Winter 2015

Be Alert – Defeat Distracted Driving

Distracted driving has reached a whole new level. Cell phone texting takes eyes off the road and hands off the wheel. At any moment of the day, around 660,000 drivers are fumbling with items that take their focus off the road. Studies show that 20 percent of teens and 10 percent of parents admit they text while driving.

Cell phone texting is an unsafe action, but other acts also pose danger:

- Putting on makeup or other grooming
- Drinking and eating
- Reading
- Changing the radio or portable music players
- Looking at a navigation screen
- Talking to riders in the car

Be alert and stay safe on the road. Sending or reading a text while driving takes your eyes off the road for about 4.6 seconds. If you’re driving 55 miles per hour, that’s the same as driving the length of a football field blind.

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation

Start a Health Care To-Do List

Even if you don’t make New Year’s resolutions, you can make a health improvement checklist. Start by scheduling any needed medical and dental checkups for you and your family.

January is Birth Defects Prevention Month and Cervical Cancer Awareness Month. So start the year off healthy with your annual well-woman exam, including cervical cancer screening. If you are pregnant or thinking of getting pregnant, see your doctor early. Help keep your health and your baby’s health in check.

Men need to get in the game too, by putting this year’s health exam on the books. Help catch any health problems early before they sneak up on you.

Source: American Cancer Society
Ready, Set …
Plan for Emergencies

No one thinks they will be in an emergency situation. That’s why it’s vital to do something now just in case. Having a plan and working together can help protect you and your loved ones. Use these steps to make your crisis plan:

• Turn on smartphone settings to get emergency alerts.
• Teach everyone in the family to text, since more texts get through than phone calls in emergencies.
• Teach children 911-calling basics.
• Agree on a meeting place.
• Know safe parts of your home for each type of disaster.
• Pick a date to restock emergency supplies each year.
• Make your plan routine, and test kids with quizzes and drills.

To learn more, visit emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Home Safety Aids
Head off Injuries

Home safety improvements can sharply reduce injuries to your young child, a study shows. Stair gates, cabinet locks, smoke detectors and other safety measures led to a 70 percent drop in home-hazard-related injuries that required a doctor’s aid during children’s first two years of life.

Researchers at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center compared two groups of homes. In 167 homes, researchers found hazards and put in safety devices. In 159 other homes, they made no safety changes. After two years, they compared the number and rate of injuries. They looked for incidents that required medical help and could be prevented by safety improvements. There were 16 injuries in homes that hadn’t been modified, and five in homes that had.

Source: Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine

Fight off Colds with Mind and Body

Forget chicken soup. Scientists may have found two new ways to battle the common cold: exercise and meditation.

Study group members did daily moderate workouts or underwent training in mindfulness meditation for eight weeks. They reported fewer illnesses during cold and flu season than those who did neither. And when they did get sick, they described their symptoms as less severe. And they missed fewer days of work.

In addition, both groups reported being more optimistic and relaxed. For best results, combine these activities with other cold-prevention methods. These include washing your hands and staying away from sick people.

Sources: Annals of Family Medicine, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Walking: Meditation in Motion

Time spent walking relaxes nerves and clears the mind. But want a way to make it more calming? Try meditating as you move. Meditation is a relaxation technique that can reduce anxiety. It may also reduce blood pressure and increase feelings of well-being. Daily stresses and responsibilities can keep your body working in constant overdrive. This strain on the body has been linked to both short- and long-term health problems, including heart disease, high blood pressure, backaches, asthma, migraine headaches and colds.

Mental well-being can suffer from stress, as well. Sleeplessness, depression, anxiety and forgetfulness all are linked to stress.

By meditating while you walk, the nervous system gets a much-needed rest. Plus, the body gets a nice workout. The key to blending walking and meditation is to pay close attention to your body as you walk each step and breath. Meditation involves focusing on one mental picture or sound such as a word or breathing and blocking out distractions. It also takes practice. Experts suggest trying walking meditation five to 30 minutes a day. Follow these steps to feel its benefits:

• Walk at a comfortable pace.
• Feel each breath. Notice if it’s fast or slow, deep or shallow.
• Don’t change the pattern; just allow it.
• Focus on physically putting each foot on the ground.
• If your mind wanders, return to focus on your breathing and footsteps.

Source: Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention