

Winter 2011

# InsideCircle

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**Mind Games  
and Aging**

**The Powerful  
Blueberry**

**Uncovering  
Hidden Sodium**

**Benefits  
of Yoga**



winter2011

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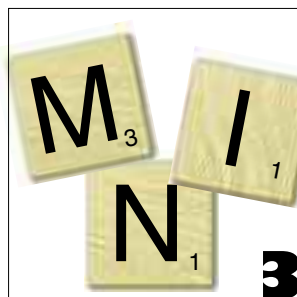
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# THE POWERFUL BLUEBERRY

## Blueberries slash risk of certain chronic conditions

In recent years, blueberries have earned the reputation for being nature's "superfruit." The blueberry has the highest level of antioxidants of most fruits and some vegetables, too. Recently, a pair of studies published in the *Journal of Nutrition* claim that eating blueberries regularly may help patients control diabetes and stave off high blood pressure.

In the first study, Louisiana State University researchers observed 32 obese, insulin-resistant, non-diabetic men and women who were instructed to consume a blueberry smoothie or a non-blueberry smoothie twice a day for six weeks. Researchers found that the participants who

consumed the blueberry smoothie became more sensitive to insulin across the study period, which has been linked to a lower diabetes risk. According to the study, the findings provide additional evidence that including blueberries in a patient's diet helped limit their risk of diabetes.

An Oklahoma State University study found that consuming two cups of blueberries daily for eight weeks reduced participants' systolic blood pressure by up to eight points. The lead author of this study noted that blueberries also may help pre-hypertensive and hypertensive patients regulate their glucose levels.



Good to be Blue!

The deep blue pigment of wild blueberries is highly concentrated with antioxidants.

Antioxidants help slow down the oxidation process and enhance the body's immune defense, lowering the risk of cancer and other infectious diseases.

Antioxidants help protect our bodies against disease and age-related issues. They neutralize free radicals and help prevent cell damage and inflammation.



### Indulge in blueberries!

At only 84 calories and 3 grams of fiber per cup, blueberries are also a satisfying snack that provide energy.

- For breakfast, try blueberry pancakes, blueberry breakfast bars, or throw some blueberries in your cereal. Although tempting, beware of blueberry muffins; muffins can be high in fat.
- For a tasty, sweet snack, use blueberries in a fruit smoothie or blueberry shake.
  - When making a fruit salad, don't forget blueberries. (Top with low-fat whipped topping – yum!)
  - For a refreshing twist, toss blueberries on your salad.
- Most grocery stores now stock blueberry juice. Give it a try!
- Mouth-watering blueberry desserts include blueberry pies, blueberry berry crisp, blueberry bread pudding, blueberry cheese cake, and blueberry cobbler.



*Mental workouts  
may help postpone signs of aging*

**Cognitive Health**

The overall well-being of the brain, including processes such as perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning.

**Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)**

A condition in which a person has problems with memory, language, or another mental function severe enough to be noticeable to other people and to show up on tests, but not serious enough to interfere with daily life.

We've all struggled to recall the last name of a friend, lost the conclusion of a thought in mid-sentence, or searched our brain for what should be a familiar fact or detail ... only to come up empty. Is it Alzheimer's disease? Possibly – but not likely. In most cases, these are simply the symptoms of an aging brain.

The brain's response time slows down as we age, due to weakening connections that regulate the "conversation" between the right and left halves of the brain, according to new research. As this area of the brain that regulates right brain/left brain communication – known as the corpus callosum – ages, it is less efficient. The result is overlapping "conversation," in which both halves of the brain "talk" and the body attempts to figure out how best to respond – resulting in a delayed reaction or information retrieval.

Using computer joysticks and MRI imaging, an August 2010 study at the University of Michigan explored brain activity and response times of different age groups – comparing adults ages 20 to 25 to adults ages 65 to 75. MRI readings measured blood oxygen levels in the brain, to determine the level of brain activity.

The more that the test activity targeted a specific side of the brain (i.e., the movement of a single arm or hand to operate the joystick), the slower the response times among older participants, according to researchers. "When both sides of the brain 'talk' simultaneously while one side of the body tries to move, confusion and slower response times

result," explains lead study author Rachael Seidler, associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Kinesiology and Department of Psychology.

