

An Anthology of
Timely Tidbits, Personal Stories, and Fascinating Factoids for

Savvy Jersey Seniors



Advice, Humor, and Miscellaneous Words of "Wisdom"
For & About Seniors

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Welcome!

In this latest edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for May and June of 2023, we present the third of three promised follow-ups on the hobby of metal detecting from our first issue of the year. And, of course, our usual potpourri of information that we feel might make a difference to our senior friends across South Jersey.

By the way, please don't forget that we always welcome your ideas for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. As we've noted previously, we're especially interested in the avocations and hobbies of our readers.

In that vein, we really want to hear about the volunteer efforts that seniors across South Jersey are making on behalf of the literally thousands of non-profit organizations that serve our region. Just drop us a note at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

Grip Strength Can Be Indicator of Overall Health

Grip strength is a lesser-known indicator of your overall health. A new study indicates that doctors should also be assessing their patient's grip strength.



Grip strength is an excellent measure of a person's overall muscular strength. It is measured with a hand dynamometer—a device which measures the force used to squeeze two handles together.

A multi-country study showed that those with an 11-pound decline in grip strength had a 17 percent higher chance of dying from a heart attack or stroke across a 4-year period.

This is not an example of causation however, it's an example of a strong correlation.

The correlation is that a stronger grip is found in people with more muscle mass. And those with higher muscle mass as a percentage of their weight usually exercise more and have overall better health.

Grip strength has also been found to correlate to mental health. A study showed a link between low grip strength and depression.

Strong Neighborhood Connections Have Health Benefits

Strong neighborhood connections reduced the negative impact of living alone on the death rates of older Chinese Americans, according to Rutgers researchers.

The study examined if neighborhood cohesion in Chinese Americans living in the greater Chicago area would reduce the impact of living alone on early death.

"Older Chinese Americans who lived by themselves in neighborhoods with low cohesion were much more likely to die earlier than those who lived by themselves in neighborhoods with strong cohesion," said Yanping Jiang, author of the study.



In the United States, about 27 percent of people ages 60 and older live alone, according to Pew Research Center. Living alone has been found to be associated with various poor health outcomes, such as depression, cardiovascular disease, dementia, poor biological health and premature death.

Researchers found participants who lived alone and reported low interaction or connection with their neighbors had a 48.5 percent increased risk of death than their peers living with others. Participants who lived alone and reported strong cohesion with their neighborhood had a similar risk of death compared to those living with others.



Keys To Aging Optimally?

No Real Surprises...

What are the keys to successful or optimal aging?

A new study found that those who were female, married, physically active, and not obese and those who had never smoked, had higher incomes, and who did not have insomnia, heart disease or arthritis, were more likely to maintain excellent health across the study period.

They were less likely to develop disabling cognitive, physical, or emotional problems.

As a baseline, the researchers selected participants who were in excellent health at the start of the three-year study. Older adults who were obese were less likely to maintain good health in later life.

Compared to older adults who were obese, those who had a normal weight were 24 percent more likely to age optimally.

Income was also an important factor. Only about half of those below the poverty line aged optimally compared to three-quarters of those living above the poverty line.



Prunes May Help Women Maintain Bone Density

About 10 million adults over the age of 50 in the United States have osteoporosis. Women are four times more likely than men to experience the condition.



This is partly due to a decline in estrogen levels at the onset of menopause that results in the loss of bone density.

New research led by Penn State shows that eating prunes on a daily basis may help women preserve bone density.

Researchers evaluated the bone density of 235 postmenopausal women, some of whom were assigned to eat five or six prunes each day for a year. The researchers measured the women's bone mineral density, bone geometry, and estimated bone strength and found evidence that prunes may be beneficial. The findings indicate that prune consumption preserves bone mass density and strength at weight-bearing sites in the hip.

Researchers evaluated the bone density of 235 postmenopausal women, some of whom were

Optimism Linked To Increased Longevity

When you think about the future, do you expect good or bad things to happen?

If you weigh in on the good side, you're an optimist. And that has positive implications for your health in later life. Multiple studies show a strong association between higher levels of optimism and a reduced risk of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and cognitive impairment. Several studies have also linked optimism with greater longevity.



Why would optimism make such a difference? Experts advance various explanations...people who are optimistic cope better with the challenges of daily life and are less likely to experience stress than people with less positive attitudes. They're more likely to eat well and exercise. They also often have stronger networks of family and friends who can provide assistance.

Optimists tend to engage more effectively in problem-solving strategies and to be better at regulating their emotions.



Drug Overdoses By Seniors Have Tripled Since 2000

Growing numbers of older Americans are dying from drug overdoses. That's the tragic takeaway from a report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

More than 5,000 people aged 65 and older in the United States died of a drug overdose in 2020. This number has tripled since 2000.

Abuse of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids has had a big impact on the older population as

well as younger folks, said study author Ellen Kramarow. Death rates from these drugs increased by 53 percent from 2019 to 2020 among people aged 65 and older.

The study also highlighted a racial gap in deaths from drug overdoses among older adults. Drug overdose death rates among 65-year-olds are highest among Black people with one exception: white women aged 75 and older have the highest death rates from drug overdose.

Shingles Associated With Higher Risk of Stroke

A new study by investigators from Brigham and Women's Hospital demonstrates that shingles, also known as herpes zoster, is associated with an almost 30 percent higher long-term risk of a major cardiovascular event such a stroke or heart attack.

"Given the growing number of Americans at risk for this painful and often disabling disease and the availability of an effective vaccine, shingles vaccination could provide a valuable opportunity to reduce the burden of shingles and reduce the risk of subsequent cardiovascular complications," said Sharon Curhan, M.D.





Shingles often causes a painful rash and can occur anywhere on the head or body. Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox.

After a person has chickenpox, the virus stays in their body for the rest of their life. Years and even decades later, the virus may reactivate as shingles. Almost all individuals aged 50 years and older in the US have been infected with the chicken pox virus and are therefore at risk for shingles.

Some Seniors Resists Going Cashless

While there is a growing movement to online services and a cashless society, some seniors are finding it difficult to navigate this new economic environment.

There is a continuing trend to downsize bank branches, reduce staff ,and completely pull out of some markets that banks feel are underperforming.

Small urban communities have been hit the hardest, pushing more of their customers toward a digital format designed to make it more cost efficient for the bank and hopefully easier for the consumer.

Many retirees have embraced this new era with enthusiasm and have quickly adopted a new age of texting, banking and shopping online to reduce time and seize the growing trend toward technology.



So why are some seniors still resisting?

Sometimes affordability, availability, lack of instruction or confidence, and even the perceived need seems to account for the decision to avoid technology. Evolving to a new digital world can be daunting. Adapting to change is always difficult. Start slowly and take your time to learn. Join a computer class or have one of your children or grandchildren teach you about the new technology. Remember that there are many benefits to learning new things and you should never let your age define you.



Sleeping With Back Pain

Getting a good night's sleep can be tough with back pain.

It's a vicious cycle. You need sleep to heal, but your back hurts so you can't sleep, so you can't heal, so your back still hurts and you can't sleep.

If sleeping well is that important to healing back pain, how do you do it?

Here's how to sleep when your back hurts.

Keep in mind the bottom line: You should sleep in whatever position helps you to rest, but also allow for modifications.

The key to good sleep posture is alignment—keeping your ears, shoulders and hips in a straight line (more or less).

There will naturally be gaps between spaces on your body and the mattress. These spaces can strain your back or neck muscles, so you should use pillows to fill in these gaps and reduce the stress.

The best sleeping position for lower back pain is widely considered to be on your back. This position distributes the weight along the entire spine. Placing a pillow under your knees will help to maintain the natural curve of the spine.

For those who sleep on their side, placing a firm pillow between the knees helps to maintain the natural alignment of the hips, pelvis and spine.

