

An Anthology of
Timely Tidbits, Personal Stories, and Fascinating Factoids for

Savvy Jersey Seniors



Advice, Humor, and Miscellaneous Words of "Wisdom"
For & About Seniors

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Welcome!

In this latest edition of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for September and October of 2025, an *SJS* reader discusses the decisions that he has made in anticipation of and after retiring at the age of 69.

Retirement Encore?

What do you do as an encore if you've spent the last 47 years in the building industry—most recently as an owner's rep on construction jobs ranging from the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC (the second largest federal building ever at four million square feet) to the private residences of eight of the ten wealthiest people in the world.

Keep reading and find out why he decided that his goals included more time "enjoying my daughter and three grandchildren ages 10, 8 and 6 and continuing to play (senior level championship) pickleball." Not to mention finding the time for flyfishing in Scotland and Montana, golfing, and attending James Madison University football games (where he was a varsity starter as a freshman defensive end).

Simple Exercise Tips...for Seniors of All Ages

And we introduce a new continuing feature...simple exercise tips for seniors of all ages, courtesy of Rich Crowell, the principal at one of South Jersey's most widely respected physical therapy firms.

Find out why Rich says that stretching is often overlooked as an important part of the puzzle when it comes to staying active and maintaining function as you age. In fact, as Rich explains, "stretching for just 10-15 minutes a day can make you feel healthier and more mobile."



And, of course, we have our usual potpourri of information that we feel might make a difference to our senior friends across South Jersey, including notes on:

- the "cohousing" phenomenon,
- vegetables that promote weight loss,
- medications that can lead to vertigo,
- how caffeine can affect the medications and supplements that you take,
- anxiety in the "growing lonely" population about dying alone, and
- why you should check your car's windshield wipers on November 16.

Plus what we hope you'll find to be a mildly amusing list of "imponderable questions," such as Why people say "heads up," when they are actually suggesting that you "duck."

Your Ideas?

By the way, please don't forget that we always welcome *your ideas* for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. As we've noted previously, we're especially interested in the *avocations and hobbies* of our readers.

And, in that vein, remember that we especially want to hear about the *volunteer* efforts that seniors across South Jersey are making on behalf of the literally thousands of non-profit organizations that serve our region.



What To Do on the "Back Nine" of Life

As we noted in our "Welcome," *SJS* reader Steve Willmann was most recently what is known as an "owner's representative" on what are considered "high profile" construction jobs across the country.

Examples range from the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC (the second largest federal building ever at four million square feet), Glenstone Museum in Potomac, MD, Music Center at Strathmore in Bethesda, MD, and The Alamo Museum in San Antonio, TX to the private residences of eight of the ten wealthiest people in the world. Seriously!

"My goal," says Steve, "was and is to provide more time enjoying my daughter and three grandchildren ages 10, 8 and 6...playing pickleball...golfing...flyfishing...attending James Madison University football games (Steve started on the Duke's varsity as a stand-up defensive end as a freshman before an injury ended his playing career) and traveling, to list a few.

"Coincidentally, I recently attended the 55th anniversary reunion of the 1970 graduation class of St. John the Evangelist grade school in Silver Spring, MD where 30 of my 75 classmates attended...some traveling from exotic destinations such as Panama City, FL and Budapest, Hungary.



"Unfortunately, nine classmates had passed. I had already retired but, Mike Gallagher, a lifelong friend and classmate, decided to start his retirement process upon hearing that sad news.

"Although I retired full knowing well that I hadn't 'totally figured out' all my retirement details, I'm happy to share that, since retiring, I reserve most Saturdays for grandkids' soccer games, dance recitals, special one-on-one grandpa time. Plus pickleball three times a week, occasional golf, and yearly visits to Harrisonburg, VA for JMU football.

Good to know, by the way, that Steve and his pickleball doubles partner are so good that they finished second in the Maryland Seniors Olympics championship and qualified for the national Seniors Olympics just two years ago.



"I love to fish and since retiring I have traveled to Big Sky, Montana and Westernport in Western Maryland flyfishing for big rainbow and brown trout.

"I was lucky that I enjoyed my career in construction, but now feel particularly blessed to have the means and health to be an active participant in this 'back nine' of my life."