So, is it possible to train your brain to be more limber – just as we train the muscles of the body? Several studies indicate that regular mental workouts and a healthy lifestyle do help keep the brain fit. Research focusing on patients with Alzheimer's disease, dementia and neurological disorders (Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis) has shown that programs involving a combination of drug therapy, regular exercise, a low-fat diet, socialization, meditation, and cognitive training are effective in delaying the symptoms of these diseases and supporting cognitive health.

A study published in the January 2010 edition of the *Archives of Neurology* found that frequent, moderate physical exercise reduced the risk of developing mild cognitive impairment (MCI). A companion study found that mentally stimulating activities such as knitting, quilting, reading books, playing games and performing computer-based mind games, were linked to a 50 percent decreased risk of MCI.

Researchers hypothesize that mental and physical workouts are effective together, because mentally stimulating activities enhance brain activity, while exercise increases blood flow to the brain.

**Try some of these techniques to keep your**

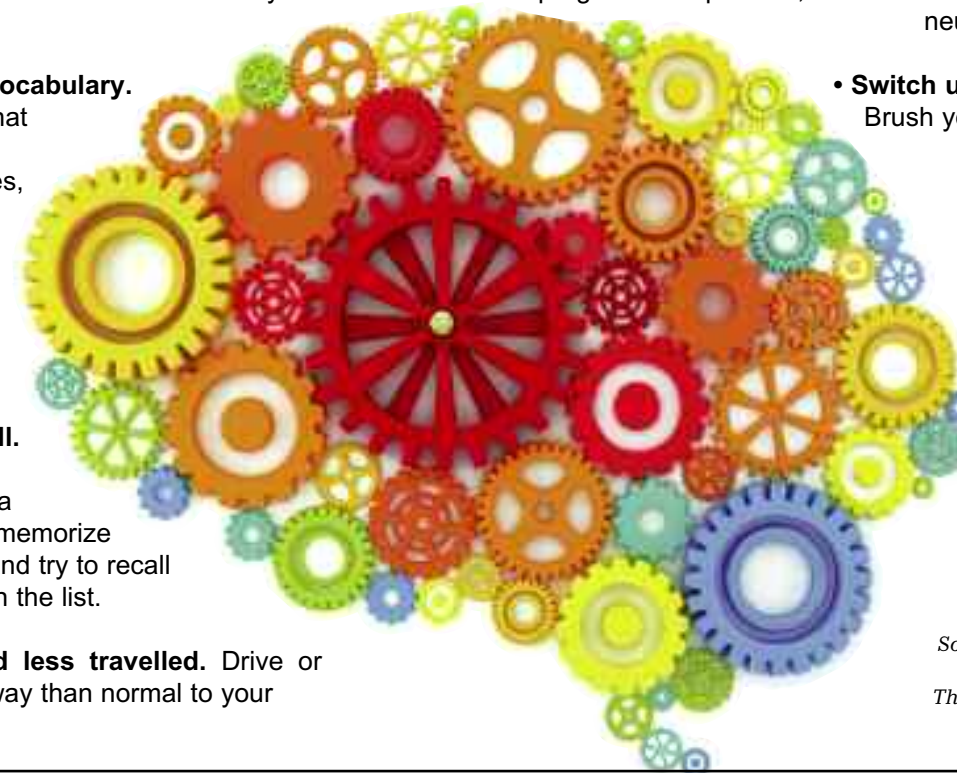


- **Learn a new skill:** a musical instrument, foreign language, sport, or hobby, such as a cooking class. Rather than practicing an activity that's familiar to you, pushing the brain to acquire new skills is more beneficial than performing tasks that are within in your comfort zone.
- **Put the calculator aside.** Solve math problems in your head, without pencil, paper or electronic help.
- **Try an electronic workout.** Computer brain-training programs are plentiful, and offer a fun workout for those neurons and synapses.

- **Expand your vocabulary.** Science shows that activities such as crossword puzzles, Sudoku and learning new words actually do help to flex those brain muscles.

- **Test your recall.** Make a list, such as a to-do list or a grocery list, and memorize it. Wait an hour and try to recall all of the items on the list.

- **Take the road less travelled.** Drive or walk a different way than normal to your destination.



- **Switch up familiar routines.** Brush your teeth or hair with the opposite hand.