However, if you are a side sleeper, try to alternate sides. This will help to avoid muscle imbalance and perhaps even scoliosis. In addition, side sleeping in a curled-up fetal position may help those with herniated disc pain.



Binge Drinking Among Seniors Is On The Rise

Binge drinking means consuming a great deal of alcohol in a short period of time.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking in more technical terms. It's a pattern of drinking that brings your blood alcohol concentration to 0.08 percent or higher.

For a typical man, that means five or more drinks in two hours. For a woman, it's about four drinks in two hours. That amount of alcohol leads to impaired judgment, impulse control, and motor coordination.

Binge drinking is most common among adults ages 18 to 34 and is nearly twice as common among men as it is among women. However, binge drinking is on the rise with both women and men.



Are Processed Foods Getting A Bad Rap? Sometimes...

Sure, salty chips and sugary cereals aren't a great source of nutrients; in fact, more than 70 percent of the sodium in the typical American diet comes from processed, packaged and restaurant foods, according to the American Heart Association.

And, as AARP pointed out in a recent report, Americans certainly love their processed foods. AARP cited a recent study by the NYU School of Global Public Health found that ultra-processed

food consumption has risen across nearly every segment of the U.S. population over the past two decades and may be a big contributor to the obesity epidemic.

There are four recognized levels of processed foods, with ultra-processed foods being linked to health problems, according to the NYU study.

1. Minimally processed foods: Whole foods, such as vegetables, fruits, grains, meat and dairy.
2. Processed culinary ingredients: Things such as olive oil, butter, sugar and salt.
3. Processed foods: Including cheese, canned fish and canned beans
4. Ultra-processed foods: Frozen pizza, soda, fast food, sweets, salty snacks, canned soup and most breakfast cereals

According to a report this year from the National Poll on Healthy Aging at the University of Michigan, about 13 percent of people ages 50 to 80—especially women and older adults who are lonely, overweight or in fair or poor health—are actually addicted to processed foods.

That's a concern because studies have linked highly processed foods to a greater overall risk of cancer (especially brain and ovarian cancer), dementia, and death from heart disease.



But, says AARP, picking processed foods that are healthy is simpler than it seems. Here's what you should look for.

- Ingredients your grandmother would recognize.
- Ingredients you'd have in your own pantry (so no emulsifiers, colorants, high-fructose corn syrup, foaming agents and the like).
- Foods you could make yourself (Cheese curls? Not).
- Foods with the fewest ingredients (A can of salmon is just ... salmon)



But there are plenty of processed options that are healthy. For example, “the milk you drink and the baby carrots you snack on are both processed foods,” says Christine Rosenbloom, a registered dietitian and coauthor of *Food & Fitness After 50*.

“Processing helps keep foods safe and affordable and on our shelves a little longer.” It also makes food more convenient — think, frozen veggies and canned beans.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics places processed foods on a continuum, explains Nancy Farrell, a spokesperson for the organization.

There are foods that are minimally processed (bagged spinach, roasted nuts); those that are processed at their peak (canned tomatoes, tuna, frozen fruit); foods with added flavors (yogurt, salad dressings); foods that are heavily processed (crackers, deli meat); and ultra-processed foods (soft drinks, packaged cookies, frozen pizza).

The key is keeping this spectrum in mind when making your food choices. The next time you’re at the grocery store, keep an eye out for these good-for-you processed foods.

1. Canned beans
2. Dairy or soy milk
3. Greek yogurt
4. Packaged salads or precut veggies
5. Cereal
6. Frozen or canned fish
7. Nuts, seeds and nut butters
8. Tofu
9. Frozen fruits and vegetables
10. Precooked lentils
11. whole-grain brown rice
12. Chickpea pastas
13. Rotisserie chicken
14. Hummus

Honorable mentions include protein-rich cottage cheese; olive oil (a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet); tomato sauce (make sure it’s low in sugar and salt); zero-calorie flavored waters; pickles (a low-cal snack food); fiber- and probiotic-rich sauerkraut; dried fruit for snacking.





