

THE COMMUNICATOR

A Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging Publication

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Ruth E. Jones, Executive Director

SIGNS THAT ITS TIME TO STOP DRIVING

Getting older doesn't automatically mean that you shouldn't be behind the wheel; however, regularly monitoring your driving abilities is an important part of maintaining senior health because there comes a point for nearly everyone when reflexes slow and vision deteriorates, making driving no longer safe for you and others on the road. This is especially true for people who have age-related health conditions, such as dementia.

Many seniors resist giving up their cars. In fact, even when loved ones voice concerns about their abilities behind the wheel, seniors often don't want to give up the independence that a car symbolizes. Some of the health conditions that may threaten a person's ability to sit behind the wheel include: Dementia (including Alzheimer's disease), problems with hearing or vision, stroke, arthritis, diabetes or any other condition that require medications that could impair driving ability, such as anti-anxiety drugs, narcotics and sleeping pills.

Making a decision about driving isn't so much disease specific as it is about driving performance. When Parkinson's or arthritis causes stiffness that's so severe it impairs reaction time, that's a sign you should stop driving. Another red flag is whether you've reached age 85. Around that time, even healthy people will experience slowed reaction time and trouble with visual acuity. Hearing may also be an issue for some at that age.

Before that point, one or more for the following driving restrictions may be an alternative to completely giving up driving:

- ◆ Avoid driving at night and in bad weather.
- ◆ Drive only in familiar places.
- ◆ Drive only within a certain radius of home.
- ◆ Stay off expressways.
- ◆ Limit distractions while driving by turning off the radio and other noises, avoiding conversations with people in the car and not texting or using a cell phone.

There are some other clear indicators that it is no longer safe to drive. They can include:

- ◆ Stopping at green lights or where there is no stop sign.
- ◆ Getting confused by traffic signals.
- ◆ Running stop signs or red lights.
- ◆ Having accidents or side-swiping other cars when parking.
- ◆ Getting lost and calling a family member for directions.
- ◆ Hearing from friends and acquaintances who are concerned about your driving.

Making the transition from being an independent driver to being a passenger can be difficult. However, creating a network of alternative transportation arrangements to get you where you need to be can go a long way toward helping you adjust.



IN THIS EDITION:

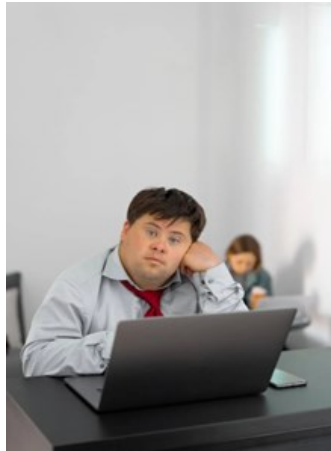
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HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF METABOLIC SYNDROME?

LuAnn Soliah

Metabolic syndrome is a medical term that involves a series of several related, complex conditions. The term is used when an individual has three or more of the following conditions:

1. A waist measurement greater than 40 inches for men and greater than 35 inches for women
2. High blood pressure
3. High fasting blood glucose
4. High triglyceride levels
5. Lower levels of *High Density Lipoproteins*



The term metabolic suggests how the body functions and regulates energy intake. All of the above risk factors play a role in this condition. The medical concern centers around heart disease, diabetes, stroke, kidney disease, and obesity.

The causes for this very common condition include inactivity, obesity, genetics, insulin resistance, and advanced age. Even though age alone is not a direct cause of metabolic syndrome, it is much more common in advanced age. Several million Americans have this condition, and are being treated for the problems that it can create.

The lifestyle remedies for metabolic syndrome include: consistent, sensible exercise routines and modification of the daily diet. The suggested dietary changes include:

- More fruits and vegetables
- More fish - especially fish high in omega 3 fatty acids
- Less processed food
- Fewer sweets and treats
- Less trans fatty acids, less fried food
- Less saturated fatty acids
- More fiber containing cereals
- More whole grains, breads

Along with lifestyle changes, prescription drugs are also available to help control blood glucose, blood pressure, and blood lipids. Consult your physician for more information on medical management of this condition.

FALL IS HERE: Stay Active

As much as we love summer pool parties and mouthwatering cookout recipes, we can't help but feel giddy about Fall! The first day of Fall is on Sunday, September 22, 2024.

