



# HEALTH EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



[www.utopiahomecare.com](http://www.utopiahomecare.com)

Family Owned and Operated since 1983

SPRING 2011 EDITION

EDITORS: BRENT PIEPENBRING & MATT HETTERICH

Long Island, NY and New York City 877-847-5934 • Connecticut 800-227-3449  
Florida 866-446-3619 • Pennsylvania 610-375-1800 • S. Carolina 843-553-6060 • N. Carolina 919-788-1400



## Gardening Health and Safety Tips

Gardening can be a great way to enjoy the outdoors, get physical activity, beautify the community, and grow nutritious fruits and vegetables. Whether you are a beginner or expert gardener, health and safety are important.

Below are some tips to help keep you safe and healthy so that you can enjoy the beauty and bounty gardening can bring.

### Dress to protect.

Gear up to protect yourself from lawn and garden pests, harmful chemicals, sharp or motorized equipment, insects, and the sun's harmful rays.

- Wear safety goggles, sturdy shoes, and long pants when using lawn mowers and other machinery.
- Protect your hearing when using machinery. If you have to raise your voice to talk to someone who is an arm's length away, the noise can be potentially harmful to your hearing.
- Wear gloves to lower the risk of skin irritations, cuts, and certain contaminants.
- Protect yourself from diseases caused by mosquitoes and ticks. Use insect repellent containing DEET. Wear long-sleeved shirts, and pants tucked in your socks. You may also want to wear high rubber boots since ticks are usually located close to the ground.
- Lower your risk for sunburn and skin cancer. Wear long sleeves, wide-brimmed hats, sun shades, and sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher.

### Put safety first.

Powered and unpowered tools and equipment can cause serious injury. Limit distractions, use chemicals and equipment properly, and be aware of hazards to lower your risk for injury.

- Follow instructions and warning labels on chemicals and lawn and garden equipment.
- Make sure equipment is working properly.
- Sharpen tools carefully.
- Keep harmful chemicals, tools, and equipment out of children's reach.

**This Newsletter  
is Distributed  
FREE  
as a Community  
Service**

For past issues, see  
[www.utopiahomecare.com](http://www.utopiahomecare.com)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Gardening Health and Safety Tips. . . . . pg. 1-2
- Older Americans: Connecting the Community . . . . . pg. 3
- Spring Weather . . . . . pg. 4

### INSERT:

- Happy Nurses Week
- Long-Term Care Planning
- Family Health History

*Continued on page 2*

# Gardening Health and Safety Tips Continued

## Know your limits in the heat.

Even being out for short periods of time in high temperatures can cause serious health problems. Monitor your activities and time in the sun to lower your risk for heat-related illness.

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day to replace lost fluids. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink.
- Avoid drinking liquids that contain alcohol or large amounts of sugar, especially in the heat. These actually cause you to lose more body fluid.
- Take breaks often. Try to rest in shaded areas so that your body's thermostat will have a chance to recover. Stop working if you experience breathlessness or muscle soreness.
- Pay attention to signs of heat-related illness, including extremely high body temperature, headache, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, confusion, or unconsciousness.
- Watch people who are at higher risk for heat-related illness, including infants and children up to four years of age; people 65 years of age or older; people who are overweight; people who push themselves too hard during work or exercise; and people who are physically ill or who take certain medications (i.e. for depression, insomnia, or poor circulation).
- Eat healthy foods to help keep you energized.

## Persons with disabilities and physical activity.

Talk to your health care provider if you have physical, mental, or environmental concerns that may impair your ability to work in the garden safely.

- If you have arthritis, use tools that are easy to grasp and fit your ability. Research shows that 2½ hours per week of moderate physical activity can give you more energy and can help relieve arthritis pain and stiffness.
- If you are taking medications that may make you drowsy or impair your judgment or reaction time, don't operate machinery, climb ladders, or do activities that may increase your risk for injury.
- Listen to your body. Monitor your heart rate, level of fatigue, and physical discomfort.

Call 911 if you get injured, experience chest and arm pain, dizziness, lightheadedness, or heat-related illness.

## Enjoy the benefits of physical activity.

Gardening is an excellent way to get physical activity. Active people are less likely than inactive people to be obese or have high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, stroke, depression, colon cancer, and premature death.

- Be active for at least 2½ hours a week. Include activities that raise your breathing and heart rates and strengthen your muscles. You can burn 150 calories by gardening (standing) for approximately 30-45 minutes. Help kids and teens be active for at least 1 hour a day.
- If you have been inactive, start out with just a few minutes of physical activity each day. Gradually build up time and intensity.
- Vary your gardening activities to keep your interest and to broaden the range of benefits.

*This information was provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Family Health Section at [www.cdc.gov/family/gardening/](http://www.cdc.gov/family/gardening/). Contact the CDC Info contact center at 1-800-232-4636.*





## **Older Americans Month - May 2011**

### **Older Americans: Connecting the Community**

Every May since 1963, people in towns and cities across the country have come together to celebrate the enormous contributions of older Americans—born of wisdom, experience, and the will to realize their dreams and speak their minds. Older Americans Month is our chance to show our appreciation and support our seniors as they continue to enrich and strengthen our communities. Utopia Home Care is joining the festivities with special activities and events.