- **Turn off the TV.** Researchers have found that passive, sedentary activities – like sitting in front of the TV for long stretches of time – actually can cause the brain to deteriorate due to inactivity.

Sources: *Everyday Health, EverydayHealth.com, The American Academy of Neurology, AAN.com*

**Online Tools**

**Health evaluations at your fingertips**

Curious about your chances of developing

**Colorectal Cancer?**

What about **Type 2 Diabetes** or **Osteoporosis?**

**Take five minutes and go to SeniorCircle.com**

There, you can take a quick risk assessment on these topics.

It could be life-changing!



# A Taste of France...

no passport needed!



Jackson Square in the heart of the Vieux Carre with beautiful St. Louis Cathedral in the background.

As Charles Dickens wrote in the opening of the famous novel, "A Tale of Two Cities," "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...." The 44-member group from the South Baldwin chapter in Foley, Ala., weren't in London or France – the two cities profiled in the famous work – but in the U.S. home for French Creole cuisine and culture, New Orleans. Chapter advisor Karen Still shares the group's adventures over their three-day, whirlwind trip.

Our motor coach drive to the Birthplace of Jazz or NOLA, as it's affectionately called by locals and fans of the area, was only a 3 1/2-hour drive.

Our first stop was the historic Destrehan Plantation, established in 1787 and the oldest documented plantation home in the lower Mississippi River Valley. Although the plantation has changed hands several



Lynn and Dave Nelson got up close and personal with a live alligator on the Jean Lafitte Swamp Tour.

times over the years, it was first owned by French nobleman Jean Noel Destrehan, who helped shape the economy of the South by perfecting granulation of sugar.

The plantation is important for another reason: preserved in its Jefferson Room is an original document dated 1804 and signed by Thomas Jefferson. This "Jefferson Document" establishes the Orleans Territory Council (of which Destrehan was a member). The council was charged with spearheading the cultural transition of the Orleans Territory into an American democracy during The Louisiana Purchase. The document is considered by historians to be one of the most important in the state's history.

The tour worked up our appetites, so we departed for dinner in the French Quarter at the famous Landry's Seafood House. Afterwards, we enjoyed roaming Jackson Square – in search of fresh pralines.

The next day, we departed from the finery of the plantation to explore the rural life at a swamp in Marrero. On the Jean Lafitte Swamp Tour, we explored the bayous and their wildlife, ecology and exotic plants. We didn't see any giant alligators, but plenty of average-sized ones ... and a petite one about 30 inches long was passed around to those of us brave enough to hold him.

We returned to the French Quarter for lunch ... muffaletta sandwiches, daiquiris, crawfish etouffée, beignets with café au lait, and, of course, more pecan pralines! Our guided tour of the city and its famous cemeteries that afternoon was fascinating. Because New Orleans is below sea level, its cemeteries consist of mausoleums – above-ground tombs, featuring ornate



Carole Deer and Yvonne Denton at one of the many famous above-ground cemeteries.

stone buildings with beautiful architecture. Sadly, along the way, we couldn't help but notice homes still abandoned as a result of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

On a lighter note, the day ended with a festive Mardi Gras-style dinner party – complete with zydeco music. We all left with plenty of colorful beads. Interestingly, we learned that while New Orleans is famous for the Mardi Gras celebration, bragging rights – and the origin of the festival – actually belong to the neighboring city of Mobile, Ala.

On our final day, we visited the National World War II Museum; it's definitely a must-see. The main floor houses the Malcolm Forbes

Theater and military vehicles. On the second floor, visitors can explore World War II in 1939 through the D-Day invasion in the Pacific, complete with artifacts, photographs and maps of Pearl Harbor. The timeline ends with the birth of the Atomic Age. The third floor depicts scenes from the war, from the Allied Forces' landing on the beaches of Normandy to Hitler's Atlantic wall, and the site of the Nazis' surrender to the Allies.

Our visit to New Orleans was a unique experience – a chance to see that the celebrated city is alive and well – and a chance for us all to say as they do in Cajun country, "Laissez les bons temps rouler (Let the good times roll!)."



The culinary house at the Destrehan Plantation on River Road.