There's just something so cozy about the trees turning from green to shades of red and gold, grill smog becoming bonfire smoke and refreshing watermelon making way for all things apples. And that's not to mention the arguably best parts of the fall season: the Labor Day holiday, tailgating and pumpkin spice lattes.



As we jump into the new season, here are a few activities that you may enjoy during this more indoor time of the year.

- **Create a Close Knit Group of Seniors** – Organizing a weekly knitting club and provide monthly transportation to a nearby yard or craft store. Knitting is one of the best fall activities for seniors and knitters will get great pride out of their handiwork.
- **Try the Hygge (pronounced Hoo-gah) Trend** – Start a hygge meet up and encourage seniors to wear their coziest apparel. Hygge involves friends coming together by firelight or candlelight to enjoy the warmth of camaraderie over simple, pleasurable activities – from games to reading.
- **Saturday Night Trivia** – You don't need to hire an outside host to launch trivia focused fall activities for seniors. Trivia games are available at several stores where board games are sold.
- **Take Tai Chi Indoors** – Simply search the internet for Tai Chi movements that can be performed while standing. Tai Chi is clinically proven to improve balance.

You don't have to stay indoors during the fall season, take advantage of the beautiful weather and spend time with your elderly friends by taking short walks after dinner, visiting a pumpkin patch or simply sitting on the front porch.

MEDICARE MOMENT

More Medicare beneficiaries today are working past the age of 65 than when Medicare was first implemented back in 1965. That means more beneficiaries may want to hold off on signing up for Medicare to avoid paying for services they don't think they need. Before making any decisions that could affect your health insurance coverage, it's important to evaluate your situation and learn when the optimal time is for you to sign up for Medicare. Doing this can ensure that you do not incur a late-enrollment penalty or a gap in coverage.



The easiest way to find out when you need to sign up for Medicare is by going to Medicare.gov and searching for "When can I sign up for Medicare?". You'll have to answer a few questions focused on your insurance status, what type of insurance you have, and your employment situation. Once you have, a detailed description of when you'll need to sign up for Medicare, and the steps on how to go about signing up will be given to you.

Important questions you may need to ask yourself before signing up:

- Do you (or your spouse) have health insurance from a job?
- Do you have health insurance that is not from a job?
- Do you have COBRA coverage?

If you are still working and do not have health insurance, it's important to sign up for both Medicare Part A and Part B when you are first eligible for them. This usually happens when you turn 65. If you do not sign up, then you may incur a penalty that will stay with you for the rest of your life.

- If you have employer health care coverage, check your coverage to find out when it ends. A month before it does, be sure to sign up for Medicare so you can avoid any gap in your coverage.
- If you have been notified that your employer health care coverage is changing, speak with your benefits administrator/coordinator to see what steps you need to take in either moving your coverage or signing up for Medicare Parts A & B.
- If you have a Health Savings Account (HSA), you along with your employer should stop contributing to your HSA 6 months before you either retire or apply for Social Security benefits. This should be done to avoid a tax penalty.

Unsure about when to sign up for Medicare and need assistance from an unbiased counselor? Contact your local SHICK Hotline at 800-860-5260. You'll be directed to your local SHICK office where a qualified and informed counselor can speak with you on your Medicare options.

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SENIOR FUN FACTS

- Senior citizens hold the most voting power. When it comes to voting in the U.S., those 60 and over cast more ballots than any other group.
- Creativity doesn't diminish with age. Laura Ingalls Wilder didn't publish Little House in the Big Woods until 65. Millard Kaufman didn't publish his first novel until he was 90.
- Learning can save your brain. In response to learning, senior citizens can grow new neurons over time which can help fight off dementia.
- Age doesn't determine success. The founder of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Harland David Sanders (a.k.a. Colonel Sanders), started KFC at the age of 65.
- The sleeping patterns of seniors change as they age; they get tired earlier and wake up earlier.
- Many seniors find that as they get older, their financial situation becomes more stable, allowing them to enjoy their retirement years.
- As seniors get older, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors like drinking too much alcohol, smoking, or driving too fast.
- There are currently over 5 million senior citizens who are still active in the workplace.
- At least 73% of all senior citizens are still sexually active.
- More than 40% of seniors have computer access and are active online. About 15 million Facebook users are 65 and older.