That's Steve's story (so far), so why don't you tell us what YOU have decided to do with your "back nine." We'd love to hear from you and we know that our readers would as well. Just drop us a note at savvyjerseyseniors.com. And include a few pictures while you're at it.



New SJS Feature:

Simple-To-Do Exercise Tips for Seniors of All Ages

Every senior knows that exercise is a critical element in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. And SJS is fortunate to be able to introduce a new feature that will help all of our readers do just that.

Rich Crowell, the principal at Romash & Crowell, one of South Jersey's most recognized physical therapy providers, has agreed to share some easy-to-follow tips about simple exercises that virtually all of us can follow.

Here's Rich's first tip: "Stretching is often overlooked as an important part of the puzzle when it comes to staying active and maintaining function as you age. Stretching for just 10 to 15 minutes a day can make you feel healthier and more mobile.

"An example of a safe, easy stretch you can do for your hamstring is to straighten one leg while sitting in a chair and reach towards your extended leg with your hand. Hold for a few seconds and then repeat on the opposite side. Make sure you feel a stretch but no pain!



"And, of course, if you feel as though there are limiting factors impacting your ability to stretch and exercise, reach out to your doctor or our physical therapy office to help you get back on track." You can reach Rich at his Haddonfield office at 856-427-9311.

Vegetables That May Help Weight Loss

Cara Rosenbloom, RD, who has been a registered dietitian for 22 years, tells *GoodRx* that while most vegetables are low in calories, making them a key part of many weight-loss plans, “vegetables alone are not a miracle weight-loss solution.”



“Vegetables are filled with fiber and fluids. This combination helps you feel full, so you may eat less and lose weight.

“In addition to helping with weight loss, the nutrients in vegetables help reduce the risk of health conditions like cancer and heart disease.

“Try to fill half of your plate with vegetables and fruit at your meals.

“Of course,” Rosenbloom adds, “it’s important to note that weight loss is a complex issue. Vegetables alone are not the magic solution to weight management.

But eating more vegetables is still an important part of creating balanced, satisfying, and satiating meals that help protect your health. Studies suggest that eating vegetables can help decrease your risk of heart disease, cancer, and cognitive decline.”

Here’s a list Rosenbloom has prepared of some vegetables that may help with weight loss. Whether you prefer fresh or frozen vegetables, or eat them raw or cooked, all of these vegetables are low in calories and provide both fiber and water:

- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Cucumber
- Kale, chard, and other leafy greens
- Lettuce
- Spaghetti squash
- Zucchini

“One of the easiest ways to include more vegetables in your diet,” Rosenbloom suggests, “is to try to add some to every meal or snack. Salads and stir-fries are always there as meal options,” but you can also toss vegetables into:

- Pasta, rice, and other grain dishes
- Scrambled eggs or omelets
- Sandwiches
- Smoothies
- Soups
- Sauces, like tomato or pesto
- Dips, such as roasted red pepper or artichoke





"Growing Lonely" Population Fears Dying Alone

Single older adults numbered 16 million as of 2023, according to *KFF Health News*.

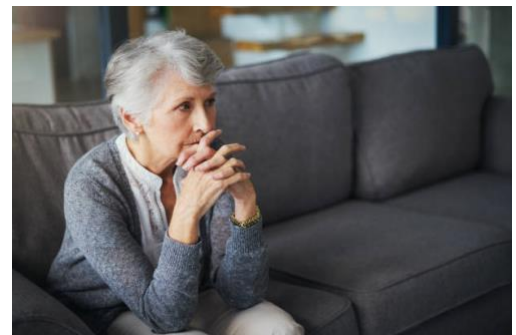
Although many have family and friends, some have no spouse, no children, relatives who are far away, or are estranged from remaining family members. Still others have lost dear friends they once depended on to advanced age of illness.

Not surprisingly, attention to the potentially fraught consequences of dying alone surged during the pandemic when families were shut out of nursing homes and hospitals as older relatives died.

Research by Sarah Cross an assistant professor of palliative medicine at Emory University School of Medicine shows that more people die at home than in any other setting.

And while literally hundreds of hospitals have "No One Dies Alone" programs which match volunteers with people in their final days, similar services are not generally available for people at home, according to *KFF*.