### Pralines Courtesy of the New Orleans School of Cooking

- 1 1/2 cups of sugar
- 6 Tbsp butter (3/4 stick)
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 1 1/2 cups pecans
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 Tbsp vanilla

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and heat to a soft ball stage (238-240 degrees), stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir until mixture thickens and becomes creamy and cloudy, and pecans stay suspended in mixture. Spoon out onto buttered wax paper or parchment paper. Note: When using wax paper, be sure to buffer with newspaper underneath, as hot wax will transfer to whatever is beneath.

# Namaste

*Yoga Benefits the Aches and Pains of Aging  
...and Much More*



Yoga has been around for more than 5,000 years, and is practiced by nearly 11 million men and women in America.



Next time you're under stress or experiencing pain, make like a tree. Or a cobra. Or a happy baby. These terms may sound foolish, unless you're acquainted with yoga poses. Yoga, long stereotyped as an exercise for the more bohemian mindset, has made its way into the mainstream. Over the years, yoga has been used for meditation, flexibility, relaxation and stress management. It's now recognized as both an exercise routine and an alternative medicine practice that can be paired with a traditional medical regime of medications, physical therapy, and diet and exercise.



### Strength-Endurance-Flexibility

Yoga helps increase muscle tone and build upper-body strength through holding poses that engage the core muscles of the abdomen and lower back, as well as quadriceps – all important muscles that improve posture and help prevent injury as we age.

### Stretching

Yoga stretches both muscles and soft tissues, including ligaments and tendons, and increases range of motion and lubrication in the joints. It's a good complement to other cardiovascular exercises, because it increases flexibility in key muscle groups – such as those in the legs that are frequently injured when a person doesn't warm up or stretch sufficiently.

### Stress Management

Yoga's deep breathing exercises and techniques for relaxing tense muscles in the neck and shoulders are ideal for helping to relieve



stress. These relaxation techniques have been shown to decrease stress hormones and boost the level of "good mood" hormones in the body.



### Aging

Yoga can help with issues that develop as a result of aging, from digestion problems to better sleep. Breathing and relaxation techniques may contribute to better, deeper sleep among people who practice yoga, according to researchers. A 2010 study at the University of Rochester Medical Center in New York found that practicing yoga relieved fatigue and sleep problems among cancer survivors. Patients who participated in yoga classes over a four-week period reported that they were able to reduce their use of sleep aids by 20 percent. Yoga positions that involve twisting and stretching of the body's core, as well as the "plank" pose (a modified push-up), strengthen the abdominal area and help with digestion. Yoga can even help with excessive bloating and gas, by stretching the belly and back, compressing the digestive organs, and bringing fresh blood and oxygen to the area.



**Numerous studies point to additional benefits of practicing yoga in the management of chronic conditions.** Research by the National Institutes of Health suggests that yoga may help – when used together with conventional medical treatment – to control hypertension, lower cholesterol, as well as help with symptoms of asthma, arthritis, migraines, cancer, depression, diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome and chronic pain.



**Best of all, yoga can be practiced at any age.** Beginners' yoga classes feature simple stretches and movements that can be performed by people of all ages and capabilities.



## Make the most of your yoga class

### Find a class that matches your goals.

Yin or Hatha yoga classes are slower paced and geared toward relaxation and stretching. Classes that focus on balance and more intricate poses, are called Ashtanga, Bikram, and Iyengar yoga. "Restorative" yoga is aimed toward revitalizing mind and body or helping with areas that are injured or overworked. More vigorous, athletic yoga workouts are called "power" yoga, "hot" yoga or Vinyasa yoga. These offer an intense workout and are oriented for weight loss or muscle building.

### Take your time.

Don't push your body to stretch or bend in ways it's not accustomed to. Flexibility will come over time, with repeated practice.

### Modify the poses that don't work for you.

Don't feel pressured to mirror your instructor – each yoga pose has several versions to accommodate participants' abilities, fitness level and any existing weaknesses or injuries. A good instructor will remind class participants to customize certain poses, and provide examples of options that will work for everyone.

### As with any new exercise, talk with your doctor before beginning a yoga class.

Yoga may not be a good fit for people with balance problems, uncontrolled high blood pressure, vision problems such as glaucoma, severe osteoporosis, or artificial joints. These conditions will not necessarily bar you from participating in a yoga class, but may mean that you should avoid or modify certain positions to avoid pressure on sensitive areas, blocked blood vessels or damage from overstretching joints and ligaments.



