The Englewood Health Watch

El Observador de Salud de Englewood

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Older Driver Safety

The American Medical Association (AMA) believes that the safety of older drivers is a public health issue. Motor vehicle injuries are a leading cause of injury-related deaths in the older population (persons 65 years and older). Per mile driven, the fatality rate for drivers 85 years and older is nine times higher than the rate for drivers 25 to 69 years old.

Why are older drivers at risk?

Older drivers have a higher risk of traffic fatalities for two reasons. First, drivers age 75 and older are involved in significantly more motor vehicle crashes per mile driven than middle-aged drivers. Second, older drivers are considerably more fragile than their younger counterparts, and are, therefore, more likely to suffer a fatal injury in the event of a crash.

The excess crash rate of older drivers results from impairments in the following functions that are important for driving:

• Vision

• Cognition

• Motor function

Declines in these functions make older drivers vulnerable to crashes in complex situations that require good visual perception, attention and rapid response. As a result, older drivers are more likely to experience crashes at intersections, especially when a left-hand turn is involved.

Getting elderly motorists off the road poses myriad of challenges

While age alone doesn't automatically make a bad driver, we know our cognitive functions, vision, hearing and other physical abilities decline with age. It stands to reason that driving skills will decline, too. Yet, giving up a car and the independence that comes along with it is a top concern among most senior citizens.

What can you do?

Have you tried convincing an aging parent, relative or friend to stop driving? It's never easy.

Strategize: Think about what the care represents to them. Is this their freedom, their youth, their independence, their status?

Anticipate reactions and objections: Have answers ready. If they say "How will I get my groceries?", you might say, "I'll take you shopping every week. It will be fun. We'll have lunch together first and then go for groceries." If they say, "I am not old!", you can say, "Of course you are not old and you are a great driver. I'm worried about the other drivers. With all the rushing and the road rage, I'm petrified one of those loonies will crash into you!"

Campaign: Cut out or print out articles about crashes from the paper. "Did you see this one? I am so glad it wasn't you!"

Watch a film, take a test, play a game, obey the law: "Giving up the keys to the car is one of the more difficult decision we will have to face as we watch our parents age and as we age," says Peter Kissinger of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. He thinks Ackerman's film can be a great icebreaker on the subject for many families. But Kissinger says asking someone to give up the keys to the car isn't the only option. There are brochures, videos, online quizzes, screening tests, refresher courses and plenty of other tools offered by the Foundation for Traffic Safety, AARP and many other organizations that can help older drivers evaluate and improve their driving skills.

And, if all these measures don't help, there's always the law. Licensing procedures vary by state, buy many states are tightening up the rules and regulations for older drivers. For example, in May 2007, Texas enacted "Katie's Law," named for a young Dallas woman killed when a 90-year old driver ran a red light. Now, Texas drivers age 79 and older must renew their license in person and take a vision test, while the license-renewal period for drivers aged 85 and older has been shortened. For the regulations in other states, check the chart put together by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety at www.ihs.org/laws/olderdrivers.aspx

Sources: AMA Aging & Community Health; MSNBC's "The Well-Mannered Traveler" columnist Harriet Baskas

Holiday Drinking and Driving Doesn't Mix!

With the holiday season right around the corner, we consider this to be one of the merriest times of year. It's a time for family gatherings, office parties and cheer. However, it's also one of the most dangerous and can be one of the deadliest times of year, due to a greater chance of drunk driving occurring.

During the holiday time between Thanksgiving to Christmas, and right on up to New Year's, more alcohol-impaired drivers get behind the wheel than at any other time of year. Because many motorists don't realize that just one drink can impair their judgment and motor skills, they risk lives and make driving conditions dangerous for everyone.

According to Mothers Against Drunk Diving (MADD), 12,998 people were killed by drunk drivers with a BAC of .08 or greater in 2007. So, before the holiday season rolls in and the drinks start flowing, remember that following a couple of these precautions can not only keep you the life of the party but can save your life:

* Designate a non-drinking driver beforehand, if possible.

* Arrange for a sober friend or family member to pick you up - or call for a taxi if you don't have a designated driver.

* Plan to give the host your car keys to reduce the likelihood you'll drive under the influence.

* Use alternate transportation provided to the public free of charge during the holiday season.

* If you can't find a ride ahead of time, don't panic. If all else fails, arrange to spend the night at your host's home. Most will understand, and would rather you camp on their couch or floor than take unnecessary chances.

Drunk driving or impaired driving is serious. If you're planning on having a couple glasses of eggnog this holiday season, don't risk your life and the lives of others. Instead, make a plan BEFORE you get behind the wheel-and stick with it.

Sources. www.nhtsa.dot.gov, www.madd.org

Holiday Food Handling

Did you know that the following foodborne organisms are associated with your average holiday turkey? Salmonella Enteritis, Campylobacter jejuni, Staphylococcus aureus, & Listeria monocytogenes. These foodborne organisms can

be avoided by thoroughly cooking the turkey, avoiding any possible cross contamination, and employing proper handwashing and sanitization techniques.

Food Safety is important year round, but during the holiday season it becomes increasingly important. The following recommendations will enable you to enjoy a healthier holiday season.

Thawing of Foods: The best way to thaw all frozen foods is on a tray, in its original wrapping, and in the refrigerator – NOT out at room temperature. When thawing large amounts of food, allow 24 hours per each five pounds. For example, it could take up to five days to thaw a 24-pound turkey. Microwaving is also an option, but you must remember if you thaw food in your microwave, you must cook it immediately thereafter. You can also thaw food under portable running water.

Safe Food Handling: Always wash your hands before and after handling food. Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean. Serve food on clean plates or serving trays, never in

the containers which raw meat juices could cross contaminate the food that is to be served.

Cook Thoroughly: If you are cooking foods ahead of time, be sure to cook foods thoroughly to safe temperatures. Cook fresh roast beef, veal, and lamb to at least 145ºF for medium rare and 160ºF for medium doneness. Bake whole poultry to 180ºF, poultry breast for 170ºF. Ground turkey and poultry should be cooked to 165ºF. All other meat, fish, and ground red meats should be cooked to 160ºF.

Use Shallow Containers: Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid and even cooling. Reheat foods to at least 165ºF. Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. Keep the remaining foods hot in the oven (set at 200ºF-250ºF) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. This way food will be held at a safe temperature for a longer period of time.

The Two Hour Rule: Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the table and discard foods which have been there two hours or more.

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold: Hot foods should be held at 135ºF or warmer. Cold foods should be held at 41ºF or colder.

Tips for a Healthy Holiday

- Wash hands often
  - Soap and scrubbing help remove the germs
- Stay warm
  - Dress warmly and in layers
- Manage stress
  - Keep a check on over-commitment and over-spending
- Travel safely
  - Spend a few extra minutes to make sure your trip will be safe
- Be smoke-free
  - 20 minutes after smoking that last cigarette, your body begins a series of positive changes
- Get check-ups
  - Exams and screenings help find problems early
- Vaccinations
  - Help prevent disease
- Watch the kids
  - Children are at high risk – keep an eye on them always
- Prevent injuries
  - Use ladders safely. Keep candles out of reach of small children and animals.
- Handle and prepare food safely
  - Keep hot food hot and cold food cold
- Eat healthy and be active
  - A balanced diet and with moderation you can enjoy the holiday.
- Relax and have fun
  - Enjoy the holidays by following these few simple steps

www.cd.gov Tips to Holiday Health and Safety

Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Homeowners should have all fuel-burning heating systems in their homes inspected to detect potentially deadly carbon monoxide (CO) leaks. This includes furnaces, boilers, fireplaces, gas water heaters, and/or kerosene space heaters. Having a professional inspection of fuel-burning appliances is the first line of defense against carbon monoxide poisoning. It is recommended that yearly professional inspections of chimneys, flues and vents be done to check for blockage by debris. Birds and other animals sometimes nest in vents, which can then allow gases to enter the home rather than vent to the outside of the house. In addition, all vents should be checked to ensure they are not loose or disconnected. All gas appliances should be checked for gas leaks and adequate ventilation. A supply of fresh air is important to help carry pollutants up the chimney or vent pipe and is necessary for complete combustion of any fuel. Install CO alarms in your home if you have fuel-burning heating and/or cooking appliances. Each year, CO poisoning from heating systems and water heaters kill about 160 people in the US. By installing a Carbon Monoxide alarm and having professional inspection of your heating system, you can prevent becoming a statistic of CO poisoning. Symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, nausea, and fatigue. Usually, the symptoms lessen when you are away from the home for a time period and return once you return to the home. If you have any questions, please contact the Environmental Health Division of the Englewood Health Department at 201-568-3450.

Anatomy of a First Aid Kit

To be ready for an emergency, make sure to keep a first aid kit close by. This is a very valuable thing to have in our home or in your car. To be prepared for emergencies, you either need to carry one with you or know where you can find one quickly. You may purchase one from the RedCross.org store or your local Red Cross Chapter. You may also make your own. First aid kits come in all sizes. Make sure you have one that is right for you and your family. Below is a list of items that a family of four would need:

2 absorbent compress dressings
25 adhesive bandages
1 adhesive cloth tape
5 antibiotic ointment packets
5 antiseptic wipe packets
2 packets of aspirin
1 blanket
1 breathing barrier
1 instant cold compress
2 pair of non-latex gloves
2 hydrocortisone ointment packets
Scissors
1 roller bandage (3 inches wide)
1 roller bandage (4 inches wide)
5 sterile gauze pads (3x3)
5 sterile gauze pads (4x4)
Oral thermometer
2 triangular bandages
Tweezers
First aid instruction booklet
www.redcross.org

A TIMELY REMINDER

Pet license renewals for dogs and cats will begin on January 1st

"Points to remember"

- Rabies shots must be current thru November 1st 2009
- Regular (non-neutered) license fees $11.00
- Neutered license fees $6.00
- March 1st late fee applied.

New fee schedule for Late Fees (per pet)

March 1st $10.00

April 1st $15.00

May 1st $20.00

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

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