

Keeping You Up-To-Date on New and Important Developments

December 2007

Greetings!

Every New Year that passes speaks to the gift of health you've given to yourself. No one becomes a senior citizen by accident, but by doing at least *some* things right, or in the words of Dr. Thomas Perls, a geriatrician at Boston University, "It's not: The Older you get, the Sicker you get, but: The Older you get, the Healthier you've been."

Since the first New Year celebrations took place to honor the Vernal Equinox in ancient Babylon more than 4000 years ago, it has been a tradition to make resolutions for the New Year. In 2000 BC it was customary to resolve to return farming equipment borrowed from neighbors. Today, in 2007 AD, we are more likely to resolve to abstain from a destructive behav-

ior; we know that good genes coupled with a good lifestyle are the keys to a long life. We also know that some of the essential ingredients of a good lifestyle include meaningful relationships, compelling activities that challenge the mind, and a passion for something that keeps you too busy to die.

While a poll of centenarians reflects conflicting advice about everything from diet, alcohol, smoking and the like, they are consistent in their insistence that their longevity is connected with mental and physical stimulation. So, for a lifetime that is merry and bright, resolve to get healthy today. ♥

"Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made..." Robert Browning

There's No Place Like Home for the Holidays

The Holidays are inextricably tied up with the idea of Home. For many families, a beloved friend, spouse, parent, child, or family member are unable to stay at home because of health considerations. Loss of autonomy is an anguish-causing consideration for the individual and their family. Add to that the danger inherent in a hospital or medical facility, peace of mind is lost, and this loss is more acutely felt during this season.

I remember being horror struck, as a child, upon learning that elderly Eskimos who could no longer contribute to their community were pushed out to sea on an ice floe, but in many ways, the healthcare model of our times resembles this ancient practice: we are abandoning our elderly into a sea of confusion and misinformation.

According to the CDC, life expectancy increased dramatically during the past century, from 47 years for Americans born in 1900, to 77 years for those born in 2001. The reasons people live longer include a better understanding of cleanliness and hygiene, pharmaceutical advances such as vaccinations and antibiotics, and unprecedented progress in medical knowledge. The reasons people die have evolved from infectious diseases which strike suddenly and kill quickly such as Cholera, TB, and acute illnesses such as foot and mouth disease, to chronic diseases and degenerative illness which cause lingering pain, disorientation and despair. In order of the number of victims, the leading chronic diseases suffered by Americans 65 and older are:



- Heart Disease
- Other (*falls & injuries, obesity, etc.*)
- Cancer
- Stroke
- Respiratory Disease
- Influenza & Pneumonia
- Diabetes
- Alzheimer's Disease

Infirmary is not an unavoidable byproduct of aging. Most of the chronic diseases from which we suffer in this brave new world are preventable. Still, the Merck Institute of Aging and Health notes that the average 75-year-old suffers from no less than three chronic conditions and uses an average of five prescription drugs. We believe that the added years should reflect a *quality* of life at least equal to the *quantity* of time inferred. ♥

Intriguing Information:

Just the facts about Americans 65 and older

36.3 Million	.....	People Who Are (12% of the total population)
42%	.....	Male
58%	.....	Female
5 Million	.....	Still in the labor force
9.1 Million	.....	Military Veterans
73%	.....	Have at least a high school diploma
81%	.....	Own their own home
3.6%	.....	In a nursing home
\$93,440/year	.....	Cost of a private room in a nursing home in NJ
78%	.....	Own a car
40%	.....	Own a computer
32%	.....	Involved in a regular exercise program
79%	.....	Registered to vote in 2004 Presidential elections
71%	.....	Claim to have actually cast a ballot in 2004
17%	.....	Percentage of Florida's population
15%	.....	Percentage of WV, PA, ND and Iowa's populations
2025	.....	Year teenagers will be outnumbered more than 2 - 1
40%	.....	Chance that one member of a couple will live to be 90
1 in 10	.....	Affected by Alzheimer's Disease
1/3	.....	Fall each year
7 x	.....	Drug error rates greater than those 65 and younger
\$114,000	.....	Median net worth
16-18 years	.....	Number of years a retired man can expect to live
1/3	.....	Family caregivers aged 65+ providing constant care
\$5500.00 to \$8728.00	.....	Average out of pocket cost of giving care
20%	.....	All U.S. suicide deaths

Sources: *SJ Magazine*; National Governor's Association; The MetLife Mature Market Institute Demographic Profile; www.seniorjournal.com; Alliance for Retired Americans; National Center for Health Statistics; World Health Network; *Philadelphia Inquirer*; *New York Times*; National Alliance for Caregiving and Evercare ♥

Websites We Love

www.livingto100.com Forty questions later you'll have a doctor's estimate of your longevity, personalized feedback for each of your answers, a personalized "To-Do" list for you and your physician, a list of things you can do differently and how many years you will add if you do so, and the option to sign up to take the calculator again so you can keep track of your answers and see if your calculated life expectancy gets better or worse.

www.suddenlysenior.com "A place for everyone who's become a senior before their time..." Enjoy more than 4,150 pages of humor, nostalgia, senior advocacy and useful information for seniors 50+. Updates daily.

www.elderweb.com/ ElderWeb is one of the oldest and most comprehensive eldercare gateways on the World Wide Web, with thousands of links for caregivers, providers, and advisors to on-line information about health, financial, legal, housing, aging, and other eldercare issues.

www.aarp.com AARP is the nation's leading organization for

people age 50 and older. It serves their needs and interests through information and education, advocacy, and community services which are provided by a network of local chapters and experienced volunteers throughout the country.

www.nia.nih.gov/ TheNational Institute on Aging. ♥

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