# THE Eyes HAVE IT

Keep aging eyes vibrant with vigilant care



As we age, things don't always work as well as they used to – and our eyes are no exception. But, unlike other body parts, age-related changes in our eyesight happen very gradually, beginning long before we notice any difference in our vision. By the time we begin to squint or have trouble focusing, the damage may already be done. Preserving good vision is a lifelong commitment: good habits must start early and continue through the golden years.

## The aging eye

In our youth, the lens of the eye is flexible and transparent. As we approach middle age, the lens becomes more rigid and doesn't shift for different focusing needs as easily as before. Small newspaper print may become more difficult to read, or we may have trouble seeing up close or far away. Eyes may feel drier because the tear ducts produce less natural moisture.

By age 50, the lens is no longer perfectly clear. Protein buildup creates a cloudy coating on the eye, which may eventually become a cataract. Our risk for age-related eye diseases such as glaucoma and macular degeneration begins to rise and, by age 60, other issues may arise, from eye pressure to loss of peripheral vision.

## Protect those peepers

What can you do to protect the eye and guard against age-related disease and vision loss? Regular eye exams, maintaining good overall health habits, and reporting any unusual changes in vision to your eye doctor is a good place to start, says Scott Buck, M.D., board-certified ophthalmologist, cataract and refractive surgeon at Porter Hospital in Valparaiso, Indiana, and co-founder of the Northwest Indiana Eye & Laser Center. "Vision loss happens gradually, without our being aware of it, but early symptoms or red flags can be detected during an eye exam. Your annual vision exam is one of the best preventive methods for preserving eye health and detecting disease early."

A good diet and regular exercise also play a role in eye health. Eating foods that are rich in beta-carotene, zinc, and vitamins C and E has been shown to benefit

vision, so choose bright-colored and dark green vegetables like carrots, spinach and kale. And a good pair of sunglasses is a must-have for ample protection against the sun's ultraviolet rays, particularly if you have light-colored eyes, which are more sensitive to bright light.

"Don't underestimate the importance of a quality pair of sunglasses," says Buck. "For maximum benefit, sunglasses should block at least 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays. UV rays may be related to some eye diseases later in life, such as macular degeneration, cataracts and even skin cancer around the eyes. When shopping for eyewear, look for those labeled UVA/UVB protective."

Also, if you use a computer, avoid eye strain with proper lighting and screen placement – about 20 to 26 inches away, just below eye level. Other habits for healthy eyes, Dr. Buck says, include avoiding smoking, and keeping blood pressure within recommended limits – high blood pressure is a risk factor for developing glaucoma.

## Common eye conditions:

- **Cataracts** are an age-related eye condition, in which protein builds up on the lens of the eye. More than 20 million Americans age 40 and older have cataracts and more than half of all Americans have cataracts by the time they are 80 years old, according to Prevent Blindness America. Cataracts develop as the lens – clear when we are young – becomes milky and cloudy, blocking the passage of light into the eye. Risk factors include long-term exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays, diseases like diabetes; smoking; long-term steroid use; and eye injuries, diseases or inflammation.

- **Glaucoma** is a disease that damages the optic nerve, rather than a consequence of aging. More than 2 million Americans age 40 and older suffer from glaucoma, according to Prevent Blindness America, and there are no early symptoms of the disease. Glaucoma causes damage to the optic nerve and impairs peripheral (side) vision, narrowing the line of vision and eventually causing blindness. Glaucoma

tends to be hereditary, and is more prevalent among African Americans. The risk of glaucoma increases with age.

- **Macular degeneration** is the leading cause of vision loss and affects 1.6 million Americans age 50 and older. This disease affects the macula, which is the center of the retina. As macular degeneration progresses, deposits accumulate in

the retina, which leads to retinal bleeding, blurry or wavy vision, and a blind spot in the center of your vision. Risk factors include European ancestry, light eyes (blue or green), smoking and obesity. The progression of the disease can be slowed by high-dose vitamin supplements such as vitamins C, E, beta carotene, and zinc. Prescription drugs are available to treat this condition and have proven

effective in stabilizing – and even improving – vision.

"The best way to care for your vision is by protecting your eyes, maintaining healthy habits, and having regular exams," says Dr. Buck. "If you're 40 or older, have an eye exam every two years. People age 60 or older – and those with a family history of eye disease – should have annual exams."