New Diabetes Guidelines Increase Weight Loss Recommendations

The American Diabetes Association has released new standards of care to reflect changes in technology, improved medications, and a deeper understanding of the social factors that contribute to disease and diabetes control.

In addition to changes in standards for weight control, blood pressure and cholesterol management, the revisions are also intended to address racial disparities in care, said El Sayed, M.D.

The new guidelines recommend losing 15 percent of body weight, as opposed to the previously recommended 5 percent.

In line with the American College of Cardiology, the new guidelines include a lower target for blood pressure of less than 130 over 80. For LDL cholesterol, the bad kind, the new guideline calls for a measurement of 70 for people without heart disease (down from 100) and 55 instead of 70 for those with established heart disease. The guidelines also call for more aggressive treatment to prevent the progression of chronic kidney disease.

Golf: A Healthy Exercise For Seniors That Beats Walking

Want to stay healthy well into your golden years? Grab a bag of clubs and hit the green, new research suggests.

Golfing beat walking or even Nordic walking (a full-body workout that consists of walking using specialized poles) when it came to improving several key measures of heart health in the small study.

"The results of this study are meant to encourage older adults to spend more time on the golf course and play by walking," said study author Julia Kettinen, a doctoral researcher at the University of Eastern Finland.



"Golf is a great way to exercise, as it motivates individuals to move, often without even realizing the distance they've walked during the game."

Golf is a lower-intensity exercise than Nordic walking and walking, but an 18-hole golf game lasts around four hours, and players may walk up to six miles during a game. As a result,

golfers burn more calories, which has a greater effect on cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

“Playing golf by walking is a form of proper health exercise and can be recommended for healthy older adults as a means to prevent cardiovascular diseases and improve [heart] health for those already suffering from [heart disease],” said Kettinen.

Good News: Seniors Experiencing Fewer Disabilities

The prevalence of disabilities among seniors is down sharply from what it was just a decade before, researchers say.

Fewer older adults have limitations in the activities that are an important part of daily life, from climbing stairs or walking without difficulty to dressing and bathing.



“Our findings suggest millions more Americans are remaining disability-free and therefore could feasibly stay in their homes well into their 80s and 90s,” said study author Esme Fuller-Thomson.

This study updates earlier information that seniors have been getting healthier since about the 1980s, she said.

The odds of having functional limitations in activities of daily living like dressing and bathing dropped 18 percent between 2008 and 2017. The odds of having limitations such as serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs were 13 percent lower.

While just over 12 percent of older Americans reported having limitations in 2008, that number was 9.6 percent by 2017.



Why It’s Important To Know Your Blood Type

Do you know your blood type? There’s a good chance that you don’t.

More Americans know their horoscope sign (66%) than their blood type (51%), according to a survey published by medical laboratory company Quest Diagnostics.

There are compelling health reasons why you should know, especially when it comes to your heart. Research suggests that people with certain blood types—namely A and B—are at higher risk to develop blood clots and to have heart attacks and strokes.

What the research shows:

Types A and B: Higher risk of blood clots, heart attacks and strokes.

Type AB: Higher risk of stroke and inflammation. Those with AB+ blood can accept blood from all donors and are called universal recipients.

Type O: Slightly lower risk of thrombosis, blood clots, heart attacks and strokes. People with type O- blood are universal donors and can donate to anyone.

Note that a healthy lifestyle likely trumps blood type in terms of increasing or decreasing

risks. People with blood types A and B are at higher risk to develop blood clots compared with people who have type O blood, according to a 2020 study. The study found that types A and B were 50 percent more likely to develop deep vein thrombosis and 47 percent more likely to develop a pulmonary embolism—when a clot travels to the lungs—than people with type O blood.

They were 8 percent more likely to have a heart attack and 10 percent more likely to experience heart failure than type Os.