Hospice care may be an alternative for some, but it may fall short for terminally ill older adults who are living alone. One reason may be that hospice—which serves people whose life expectancy is six months or less—is underused.



In fact, fewer than half of adults under age 85 take advantage of hospice services. Interestingly, according to *KFF*, some hospices do not accept people who don't have caregivers.

And, of course, we can't assume that all older adults have the same priorities for end-of-life care. *KFF* notes that some people prefer to die as they have lived—"on their own."



National Check Your Windshield Wipers Day: November 16

One in five car accidents happen due to inclement weather according to the magazine *BHG*, so wipers are one of the keys to safe driving when conditions are bad.

November 16 is the day safety experts have designated to remind us all to take a moment to check for fraying or other damage. Once you check, spray some fluid and assess how well your wipers clean the windshield. Experts say that they should wipe away the fluid "cleanly and quietly."

If you detect any unusual noises or smudging, that's your cue to invest in new wipers.



Can You Drink Coffee With Blood Pressure Meds? And Can Caffeine Affect How You React to Other Medications or Supplements?

We all know that caffeine is one of the ingredients in coffee. But did you know that it may interact with several medications and can possibly worsen some health conditions you're treating, including anxiety, high blood pressure, and diabetes?

According to PharmD Austin Ulrich, combining caffeine with stimulants, Sudafed (pseudoephedrine), or theophylline (Theo-24) can make you feel jittery and raise your blood pressure.

In a recent article for *GoodRx*, Ulrich adds that caffeine can:

- Lower how much thyroid hormone medication and vitamins you absorb if they're combined, as well as
- Raise the levels of some antipsychotic and antidepressant medications.

Interestingly, he also notes that birth control pills can make caffeine's effects last longer.

"You may not think of caffeine as a drug, but it's considered the most widely used stimulant across the globe," says Ulrich. "Many people rely on caffeine's energy-boosting effects to get through the day.

"In fact, percent of U.S. adults consume some form of caffeine daily.

"We know that caffeine can help you think more clearly and combat fatigue. But it can also temporarily raise your blood pressure.

"So, is it safe to drink coffee if you're taking blood pressure medication? And what about caffeine's effect on the other medications you take?"



Ulrich stresses that it is important that you consult with your healthcare team. "They can help you decide how much caffeine is safe for you and navigate any dietary changes you're considering."

In the meantime, here's a little more detail on what Ulrich has to say about caffeine as it relates to various health conditions and their related medications.

1. *High blood pressure medications:* It's best to limit your caffeine intake if you're living with high blood pressure—even if it's controlled by medication. Coffee and other drinks that

contain caffeine don't directly interact with most blood pressure medications. But caffeine can raise your blood pressure, which can increase your risk of heart-related issues such as a stroke or heart attack. Keep in mind that in most cases, you won't have to give up your morning coffee completely. One or two cups is usually OK, even if you have high blood pressure. You can also switch to decaf or "half-caff" coffee, or give caffeine-free tea a try.

2. Stimulant medications, such as Adderall and phentermine: These medications are often prescribed for health conditions such as obesity or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They help speed up certain functions in the body. But they can also raise your heart rate and blood pressure and cause sleep problems in some cases. Caffeine is a natural stimulant. So when it's combined with a stimulant medication, there's a higher risk of side effects. You may feel restless or jittery. And more severe effects can also happen, such as tremors, severe nausea, and heart problems.



3. Sudafed: Pseudoephedrine is an over-the-counter (OTC) decongestant that also has stimulant effects on the body. It's easy to forget that OTC medications also have interactions to consider.

But combining caffeine and Sudafed can raise your risk of heart-related side effects. It can also interfere with your sleep, which isn't helpful when you're not feeling well.

It's best to avoid caffeine while taking Sudafed. Spacing out your caffeine intake and Sudafed dose is also an option. For example, you might wait until the effects of your morning coffee wear off (after about 5 hours) before taking a dose of Sudafed.

4. Theophylline: Theo-24 is an older medication used to treat asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Caffeine and theophylline cause similar side effects, so combining them can make you feel jittery and have trouble sleeping. Caffeine can also raise theophylline levels in the body, which makes side effects more likely.