The theme of this year's celebration—Older Americans: Connecting the Community—pays homage to the many ways in which older adults bring inspiration and continuity to the fabric of our communities. Their shared histories, diverse experiences, and wealth of knowledge have made our culture, economy, and local character what they are today. The theme also highlights the many ways technology is helping older Americans live longer, healthier and more engaged lives.

In fact, older Americans are more active in community life than ever before, thanks in part to advances in health care, education, technology, and financial stability over the last several decades that have greatly increased their vitality and standard of living. Older adults are out and about giving back and making a difference in their community.

Our seniors are mentoring the leaders of tomorrow, taking to heart the need for intergenerational learning to guide and inspire young minds. They offer a take on times gone by not discussed in any history class—a unique perspective that sheds new light on contemporary issues.

Older Americans step up to help one another as well. Across the country, seniors connect with other seniors by delivering meals, helping with home repair, assisting with shopping, and offering companionship, counseling, and care. Their efforts remind us that when older adults are active and engaged in their communities, everyone benefits.

Help us celebrate Older Americans Month! Join your neighbors not only to recognize what older citizens bring to our communities, but also to help them continue playing a vital role in weaving a unique and lasting community fabric.

Contact your local Area Agency on Aging to find out about volunteer opportunities with programs that provide services for seniors to improve health literacy, increase access to quality health services, deliver food and nutrition services, provide financial and housing counseling, sponsor social and civic activities, and more. We think you will discover that when you help seniors thrive in your community, you gain far more than you give.

# Spring Weather

Spring weather can be unpredictable. When severe weather hits unexpectedly, the risk of injury and death increases, so planning ahead makes sense. Prepare for storms, floods, and tornadoes as if you know in advance they are coming, because in the spring, they very likely will.

Spring is the time of year when many things change—including the weather. Temperatures can swing back and forth between balmy and frigid. Sunny days may be followed by a week of stormy weather. Sometimes extreme weather changes can occur even within the same day. Mark Twain once said, “In the spring I have counted one hundred and thirty-six kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours.”

Thunderstorms cause most of the severe spring weather. They can bring lightning, tornadoes and flooding. Whenever warm, moist air collides with cool, dry air, thunderstorms can occur. For much of the world, this happens in spring and summer.

Because spring weather is so unpredictable, you may be unprepared when severe weather hits—particularly if you live in a region that does not often experience thunderstorms, tornadoes or flooding. And when severe weather hits unexpectedly, the risk of injury and death increases. So be sure to plan ahead.



Advance planning for thunderstorms, lightning, tornadoes and floods requires specific safety precautions. Still, you can follow many of the same steps for all extreme weather events. You should have on hand:

- A battery-operated flashlight, a battery-operated NOAA Weather Radio, and extra batteries for both
- An emergency evacuation plan, including a map of your home and, for every type of severe weather emergency, routes to safety from each room
- A list of important personal information, including telephone numbers of neighbors, family and friends, insurance and property information, telephone numbers of utility companies, and medical information
- A first aid kit, including:
  - prescription medication
  - hydrogen peroxide
  - antibiotic ointment
  - over-the-counter medicines such as aspirin and diarrhea medicine
  - bandages and dressings for injuries
- A 3–5 day supply of bottled water and nonperishable food
- Personal hygiene items
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- An emergency kit in your car

Prepare your family members for the possibility of severe weather. Tell them where to seek appropriate shelter as soon as they are aware of an approaching storm. Practice your emergency plan for every type of severe weather. Show family members where the emergency supplies are stored, and make sure they know how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity in your home.

Unfortunately, few of us get much advance notice of a severe weather event. Often by the time we are aware of an approaching storm, we have little, if any, time to prepare for it. But we do know that when spring arrives, thunderstorms, tornadoes, and floods are real possibilities. So why not take the surprise factor out of severe weather and prepare yourself, your family, and your home for severe weather? Of course, you may not have to deal with extreme weather this spring, but if thunderstorms, tornadoes and floods do occur, you'll be ready for them.

*Information provided by the CDC at [www.cdc.gov/Features/](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/) or call the CDC Info Contact Center at 1-800-232-4636.*

# All Across the United States, Registered Nurses are Being Saluted.

On May 6, Utopia Home Care joined the American Nurses Association in celebrating Nurses Trusted to Care, as part of National Nurses Week, which is held May 6-12 every year. The purpose of the weeklong celebration is to raise awareness of the value of nursing and help educate the public about the role nurses play in meeting the health care needs of the American people.

In honor of the dedication, commitment, and tireless effort of the nearly 3.1 million registered nurses nationwide to promote and maintain the health of this nation, the ANA and Utopia Home Care were proud to recognize registered nurses everywhere on this particular day for the quality work they provide seven days a week, 365 days a year.