Six Ways To Prevent Identity Theft

Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personally identifying information like your name, Social Security number, or credit card number without your permission to commit fraud or other crimes.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, approximately 9 million Americans have their identity stolen each year.

Identity thieves may use your personally identifying information to establish lines of credit, bank accounts, credit card accounts, and other forms of credit. You may not

find out your identity has been compromised until you receive a bill in the mail or are contacted by a debt collector. So, what can you do?

- Order a copy of your credit report every year from all three of the major credit reporting agencies in order to check for any fraudulent activity or discrepancies. In the State of New Jersey you are entitled to one free credit report every year from each of the credit reporting agencies.
- Protect your mail by removing it from your mailbox as soon as possible, and consider utilizing a locked mailbox.
- Shred any discarded paperwork that contains personal identifiers or financial information including pre-approved credit card and loan applications. If a vendor manually processes your credit card, ask for and destroy any carbon copies.
- Stop pre-approved credit offers by calling the Credit Reporting Industry at 888-567-8688.
- Know where your personal information is kept and ensure it is secure. Protect your wallet and purse and do not leave them unattended. There have been cases where thieves access wallets and remove one credit card, but leave the rest of the contents undisturbed. Keep an eye on your credit card when using it to pay purchases.
- Be aware of your surroundings when using ATM cards, making credit card purchases, and when using pin numbers and passwords. You've probably read about cases in which skimmers have been placed into ATMs to capture ATM data.

Five Things to Know About the Most Common Inflammatory Skin Disease

When it comes to skin rashes, eczema (also known as atopic dermatitis) is the most common type of inflammatory skin disease.

What can start as just itchy skin may develop into a skin rash with redness and scaly skin. While there is occasionally an identifiable cause, like poison ivy, oftentimes eczema is just a skin sensitivity with inflammation, which can make the skin very irritated.



Eczema does not discriminate based on age or race and can start at anytime. It can also affect any part of the body, including hands and feet. Sometimes eczema can mimic other skin conditions like a fungal infection or psoriasis, so it's important to have any skin rashes evaluated to determine what is going on and receive adequate treatment.

1. Scratching and itching makes eczema worse. It starts a snowball effect of itching, which leads to a rash, which leads to more itching!
2. Eczema is not contagious. You cannot spread eczema to someone else or spread it on yourself.
3. Eczema can be treated, but cannot be cured. There are many creams available that can help to control eczema, but ultimately it is something that comes and goes.
4. A skin maintenance routine is important for helping prevent eczema flares. Even when skin improves after an eczema flare, it doesn't mean the eczema is gone forever. Getting on a good routine of gentle skin care including mild cleansers and thick moisturizers can help with itching and prevention of future flares to some degree.
5. Eczema can be hereditary. If your mom or dad had sensitive skin, it's possible that you may inherit that from them as well as pass it on to your children.

Regular Use of Laxatives Could Increase Risk Of Dementia

Older adults who take laxatives on a regular basis could face a 51 percent higher risk of developing dementia compared to those who do not use them, a new study suggests.

Constipation and laxative use is common among middle-aged and older adults," said study author Feng Sha, PhD.



"However, regular laxative use may change the microbiome of the gut, possibly affecting nerve signaling from the gut to the brain or increasing the production of intestinal toxins that may affect the brain."

"Our research found regular use of over-the-counter laxatives was associated

with a higher risk of dementia, particularly in people who used multiple laxative types or osmotic laxatives.



Those who took multiple types of laxatives were found to have an even higher risk of dementia, with a 90% increase. Researchers adjusted the results to account for lifestyle factors, pre-existing medical conditions, medications, family history and other socio-demographic attributes.

Dr. Laura Purdy, M.D., who was not involved in the study, said the study is very high-level and looks only broadly at the association between dementia and laxative use. "Much more information is needed, such as which laxatives may contribute and how much use is risky," Dr. Purdy said.

Stroke Risk May Decrease As People Age

High blood pressure and diabetes are known risk factors for stroke, but now a new study shows that the amount of risk may decrease as people age, according to a study published in *Neurology*.