5. Antipsychotics such as olanzapine: Antipsychotics are medications that treat mental health conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Caffeine can increase the levels of some antipsychotics in the body, which can raise the risk of side effects. This includes medications such as olanzapine (Zyprexa), haloperidol (Haldol), and clozapine (Clozaril).





Your prescriber will likely adjust your antipsychotic medication dosage based on how you respond to the medication. Your daily caffeine intake will play a role in this process. But if you increase or decrease how much caffeine you consume at any point while you're taking these medications, it could cause a problem. Your medication may become less effective or you may experience more side effects. Let your prescriber know before making any changes in your daily caffeine habits.

designed to have the opposite effect. Sedatives are often prescribed for health conditions such as insomnia and anxiety.

Examples include medications such as alprazolam (Xanax) and zolpidem (Ambien). As with blood pressure medications, this isn't a direct drug interaction. Instead, caffeine can make it harder for these medications to work because it worsens the symptoms of the health condition you're treating.

If you take medication to help manage your anxiety levels, it's best to keep caffeine to a minimum. If you're taking medication to help you sleep, you probably want to avoid caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime.

7. Oral contraceptive pills: Oral contraceptive pills can slow down how fast your body breaks down caffeine. Studies show that caffeine's effects can last twice as long as usual if you're taking a hormonal contraceptive pill. So when you're first starting an oral contraceptive, you may want to lower your caffeine intake until you know how this interaction affects you. And if you're already taking birth control pills, it may be a good idea to avoid caffeine other than in the morning, since it can linger in your body and interfere with sleep if you consume it later in the day.

8. Diabetes medications: Caffeine can reduce your body's sensitivity to insulin. It can also increase blood glucose (sugar) levels after meals, especially in those living with Type 2 diabetes.

These changes can make it harder to control your blood glucose levels. And it can interfere with the effectiveness of your diabetes medications.



It's likely fine to have a cup or two of coffee if you have diabetes. But avoid sugar and creamers if possible and keep an eye on your blood glucose levels. Energy drinks are more risky, since they contain large amounts of caffeine along with sugar and other ingredients that can affect your blood glucose.

9. *Thyroid hormone medications such as levothyroxine:* Thyroid hormone medications are used to treat hypothyroidism (low thyroid hormone levels). Thyroid medications, such as levothyroxine (Synthroid), can interact with caffeine—but more specifically, with coffee. Coffee can lower the amount of thyroid medication that's absorbed into the body. This can make the medication less effective for you. It's recommended to wait at least 60 minutes between drinking coffee and taking thyroid hormone medications to avoid this interaction.



10. *Tricyclic antidepressants such as amitriptyline:* TCAs) treat mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. Caffeine can increase the levels of some TCAs, such as amitriptyline and imipramine (Tofranil). This raises your risk of side effects, including sleepiness, dizziness, and constipation.

11. *Supplements:* Several OTC supplements can also interact with caffeine. Supplements with stimulant effects can raise the risk of heart problems if you combine them with caffeine. Examples include Guarana, Ephedra, Geranium, Ma huang, and Yohimbe. Caffeine may also prevent you from absorbing certain vitamins and minerals, such as Iron, Vitamin C, and B vitamins. If you're a morning coffee

drinker, taking your vitamins in the evening can help ensure you absorb them properly.

The bottom line, says Ulrich is that changes in how much caffeine you consume could make a difference in how some medications and supplements work for you. As with every other aspect of YOUR health, you want to discuss all aspects of your care with YOUR healthcare team. The professionals on YOUR team are best situated to help you decide how much caffeine is safe for you and navigate any dietary changes you're considering.

Older Americans Trying Alternative Housing

"As people live longer, they are reimagining where and how they want to live," reports Clare Ansberry in the *Wall Street Journal*. "And sharing space with unrelated roommates is growing in popularity."

An estimated 75 percent of those 50 and older report that they want to remain in their homes as they age, according to AARP. But rising housing costs and upkeep, as well as health problems, can make living in their home more difficult.



Many anticipate needing to move as a result. Some people have enough money, but travel often and they want a housemate for oversight, says Ansberry. Others simply want companionship.