## Creating a Family Health History

### Why Create a Family Health History?

A family health history is a written record of a every family member's health. The history contains information about a family's medical conditions, lifestyle habits (for example, whether anyone in the family has smoked), and where and how family members grew up. It's like a family tree for health.

You can use a family health history to see if you, your children, or your grandchildren might face an increased risk of developing serious health problems. These health problems might be common ones, such as heart disease, cancer, or diabetes. They could also be less common diseases that are passed from one generation to the next, such as hemophilia or sickle cell anemia.

Many diseases result from a combination of a person's genes, lifestyle, and environment. People can't change the genes they inherit from their parents. But they can change things like diet, physical activity, and medical care to try to prevent diseases that run in the family.

A health care professional can use a family health history to help assess a person's risk of certain diseases. The professional might recommend actions to lower the chance of getting those diseases.

Actions to reduce the risk of disease may involve lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier foods, exercising more, getting certain medical tests, and taking new medications.

For example, a son who is at risk of developing diabetes might be told to lose weight and exercise more. A daughter who is considering having a baby might get tested to see if she carries a gene for a rare condition that runs in the family.

For older adults, a family health history might help explain why you have developed certain health conditions. But it is important to know that simply getting older increases the risk of many diseases, too.

Creating and sharing your family health history with your health care professional can help you be healthier. But perhaps the biggest benefit is providing information that may help your children and grandchildren live longer, healthier lives.

*Information provided by the National Institute on Aging and can be found by visiting [www.nihseniorhealth.gov](http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov).*

## UTOPIA HOME CARE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN HOME HEALTH CARE

For Certified Home Health Aides, Nurses, Therapists, and Social Workers. **FREE TRAINING** to become a Certified Home Health Aide on Long Island, in New York City and in Connecticut. EOE

### HOME HEALTH CARE SERVICES:

Please call the numbers listed below for information, or visit our website at [www.utopiahomecare.com](http://www.utopiahomecare.com)  
LI, NY and NYC 877-847-5934, CT 800-227-3449, FL 866-446-3619, PA 610-375-1800, SC 843-553-6060, NC 919-788-1400

# Long Term Care (LTC) - The Importance of Planning

No one wants to think about a time when they might need long-term care. So planning ahead for this possibility often gets put off. Most people first learn about long-term care when they or a loved one need care. Then their options are often limited by lack of information, the immediate need for services, and insufficient resources to pay for preferred services. Planning ahead allows you to have more control over your future.

## Why Plan Ahead for Long-Term Care?

Planning ahead for long-term care is important because there is a good chance you will need some long-term care services if you live beyond the age of 65. About 70 percent of people over age 65 require some services, and the likelihood of needing care increases as you age.

Planning ahead helps you understand what service options are available in your community, what special conditions may apply for receiving services (for example, age or other eligibility criteria) what services cost, and what payment options—public and private—apply. Having this information helps ensure you will have a range of options when you need long-term care, and makes it more likely that you will have more choice and control over where and how you receive services.

Planning ahead is important because the cost of long-term care services often exceeds what the average person can pay from income and other resources. By planning ahead, you may be able to save your assets and income for uses other than long-term care, including preserving the quality of life for your spouse or other loved ones. With planning, there is a greater likelihood of being able to leave an estate to your heirs, because you are less likely to use up your financial resources paying for care.

Planning ahead also means less emotional and financial stress on you and your family. It can provide a way to involve your family in decisions without depending on them to bear the entire burden alone.

Finally, for many people, one of the most important advantages of planning ahead is to ensure greater independence should you need care. Your choices for receiving care outside of a facility and being able to stay at home or receive services in the community for as long as possible are greater if you have planned ahead.

## Why People Don't Plan Ahead

There are many reasons why people don't plan ahead for long-term care. These include the natural tendency to avoid thinking about becoming dependent on others for your care, misinformation about the risks of needing care, and lack of knowledge about the cost of care and payment options.

Most people don't like to think about getting older, developing a disability, becoming less independent, or needing help with personal care. Many people don't realize that their chance of needing long-term care by the time they turn 65 is as high as 70 percent.

People commonly misunderstand how expensive long-term care is, and how it is paid for. Consumer surveys have shown that many individuals don't realize that health insurance, Medicare, and/or disability coverage do not pay for most long-term care services. Medicaid pays for some long-term care services, but only if you qualify for the program because you have limited income and financial resources.

Some people find it too difficult to raise these subjects with their loved ones, making it difficult to explore and define their plans. Adult children often feel like they are patronizing their parents if they raise the subject or they are afraid of giving the impression that they might not want to provide care if it is needed. Parents often don't want to make adult children uncomfortable or to discuss details of their finances with them.

Finally, some people realize it is important to plan, but don't know how to go about it. The best way to begin is with small and easy steps. Even just talking with your loved ones is a great first step!



*Courtesy of the National Clearinghouse for Long-Term Care - [www.longtermcare.gov](http://www.longtermcare.gov). The website was developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide information and resources to help you and your family plan for future long-term care (LTC) needs.*