"High blood pressure and diabetes are two important risk factors for stroke that can be managed by medication, decreasing a person's risk," said study author George Howard of the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health.

"Our findings show that their association with stroke risk may be substantially less at older ages, yet other risk factors do not change with age. These differences in risk factors imply that determining whether a person is at high risk for stroke may differ depending on their age."

"It is important to note that our results do not suggest that treatment of high blood pressure and diabetes becomes unimportant in older age," said Howard.

"Such treatments are still very important for a person's health. But it also may be wise for doctors to focus on managing risk factors such as atrial fibrillation, smoking and left ventricular hypertrophy as people age."



Seniors Should Get Screened For Anxiety

Recently the medical community has been very focused on anxiety. Across the country more and more people have been suffering from anxiety due to Covid-19 concerns and other issues.



Medical professionals are now recommending anxiety screenings for all adults under the age of 65. But seniors who are over the age of 65 need anxiety screenings too.

Anxiety affects more than one in ten seniors. Seniors may be less likely than other age groups to report the symptoms of anxiety because they may not feel comfortable with counseling or taking medications that can help their anxiety.

But when seniors are worrying excessively or are fighting off panic attacks they may need help. Even though medical professionals have not come out and said that all seniors should be screened for anxiety, it is a good idea if you have noticed signs of anxiety.

You can get a general anxiety screening at your primary care doctor. The doctor will ask you some questions and may have you fill out a generalized anxiety symptom list to determine if you have an anxiety disorder. If you do have an anxiety disorder, then your primary care doctor will refer you to a specialist.

Metal Detecting as a Hobby...Part Three

A number of our regular *SJS* readers commented on Janis Stuart's recent article about the hobby of metal detecting and how she and her husband Harold got involved.

As we promised here is part three of our three-part, more in-depth look at metal detecting as a hobby—*The Treasure Hunter's Code of Ethics*.

As part of its commitment to recreational metal detecting, the Federation of Metal Detector & Archeological Clubs encourages responsible conduct and strict compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations and restrictions, as well as unconditional respect for the rights and property of others, and "for those held in common by us all."

The FMDAC Code of Ethics states that its members will:

- Respect private property and do no treasure hunting without the owner's permission.
- Fill all excavations.
- Appreciate and protect our heritage of natural resources, wildlife, and private property.
- Use thoughtfulness, consideration, and courtesy at all times.
- Build fires in designated or safe places only.
- Leave gates as found
- Remove and properly dispose of any trash that they find.

In addition, its members pledge not to:

- Litter
- Destroy property, buildings, or what is left of ghost towns and deserted structures
- Tamper with signs, structural facilities, or equipment.

For more information on the Federation of Metal Detector & Archeological Clubs, interested parties can contact FMDAC's National Secretary, Dave Perry at 603 West State St Princeton, IN 47670 or 812-385-5676.

KIDS TODAY ARE SOFT. I DIED ONCE WHEN I WAS FIVE, AND MY MOM MADE ME WALK IT OFF.



EXERCISE FOR PEOPLE OVER 60

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side.

With a 5-lb potato bag in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, and then relax.

Each day you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer.

After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb potato bags. Then try 50-lb potato bags and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb potato bag in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute. (I'm at this level).

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each bag.



"The only time I live life in the fast lane is when I have eight items or less."

The People Who Have Helped Make SJS Happen:

Our contributors have included (in alphabetical order) Daryl Albury, Karen Berg, Lucille Bondi, Lou Ciavolella, Courtney Colletti, Deanne Farrell, Bev Harting, Churchill Huston, Janis Stuart, Antoinette Maciolek, Nancie Merritt, Vikki Monaghan, Joe Murphy, Joanne Rafferty, Charlotte Ryan, Arlene Scornavacca, Barry Sparks, Phyllis St. Onge, Phyllis Weber, and Jared Willmann.

Contact Us:

And remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at savvyjerseyseniors.com.