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FROM THE DESKS OF  
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Jan 22, 2021

To Our Patients:

Remember when rollercoasters looked like the Mr. Twister from the 1965 Elitch's Gardens. We miss those days. Life has been more like Elitch's current rollercoaster, the Mind Eraser, with getting our hands on the vaccine a bit like the carnival game Whack-a-Mole. The good news is that Dave and I, along with our fearless team cannot be deterred or discouraged! Every day has been a new adventure and we continue to be up for the challenge and will continue to do the very best we can by you.



#### Office Updates

Our office space lease is up late summer/early fall. We are exploring potential leasing options within a 5 block radius of our current location. More to come as we learn more and make some big decisions.

Next Zoom Session (date correction)

Topic: COVID 19 and Vaccine Updates

Date: *February* 4, 2021 at 7pm

Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7203202061?pwd=eUpVd1pEaDFZSGJaZEs4S1RoV1NtUT09>

Meeting ID: 720 320 2061

Passcode: 123456

### Neighbor Contributions

I adapted this great list from my neighbor and friend, Stephanie Goldammer, who was not only brave enough to help us buy and sell a few houses over the years but allowed me to buy my current home near hers! I love this list because it includes things we can do for others while we are enduring our last few months in quarantine!

1. Send a crazy letter or postcard to make someone laugh.
2. Shovel for your neighbor (I think Stephanie put this one in on purpose. ☺)
3. Buy a stranger coffee.
4. Carry around a care package of food or toiletries that you can give to a homeless person.
5. Place sticky notes with encouraging words for loved ones to find.
6. Chalk a message on a friend's sidewalk or driveway
7. Donate unused towels or blankets to a local pet shelter.
8. Drop off a meal for a friend or neighbor.



"I hate giving shots. Would you mind leaning into it?"



### Home Make-Overs

At 38 years old, we searched for what I hoped would be the home we would live in for the rest of our lives. As we toured homes with Stephanie, I looked to make sure that there was a bedroom and full bathroom on the ground floor. I checked to see if there was enough room to

cover the entry way steps with a ramp. Yes, the bathroom tub could be replaced with a walk-in shower and there was room to eventually move the washer and dryer up to the ground floor from the basement if needed. Stephanie smiled and asked, "Jeannette, who did you say is going to be living in this house?" I grinned and said, "We are! But you see I'm a geriatrician and it's got to last the duration!"

Remember, it was Benjamin Franklin who said, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Here are my home medical safety tips:

- Medication errors are one of the leading causes of death in America. Organize your medications or have someone help you organize your medication if that is not one of your strengths.
  - On each pill bottle write what the medication is for. For example, on the bottle of lisinopril, write, "high blood pressure"
  - If you're supposed to stop a medication put a big X on the bottle with the date and store the bottle separate from the medications you need to be taking every week.
  - If you have multiple pills of the same kind and the same dose, combine them into one bottle.
  - Buy a pillbox with rows for when you need to take your medications. For example, if you take your medications in the morning and at night, the pill box should have 2 rows, with 7 boxes for each day of the week in each row.
  - Fill the pillbox every week.
- Falls are a leading cause of injury in seniors.
  - Remove throw rugs
  - Remove wheels from chairs
  - Clean up piles of clutter
  - Widen walkways and paths to at least 32 inches across, even if you have to donate furniture to make more room to move around
  - Move electrical cords out of the way and consider affixing them to the moldings
  - Wear non-slip foot wear that is secure on your feet
  - Have a cane or walker that you are willing and able to use. Many people use hiking poles instead of canes because it makes them feel younger, others find them more comfortable on the wrist than a standard cane or walker.
  - Install railing on both sides of all stairs, inside and outside of the home
  - Placing a different color of duct tape at the edge of each step can help seniors see the step better, and nonstick treads prevents slipping on steps.
  - Some may need stairlifts
- Renovate the bathroom as it is the most dangerous room in the house.
  - Install grab bars in the shower or tub area, and beside the toilet
  - Consider elevating the toilet seat... although you need to have your feet firmly on the ground to engage the abdominal muscles to have a bowel movement (this is why toddlers struggle to poop – their feet are dangling)
  - Roll out the rubber mat in the tub to prevent slipping