PUBLIC HEARING/TOWN HALL MEETING

A Public Hearing/Town Hall was hosted by the Area Agency on Aging in collaboration with the Silver Haired Legislature (SHL) and the Shepherd Center at Victory Hills Baptist Church on Thursday, August 8, 2024.

Sherri Grogan, SHL Vice President and Leavenworth County delegate invited Kansas Representatives and our UG Local Commissioners to speak at this event. Sherri also coordinated the very informative agenda.

The Area Agency on Aging provided an overview of their programming followed by the dignitaries who spoke on an array of subjects that affect the lives of the senior population.

- State Representative Melissa Oropeza discussed the importance of voting and expressed that everyone should do their own research of the candidates and know who it is you want to vote for prior to heading to the polls. Rep. Oropeza also mentioned that poll workers are always needed.
- State Representative Pam Curtis discussed Medicaid Expansion and provided a stat that 150,000 Kansans would be eligible (that's 7 out of 10 Kansans). Representative Curtis also mentioned that the *Tax Package* was passed. It provides relief for everyone, increased standard deductions and the state tax on Social Security was removed.
- State Representative Tim Johnson discussed the Expansion of the Grandparents as Caregivers Act. He explained that expansion would allow financial and medical assistance to those who have been thrust into that roll. The expansion would also allow those who are not necessarily "grandparents," but to those family members when no grandparent is present.
- Commissioner Burroughs, At-Large District 2 provided a snapshot of the Unified Government's (UGs) Revenue Neutral Budget and what it will include. The commissioner explained in his overview that it would include no increase to property taxes, no personnel cuts, but will come with challenges.
- Commissioner Bynum, At-Large District 1 provided an overview of the Relief Programs being provided by the Unified Government of WyCo/KCK. Utility Tax Rebates for those 60+ or disabled and meet income guidelines, Sales Tax Rebates which will provide \$200 rebate check, assistance with the filing of the *Kansas Homestead* form for those who qualify, and the removal of the *BPU Pilot Fee* from BPU bills.
- Commissioner Stites, District 7 provided an outlook on Economic Development in Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas. He announced that the UG has hired an Economic Development Director and shared a slew of upcoming developments in his district out West and the Bonner Springs area. Margaritaville, Home Field, Atlas Nine, American Royal, a Quilt Museum and Bucky's to name a few. He discussed how the new development will bring new jobs, housing, sales tax revenue and transient guest tax (TGT) to our area.
- Commissioner Hill, District 4 shared several examples of how the constituents of her district feel as it regards to BPU fees and charges on household bills. Her constituents have shared the frustration with being toggled between BPU and UG for billing issues, where the Wilhelmina Gill Center be moved to and the fluctuation of amounts as it regards to deposits when opening new service with BPU.

The Area Agency on Aging would like to thank all dignitaries who took time out of their day to recognize that seniors should be heard and especially for informing them of the issues that directly affect them.



SEPTEMBER IS FALL PREVENTION MONTH

Mealsonwheelsmd.org

It is estimated that every one in four Americans aged 65+ takes a fall every year in the United States. This number is significant considering that falls can be detrimental to the health, safety, and financial independence of the individual. The good news is that with increased awareness surrounding this issue, both individuals and their loved ones can contribute to reducing the risk of falling and the serious impacts that may follow.



September is National Fall Prevention Awareness Month. The purpose of fall prevention awareness is for organizations to share education of effective strategies for increasing mobility and strength, while also offering practical solutions for safety. It is also a great opportunity for individuals to reflect on their own risk factors or those of a love one.

It is important to note that falls are not inevitable in older age, but the risk is greater. Below is a short list of steps that can help prevent falls.

- Find an exercise program that can help build strength and flexibility. Some ideas include heel lifts, toe lifts, sit to stand, wall push-ups, and leg lifts.
- Speak to a health care professional to understand the risk of falling.
- Regularly review medications with your doctor and/or pharmacist to understand the side effects.
- Get both hearing and vision checked annually.
- Reduce tripping hazards at home.
- Enlist the support of family and friends.

During Fall Prevention Month we encourage you to learn more about fall prevention and to be an advocate for either yourself or a loved one.

It's never too late to take steps towards improving balance and mitigating risk factors. Additionally, remember that fall prevention can reduce financial burden and injuries, increase independence and can even save a life!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The AAA's are encouraged by the Older Americans Act, to target services to hard to reach communities, where language barriers may exist.

