

Seniors Are Vulnerable In Medical Emergencies

Just as young people may believe they are indestructible, many older people fall victim to the belief that bad things happen only to other people—not to them.

Some with "silent" diseases such as high blood pressure feel fine and

think their health is excellent. Others just can't imagine that they could end up injured or unconscious in an emergency room.

But the facts say something different: over 90 million Americans are treated in hospital emergency

rooms each year, many of them older people with chronic conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and taking multiple medications.

"No one expects a medical emergency, but the unexpected does happen," said Dr. Charlotte Yeh, chief of the Emergency Department at Newton-Wellesley Hospital in Massachusetts.

Elderly Have Special Problems

Older people often arrive at the emergency room in serious condition because they have put off seeking care, doctors say. Or they may be injured, in pain or unconscious from an accident or a medical crisis.

The stress of a medical emergency may cause older people to forget vital information, and the many who go to the emergency room alone have no one to provide that information to doctors and other medical personnel.

But accurate medical data must be available quickly to help avoid life-threatening delays.

Having that information could help me save your life," said Dr.



Stephan G. Lynn, director of the Department of Emergency Medicine at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center in New York.

Wearing emergency medical identification, such as the Medic Alert emblem, can ensure that a person's critical medical information will be available in times of need, and is particularly important protection for seniors.

"A ready source of patient infor-

mation can improve the care we provide, and Medic Alert is the best system currently available," said Dr. George Podgorny, past president of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

For a \$30 membership fee, the nonprofit Medic Alert Foundation International provides a custom engraved emblem which can be worn as a bracelet or neck chain, displaying a person's primary medical condition and medications, personal I.D. number and Medic Alert's hotline phone number. By calling that number, emergency medical personnel immediately access the patient's computerized medical record, including medical conditions, medications and physician and family contacts.

For a free brochure, call toll free 1-800-432-5378 or write the Medic Alert Foundation, 2323 Colorado Ave., Turlock, CA 95380.

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Managing Pain Is Challenge For Arthritis Sufferers

Learning to live with chronic pain may be the most challenging aspect of having arthritis, reports the Arthritis Foundation.

The way you manage pain can have a big effect on how you feel. You play a significant role in the management of your health care. This role includes using techniques to maintain mobility and strength, reduce pain and balance the beneficial and adverse effects of medication.

"Everyone reacts to pain differently," said Arthur Grayzel, M.D., the Arthritis Foundation's senior vice president for medical affairs. "Pain is physical, but it also is affected by psychological factors. It's possible to be caught in a vicious cycle of pain, depression and stress. The first step in learning to handle pain is to believe you can help yourself, and then to take steps toward accomplishing this goal," Grayzel said.

By learning relaxation techniques, you can help reverse the effects of stress and give yourself a sense of control and well-being. Deep breathing, muscle relaxation and biofeedback are some of the more popular relaxation techniques.