About 990,000 older adults were living with unrelated housemates in 2023, which was up almost 9 percent since 2021 and more than double the number two decades ago, according to Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies.



And Ansberry notes that “home builders are paying attention.” For example, Lennar introduced a new “home within a home” more than a decade ago in Phoenix after learning more about multigenerational households in Europe and realizing there was a need for houses suited for that arrangement in the U.S.

Lennar’s multigenerational models, call Next Gen, have a separate living space with a bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, family room, and entrance.

Cohousing communities, in which decisions are made by consensus, are also a growing phenomenon. Typically, teams are each assigned responsibilities to manage, including maintenance, landscaping, and community activities.

An example is the Mountain View Cohousing Community in Silicon Valley which includes 19 units in a three-story building. It opened a decade ago and has been fully occupied since. In fact, all of the original owners are still there, except four who died and there are more than 20 people waiting to move in when there is a vacancy.

Some “BIG” Questions for You to Ponder

- Why do “fat chance” and “slim chance” mean the same thing?
- If the Number 2 pencil is the most popular, why is it still Number 2?
- Why do people say “Heads up,” when they really want you to “Duck”?
- When French people swear, do they say “Pardon my English”?
- When does it stop being “partly cloudy” and start being “partly sunny”?
- At a movie theater (does anybody still actually go to the movies?), which arm rest is yours?
- Speaking of movies, why are you “in” a movie, but “on” TV?
- Why do we drive on “parkways” and park on “driveways”?
- What was the best thing BEFORE “sliced bread”?



Nine Medications That Can Cause Vertigo

Writing for *Good Rx*, California PharmD Kristianne Hannemann explains that many medications can cause vertigo, a type of dizziness that often feels like a spinning sensation and affects an estimated 30 percent of the population. "Common examples," she says, "include antiseizure medications, some anti-infectives, and diuretics.



"Other medications that can cause vertigo include pain relievers, proton pump inhibitors, and some mental health medications. Some blood pressure, Parkinson's disease, and cancer treatments may also cause this side effect.

"In some cases, vertigo will resolve on its own. But if vertigo occurs alongside ringing in the ears or hearing loss, it's important to notify your healthcare team. This could be a sign of damage to your ears, which should be managed right away.

Hannemann emphasizes that you should talk to your healthcare team if

you experience dizziness or a spinning sensation while taking medication, especially if you're also having ringing in your ears or hearing loss. These could be signs of damage to your ears. Your healthcare team can help you determine whether your medication is behind these symptoms and offer guidance on what to do next.

That said, if you've ever felt like you or the room was spinning when everything was still, vertigo could be to blame.

Here are nine types of medications that can cause vertigo, according to Hanneman:.

1. Antiseizure medications: Examples include:

- Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- Lacosamide (Vimpat)
- Lamotrigine (Lamictal)
- Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal)
- Clobazam (Onfi)

2. Antibiotics and antifungals: Examples of antibiotics that may cause vertigo as a side effect include:

- Ciprofloxacin (Cipro)
- Levofloxacin
- Clarithromycin (Biaxin XL)
- Erythromycin (Ery-Tab, E.E.S.)
- Azithromycin (Zithromax)
- Tobramycin (Tobi)
- Amikacin



Certain antifungals have also been linked with vertigo, including:

- Amphotericin B
- Flucytosine (Ancobon)
- Itraconazole (Sporanox)
- Fluconazole (Diflucan)

3. Diuretics: One diuretic that's been associated with vertigo is hydrochlorothiazide. It isn't clear why this happens, but researchers think it has to do with electrolyte changes in the ear. Excess fluid loss may also play a role. Vertigo is also a reported side effect for other diuretics, such as:

- Bumetanide (Bumex)
- Chlorthalidone (Thalitone)
- Ethacrynic acid (Edecrin)
- Furosemide (Lasix)

4. NSAIDs and acetaminophen: Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and acetaminophen (Tylenol) are commonly used to relieve pain and fever. Some examples of NSAIDs include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn), and aspirin.