- Consider a shower chair and hand-held showerhead
- Set the thermostat on the water heater to <120 degrees F to prevent accidental burns
- Install a motion detector nightlight in the bathroom and everywhere else
- You may need to install a walk-in shower, rather than one where you have to step into a tub.
- Decorate the refrigerator
  - List 911, emergency contacts, family members' phone numbers, the patients' primary care doctor, and poison control (1-800-222-1222) and place these numbers on the refrigerator
  - Place a copy of your CPR directive and medical durable power of attorney's name and phone number on the refrigerator. Paramedics know to look there for instruction.
- Simplify technology
  - Make sure you have a phone that you can use.
  - Ideally have a phone that can be kept in the pocket. This will keep you from feeling like you have to run to pick up the phone.
  - Enlarge the font or find someone who can help you... just do what I do, and ask the youngest person in the room. Even the 8-years-olds are better at programming the phones than I am.
  - Ensure that you can easily call family members and know when they are calling.
- Protect against fire
  - Change the batteries in your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July.
  - Check for damaged or frayed electrical cords or overloaded power strips.
  - Remove candles and space heaters from the home
  - If dementia sets in, unplug stoves or have them disconnected from the gas line.
- Make the kitchen friendlier
  - Unclutter the cabinets and rearrange items to limit reaching and bending
  - Install pullout shelves in cabinets for easier access
  - If possible, use a refrigerator with a lower drawer freezer
  - Elevate the front of the refrigerator so that the door always closes
  - Install a swivel plate into the corner cabinets to avoid bending and reaching
  - Use an electric teakettle that automatically shuts off rather than a stove top kettle.
  - Consider color coding the hot faucet with a red rubberized water faucet cover and the cold with a blue rubberized water faucet cover
  - Replace round kitchen water faucets with levers.
  - Clean out the refrigerator and food cupboard or pantry weekly. Throw out expired and soured food.
- The monsters aren't under the bed.

- The monster is the bed. It can be really hard to get out of sagging soft mattress. Replace it with a firm one that is at a height that will allow you to get in and out of easily, but that is not so high as to cause injury if you were to fall out.
- I've seen some great floor to ceiling telescoping grab bars beside the bed to help seniors get in and out of bed.
- Keep a flashlight under the bed... just in case there are monsters under the bed.
- Keep a sturdy chair in the bedroom for dressing
- More home renovation projects?
  - Replace round door knobs with levers instead.
  - Replace burnt out light bulbs and install more light fixtures
  - You may need to move light switches.
  - Remove locks from inside doors
  - Keep stairs and paths clean of snow, ice and leaf debris or hire a service or neighbor to help.
  - You may need to widen doorways.
  - Research alert necklaces and bracelets

### Questions for Dave and I

#### **1. What are some things that I can do to get rid of my heartburn symptoms?**

A recent study demonstrated that 5 lifestyle changes heartburn or GERD symptoms in women: (1) not smoking; (2) drinking  $\leq 2$  cups of coffee, tea, or soda daily; (3) a "prudent" diet (i.e., high intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, fish, poultry, and whole grains); (4)  $\geq 30$  minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily; and (5) normal weight (body-mass index,  $< 25 \text{ kg/m}^2$ ). Women who adopted these lifestyle changes had as much symptom relief as people on medications such as histamine-2 ( $\text{H}_2$ )-blockers like Pepcid and proton-pump inhibitors (PPIs) like Nexium, Protonix, Prevacid.

Other lifestyle modifications include: less alcohol, not lying down within 2 hours of eating, elevating the head of your bed 6 to 9 inches, avoiding acidic or spicy foods, giving up peppermint, avoiding clothes that fit tightly around your abdomen.

#### **2. Did you ever read that book I suggested?**

I probably did! I put your suggestions in to my wishlist and read them avidly. In this case, the book was Everything You Need to Know About Parkinson's Disease by Lianna Marie. Every medical topic needs books written by both physicians and patients (or their families.) This book was written by the daughter of a woman with Parkinson's. It is filled with stories, experiences and tips that no physician could ever provide unless they have had their own personal life experience. For that reason, I recommend it. The medical information is partially accurate but will help to inform the reader so that they can ask questions of their physicians and then go on to read more medically sophisticated books.

Continue to send questions. Remember you can no longer reply to this email. Instead, email me at [Jeannette@coloradocme.com](mailto:Jeannette@coloradocme.com). I'm going to attempt to take on a big topic in the next email newsletter... cytokine storm. It will help people understand why the body reacts the way it does to COVID 19, why some experience ongoing symptoms, and why we get a fever after the vaccine.

Stay warm and hopeful,

*Jeannette and Dave*

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