## HEART MEDICATIONS AND HERBAL REMEDIES

### Beware the combinations

People age 65 and older consume more prescription and over-the-counter medicines than any other age group, according to the National Institute on Aging. But if you take heart medication, you may want to avoid some of the popular herbal supplements. Herbal remedies can cause potentially serious problems for people taking heart medications, warns a new report.

Lead author Arshad Jahangir, M.D., cardiologist and professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Ariz., says, "These products are not by themselves dangerous, but when taken with medications for cardiovascular diseases, a relatively safe compound can become dangerous."

Herbal remedies can dilute, intensify or exacerbate the side effects of prescription heart drugs such as blood thinners and cholesterol-lowering statins. Some supplements may actually increase the heart rate and blood pressure, causing potential complications in heart patients.

The report, published in the February 9, 2010 issue of the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* lists more than 25 herbal products that people with

cardiovascular disease should avoid, including 12 of the 20 best-selling herbal supplements in the United States.

"Many people think that 'natural' is synonymous with 'safe,'" Jahangir says. "Many of these remedies have been used for centuries, but they may not be safe in the current era when used by patients taking many other medications."

Mixing heart medicine and herbal products is made even more risky by the lack of scientific evidence and regulation for herbal products and other dietary supplements, the report suggests. They are not subject to the same checks that prescription drugs are. Few herbal products have been widely tested for safety and efficacy in randomized, placebo-controlled trials, as

#### Some Herbal Remedies to be wary of:

Alfalfa • Bilberry • Black Cohosh  
Dong Quai • Echinacea  
Fenugreek Garlic • Ginkgo Biloba •  
Ginger Ginseng • Hawthorn •  
Saw Palmetto • St. John's Wort



the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires of prescription drugs.

Your best course of prevention: always tell your doctor if you are taking any herbal products or dietary supplements.



Thinking of washing your heart meds down with a glass of grapefruit juice? Think again. Dr. Jahangir says taking heart medications with grapefruit juice is a common cause of drug toxicity.

For almost two decades, researchers have known that grapefruit juice can increase dosages of some drugs to toxic levels by inhibiting a key enzyme in the intestine that breaks down medications.

Jahangir cautions that patients on cholesterol-lowering statins who take the drugs with grapefruit juice may end up with blood statin levels that are three to four times higher than intended. "I think it is a good idea for anyone taking medication to avoid this juice because the effects can last as long as 24 hours."

# Heart of the Matter



Half of all Americans at risk for heart disease – some don't even know it

Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in the United States, killing more than 600,000 men and women each year. Nearly half of all Americans have risk factors for heart disease<sup>1</sup> – high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes – and what's worse, many are unaware that they have one or more of these conditions.

"Regardless of your family background and your individual risk factors, there are many things that you should do to offset your risk of heart disease," says cardiologist Kala Mehta, M.D., at Claremore Regional Hospital in Claremore, Okla.

"Some heart disease risk factors can be reduced, treated or controlled, with a combination of diet and exercise, and medication – but other risk factors cannot," explains Dr. Mehta. "The greater the level of each risk factor – for example, the higher a person's blood pressure or cholesterol levels – the higher their risk. And, the more risk factors a person has, the greater their chance of developing heart disease."

Some major risk factors for heart disease cannot be changed. More than 83 percent of people who die from coronary heart disease are 65 and older.<sup>2</sup> Men, individuals with a family history of heart disease, and certain ethnic groups – African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, native Hawaiians and some Asian Americans – also have a greater risk level.

## Factors that you can control include:

- **High cholesterol** – As the level of cholesterol rises, so does the risk of heart disease. Nearly 37 million Americans have total cholesterol levels of 240 mg/dL or higher. Healthy blood cholesterol is considered 200 mg/dL or lower.

- **High blood pressure** – More than 72 million U.S. adults age 20 and older have high blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg and higher).<sup>3</sup> Normal blood pressure should fall below 120/80 mm Hg.