5. Proton pump inhibitors: Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) reduce stomach acid to treat chronic acid reflux and stomach ulcers. Examples include:

- Omeprazole (Prilosec)
- Pantoprazole (Protonix)
- Esomeprazole (Nexium)
- Lansoprazole (Prevacid)

6. Antidepressants and antipsychotics: Antidepressant and antipsychotic medications can help treat vertigo in some cases. And vertigo often occurs along with other mental health conditions. But these medications may also cause vertigo for some people. Antidepressants such as mirtazapine (Remeron), tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have all been associated with vertigo.



Antipsychotic medications can also cause dizziness and vertigo. Examples include:

- Clozapine (Clozaril)
- Haloperidol (Haldol)
- Lithium (Lithobid)
- Aripiprazole (Abilify)
- Olanzapine (Zyprexa)
- Quetiapine (Seroquel)



7. Blood pressure medications: Vertigo seems to be more likely with the following types of blood pressure medications:

- Calcium channel blockers
- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors
- Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs)
- Hydralazine

8. Parkinson's disease medications: Parkinson's disease (PD) is a condition caused by low dopamine levels in the brain. PD may cause vertigo on its own. But certain medications that help manage symptoms of PD can also cause vertigo for some people. Examples include bromocriptine (Parlodel) and carbidopa / levodopa (Sinemet).

9. Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy medications are used to treat cancer. People receiving platinum-based chemotherapy medications, such as cisplatin and carboplatin (Paraplatin), have reported vertigo as a side effect. This is likely due to inner ear damage caused by the medication.

But Hannemann reminds that the bottom line is, as always, talk with YOUR doctor!



Five Foot Symptoms You Should NOT Ignore

"Your feet are the first place where you can see warning signs of things like diabetes or vascular disease or even skin cancer," says Hira Mirza, a podiatrist at CLS Health in Houston.

"If you look closely enough, it really is a window to the rest of your health," she told *Time*. Responding to that admonition, the magazine recently polled experts on foot-related symptoms that you should never ignore.

Here's the list:

1. Hair that stops growing on your toes—often a sign of vascular insufficiency.
2. Sudden pain in your big toe—possibly a sign of gout...especially if you wake up with a red, hot, swollen big toe that's extremely tender and painful.
3. Numbness or tingling in the feet—could indicate any kind of neuropathy, but is most commonly related to diabetes.
4. Dark streak under your toenail—might indicate subungual melanoma, a rare type of skin cancer that develops under the nail bed...telltale sign is a dark vertical line (Note: if you typically wear nail polish, check your toes before applying a new coat.
5. Inability to bear weight on an injured foot—if you're still not able to put weight on the foot three to four days after the injury, see a doctor. The injury is probably more significant than you thought...possibly a fracture or dislocation.



Worried About Dementia: "Personal Responsibility Matters"

"When it comes to healthy aging," writes Tom Frieden in the *Wall Street Journal*, "personal responsibility matters."



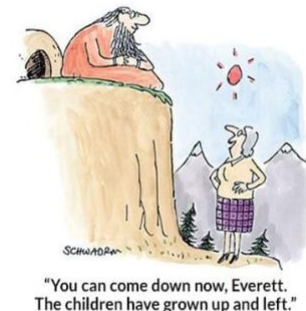
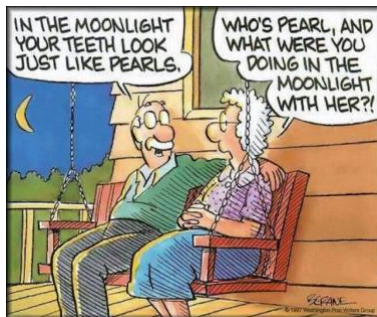
"But American healthcare also suffers from systemic failures," says Frieden, who is a former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and is now president and CEO of *Resolve to Save Lives*.

"Despite spending more than \$4 trillion annually, we get the most important things, such as blood pressure control, right at most half the time. Our system doesn't incentivize

doctors to deliver the preventive care that matters most. For instance, they are paid little or nothing for making an effort to control a patient's blood pressure."

But Frieden also says that "the tools for a healthy, dementia-free future exist." Here's his list:

- Blood pressure control,
- Appropriate statin and other therapy,
- Smoking prevention and cessation support, and
- Comprehensive primary care focused on prevention.



Contact Us:

Remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at savvyjerseyseniors.com.

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