Tuesday August 20th, older adults from the Hmong community converged upon the Area Agency on Aging to learn about aging resources through a Hmong community interpreter. We are excited to see increased outreach to the Hmong senior citizens in our community.



An Open House was held on August 21st at the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in honor of *National Senior Citizens Day*. This annual observance is dedicated to honoring the elderly citizens of the United States. Seniors toured the AAA office and



learned of services that will assist them to continue living in their own home and community. Refreshments were also served.



MAPLE PORK RIBS

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 lb boneless country-style pork ribs, trimmed and cut into 3-inch pieces
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced and separated into rings
- 3 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons spice brown or Dijon mustard

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large skillet, brown ribs in oil on all sides; drain.
2. Place ribs and onion in a 1 1/2 quart slow cooker.
3. Combine syrup and mustard; pour over ribs.
4. Cover and cook on low until meat is tender, 5-6 hours.



WORD SEARCH

Find and circle all the words hidden in the grid.

- APPLE ORCHARD
- BLACK CATS
- BOB FOR APPLES
- BONFIRE
- CANDY CORN
- CIDER
- COLUMBUS DAY
- CORNSTALK
- CORNUCOPIA
- COSTUMES
- EQUINOX
- FALL
- FOOTBALL
- FULL MOON
- GHOULS
- GOBLINS
- GRANDPARENTS DAY
- HALLOWEEN
- HARVEST
- HAYRIDE
- JACK O LANTERN
- LABOR DAY
- LEAVES
- LIBRA
- MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT
- PATRIOT DAY
- POPCORN
- PUMPKIN
- RAKE
- SCARESCROW
- SKELETON
- SPIDER
- TWIN TOWERS
- UNIONS
- VIRGO
- WEENIE ROAST

W	F	Z	P	Y	I	C	S	T	E	X	K	D	I	T	C	F	Q	C	S	N	Z	C	U	O
T	Q	H	I	I	C	O	E	W	O	R	V	N	V	V	E	R	O	N	O	B	S	O	P	J
G	C	A	H	R	M	L	L	I	P	X	I	L	L	A	F	R	I	O	J	E	Y	N	G	R
K	N	H	G	Q	Q	U	P	N	W	J	Q	F	Y	H	N	L	M	H	V	A	L	E	B	N
S	I	R	A	K	E	M	P	T	V	Y	K	S	N	S	B	L	Y	A	D	R	O	B	A	L
S	N	E	H	D	S	B	A	O	N	E	X	V	T	O	L	Y	E	S	J	T	Q	P	Q	N
P	C	O	V	G	S	U	R	W	J	P	B	A	G	U	B	L	T	V	S	N	Q	B	M	R
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S	K	T	R	N	T	D	F	R	C	K	H	Y	Y	B	E	D	O	I	Z	T	F	C	V	C
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N	O	N	U	G	U	T	O	B	X	R	D	C	N	U	S	W	R	L	V	H	X	B	R	A
X	E	P	F	A	E	D	D	W	L	N	K	E	B	T	I	K	T	M	J	H	M	T	S	C
I	O	E	C	W	W	D	G	A	A	T	E	M	N	O	A	P	E	P	L	M	M	O	T	A
T	K	N	W	O	Z	Y	P	R	Y	W	D	Z	Q	E	X	A	Z	L	C	S	X	O	A	J
Q	Z	A	I	O	R	D	G	G	G	J	A	C	K	O	L	A	N	T	E	R	N	F	C	N
K	B	F	Y	U	L	N	N	G	H	C	H	A	Y	R	I	D	E	C	B	T	Q	B	K	R
G	P	X	Z	M	Q	L	O	K	O	O	L	H	Q	K	Z	D	O	P	B	N	O	R	C	E
Y	U	F	A	E	N	E	A	S	G	D	U	K	W	D	Z	A	R	B	D	Y	U	N	A	D
X	M	O	G	R	I	V	T	H	A	P	P	L	E	O	R	C	H	A	R	D	M	Q	L	I
H	P	F	K	L	Y	U	U	I	U	B	A	A	S	Y	T	D	X	X	M	O	I	B	B	P
D	K	X	U	E	M	G	Z	G	C	N	Q	B	F	Y	W	A	P	G	R	W	A	I	V	S
V	I	T	N	E	M	L	L	O	R	N	E	N	E	P	O	E	R	A	C	I	D	E	M	A
A	N	G	S	A	I	P	O	C	U	N	R	O	C	K	M	N	T	X	Z	W	X	W	D	M

