Assistants
- ABC sitters are trained in accordance with Hospital policies and requirements
- ABC services are tailored to the needs of the patient
- ABC sitters are present to:
 - ◆ Ensure patient is comfortable and safe
 - ◆ Give baths and assist with personal care
 - ◆ Assist patient to bathroom
 - ◆ Monitor intake and output
 - ◆ Assist with patient transfers
 - ◆ Help with ambulation, range of motion and exercises
 - ◆ Change linens
 - ◆ Provide skin care and turn patient to reduce risk of skin breakdown
 - ◆ Prevent patient from pulling out tubes and/or disconnecting oxygen
 - ◆ Keep patient from falling out of bed
 - ◆ Keep patient's area neat and clean
 - ◆ Feed the patient
 - ◆ Keep notes for family
 - ◆ Report patient status to the nurse at the end of shift
 - ◆ Ensure all visitors follow Infection Control procedures

Give your loved one the reassurance of a professional, dedicated to their needs at all times. Call us at ABC Home Healthcare at 781-245-1880 or online at abchhp.com/hospitalsitters for more information regarding this program.

Healthcare Resources on the Web

The internet is a great tool to get the information you need, when you need it. Below are two more newly launched websites that will help you get answers to your healthcare questions and more.

MyHealthcareOptions:

The Massachusetts Health Care Quality and Cost Council (MHCQCC) recently launched MyHealthCareOptions: a website dedicated to providing Massachusetts' consumers, health care providers, health plans, employers, and policy-makers with comparative health care cost, quality, and related information. The website contains reliable, accurate and updated cost information and quality ratings on every hospital in the state, searchable by location or procedure. By providing information about hospitals across the Commonwealth, the site not only helps the consumer learn more about a facility and related costs to their health plan, but can also help them learn more about a procedure - empowering them to have a two-way dialogue with their physician or care provider.

Established in 2006, the MHQCC's mission is to develop and implement health care quality improvement goals that are intended to lower or contain the growth of health care costs while improving the quality of care. This website is a key factor in achieving that mission. See it for yourself at <http://hcqcc.hcf.state.ma.us/>

AskABCHomeCare.com

Do you have a home healthcare question? Jeannette Sheehan, ABC's CEO and a life long home health care professional, is now available online to answer your healthcare related questions and provide advice at www.askabhomecare.com. Log onto www.askabhomecare.com and submit your questions to Jeannette Sheehan, ABC Home Healthcare's CEO, and she will respond by email with a thoughtful response tailored to your particular concerns.

Simple Tips to Protect You in Your Home

There are minor changes everyone can make in your home to ensure it's safer for you and your family.

- Improve lighting throughout your home. Add night-lights in bedrooms, bathrooms and hallways.
- Remove tripping hazards such as throw rugs and clutter in walkways.
- In the bathroom, use non-slip mats on the bathtub/shower floors and non-skid bath mats outside the shower/tub. Install grab bars next to the toilet and in the tub or shower.
- Follow the law and install at least one smoke alarm in your home and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors on every level.
- Change your smoke alarm batteries twice a year when you change your clocks.
- Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen away from the stove.
- Have a fire escape plan and practice it.

Protect your home

- Have a door viewer on your exterior doors.
- Keep doors and windows locked at all times.

- Put a couple of lights on timers and leave a radio on to give a lived-in impression at all times.
- Make sure a friend or trusted neighbor has a key to your house.
- Keep emergency numbers by your telephone and in your wallet.

Medication Safety

- Complete a personal medication record and keep it with you at all times, including allergies and medical conditions.
- Be sure you understand the reason you are taking each medication.
- Keep your medication in clearly labeled bottles, and store them as recommended.
- Discard medications after they expire.
- Take medications as directed by your doctor. For example, do not stop taking antibiotics once you are feeling better...finish them all!

These simple changes will make it safer for you and your loved ones for years to come.

ABC Home Healthcare • Committed to Life at Home • www.abchhp.com



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**We want to hear from you.
Is there a topic you want
to know more about?
Call or email us.
Your topic may be a
feature in our next
ABCs of Homecare!**