TELL US ABOUT YOU

GENDER: ___ MALE ___ FEMALE **AGE GROUP:** ___ UNDER 60 ___ 60+

MARITAL STATUS: ___ SINGLE ___ MARRIED ___ WIDOWED ___ DIVORCED

RACE: ___ AFRICAN AMERICAN ___ HISPANIC ___ AMERICAN INDIAN/NATIVE ALASKAN
 ___ ASIAN AMERICAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER ___ NON-MINORITY CAUCASIAN ___ OTHER: _____

RESIDENCE: ___ SENIOR RESIDENCE ___ OWN HOME ___ WITH FAMILY ___ ASSISTED LIVING
 ___ NURSING FACILITY ___ OTHER: _____

HOUSEHOLD INCOME: ___ BELOW \$20,000 ___ OVER \$20,000 **RESIDENTIAL ZIP CODE:** _____

REASON YOU CONTACTED US

- ___ **INFORMATION** - You received information on a single topic.
- ___ **REFERRAL** - You received a referral to a community service provider.
- ___ **ASSISTANCE** - You received assistance on how to access needed services in your community.
- ___ **OPTIONS COUNSELING** - You received information on service options, provider options, or other options which helped you make an informed decision regarding your choices. This included a follow-up contact from our staff.
- ___ **ASSESSMENT** - You received a functional assessment to determine your functional eligibility for Home and Community Based Services.
- ___ **CAREGIVER SERVICES** - You received services as a caregiver OR grandparent raising your grandchild(ren).
- ___ **CARE or Nursing Home Admission** - You received a CARE assessment for nursing home admission.
- ___ **CASE MANAGEMENT** - A case manager met with you to help set up in-home services.
- ___ **HOME DELIVERED MEALS** (Meals on Wheels) - You receive: ___ Hot ___ Frozen
- ___ **CONGREGATE MEAL SITE** - You eat at one of our nutrition sites for lunch.
- ___ **LEGAL SERVICES** - You received legal assistance through Kansas Legal Services.
- ___ **TRANSPORTATION SERVICE** - You used either: ___ Mill Levy Transportation ___ Unified Government Transit Services
- ___ **OTHER:** (Please Specify) - _____

HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH:

THE OVERALL SERVICE YOU RECEIVED?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE COURTESY OF OUR STAFF?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE KNOWLEDGE OF OUR STAFF WITH YOUR ISSUE.	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE HELPFULNESS OF OUR STAFF?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION YOU RECEIVED.	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE PROFESSIONALISM OF OUR STAFF.	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
WAS YOUR CONCERN ADDRESSED?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
THE TIME IT TOOK OUR STAFF TO ASSIST YOU?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply
HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU OUR SERVICES?	___ Very Satisfied	___ Satisfied	___ Not Satisfied	___ Does Not Apply

If not, explain. _____

IF YOU HAD A NEED OR CONCERN THAT WE COULD NOT ASSIST WITH, PLEASE SPECIFY YOUR UNMET NEED.

ANY COMMENTS OR WAYS TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE?

IF YOU WOULD LIKE A FOLLOW-UP CALL TO DISCUSS ANY OTHER CONCERNS, PLEASE LEAVE US YOUR NAME, PHONE NUMBER.

ANY OTHER COMMENTS:

RETURN SURVEY TO: WY/LV AAA 849 NORTH 47TH STREET, SUITE C, KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66102

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 31, 2024



WYANDOTTE/LEAVENWORTH AREA AGENCY ON AGING

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SEPTEMBER >>>

LABOR DAY

Monday, September 2, 2024
Unified Government Offices Closed

GRANDPARENTS DAY

Sunday, September 8, 2024

PATRIOT DAY

Wednesday, September 11, 2024

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Donations are suggested.

The Wyandotte/Leavenworth Area Agency on Aging does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, sex, or handicap.

If you feel you have been discriminated against, you may file a complaint with the Kansas Department for Aging & Disability Services at 1-800-432-3535.

OCTOBER >>>

COLUMBUS DAY

Monday, October 14, 2024

MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT BEGINS

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

HALLOWEEN

Thursday, October 31, 2024



Linda Ramirez, Editor