[Learn more about controllable risk factors for heart disease and changes you can make in your lifestyle on the Health Resources link on SeniorCircle.com. Under "Interactive Tools" you can also take a Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment, or a quiz to test your knowledge about Obesity. Want to calculate your Body Mass Index? Don't miss the BMI calculator.](#)

- **Diabetes** – Being overweight or obese makes the heart work harder and increases the likelihood of developing diabetes. American Heart Association data shows that about 66 percent of Americans age 20 and older are overweight or

obese (see page 12), and at least 65 percent of people with diabetes die from a heart or blood vessel disease. Even when blood glucose levels are under control, diabetes is a serious risk for heart disease or stroke.

- **Physical activity** – An active lifestyle is an important part of managing your heart health. Regular physical activity (i.e, light to moderate exercise, 30 minutes or more, five days a week), or vigorous physical activity, 20 minutes or more, three days a week) can control your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol level, among other benefits.

- **Alcohol and tobacco use** – Alcohol use can raise blood pressure, increase the level of triglycerides in the blood, and contribute to obesity, cancer and a variety of other diseases. Likewise, a smoker's risk of developing heart disease is two to four times greater than that of a non-smoker's.

- **Stress** – Don't overlook the importance of stress relief in managing heart health. While no direct correlation between stress and heart disease has been established, stress has been shown to impact behaviors that increase your risk – alcohol consumption, smoking or overeating – as well as involuntary reactions, such as increased blood pressure. Stress can manifest itself in many ways, from emotional outbursts to chest pain or other physical symptoms.

"Stress is one of those intangible risk factors that produces very real physical symptoms that have a measurable effect on your heart health," says Dr. Mehta.

Some patients may not seek out medical advice for heart disease until they're having physical symptoms – chest pain,

nausea, and shortness of breath, but Dr. Mehta advises not to wait that long. "Regular checkups to track your blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and preventive health measures like a good diet and regular exercise are the best way to start."

## THE WEIGHT PROBLEM

Obesity has become a national epidemic, and a common risk factor in the leading causes of death and chronic disease.



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from 1960 to 2006:

- Obesity has increased from 13.4 to 35.1 percent in U.S. adults age 20 to 74.
- Today, more than 68 percent of adults – two-thirds of the U.S. population – are overweight or obese.

An adult with a body mass index (BMI) between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight; a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese. The National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute also looks at other factors to predict a person's chances of developing chronic weight-related diseases, including waist circumference, level of physical activity, genetic background, cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood glucose level.

Less than one-third of U.S. adults are at a healthy weight.<sup>4</sup> Also, many people have an inaccurate body image, believing they're less heavy than they actually are. A September 2010 Harris Interactive/HealthDay survey found that many Americans don't realize they fall into the overweight or obese categories. Of the more than 2,000 adults age 18 and up surveyed, 30 percent of respondents in the "overweight" category believed their weight was in the normal range; 70 percent of obese individuals classified themselves as only being overweight.

The problem with this, say researchers, is that although many Americans are accustomed to a culture that idealizes the thin physiques of fashion models, many more have grown up surrounded by individuals who are overweight and unconsciously think that it's the norm. "If people don't recognize the problem or the severity of the problem, they are less likely to do something about it," says a representative of the survey organization.

Your doctor can help you determine a healthy weight and, if you need to lose a few pounds, the appropriate amount to lose for good health. The good news: It doesn't take much to make a difference. Even a small weight loss – 5 to 10 percent of your current weight – can decrease your risk level for weight-related diseases.

<sup>1</sup> - Recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<sup>2</sup> - American Heart Association (AHA)

<sup>3</sup> - Data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Survey

<sup>4</sup> - National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

## Sobering statistics

The U.S. National Health and Nutrition Survey (1999-2006) reported that...

- 30.5% U.S. adults had high blood pressure.
- 26% had high cholesterol.
- 9.9% had diabetes.
- 45% of adults polled had at least one of three risk factors.
- One in eight adults had two of the three above conditions, and a significant number of people had all three.

# Never too old to learn



For high school students, marching in cap and gown to the graduation hymn "Pomp and Circumstance" and receiving that long-awaited diploma is a memorable day. One member of the graduating class last June had looked forward to that day longer than most. Paul Evans, Senior Circle member of the Mountain West Chapter in Tooele, Utah, finally received his diploma at age 73.

Paul did not know how to read or write for most of his life. Born in 1937 in Price, Utah and raised on a farm, he attended elementary school off and on, but eventually dropped out to help on the family farm. After a few attempts to run away from an unhappy home, Paul resigned himself to doing odd jobs and farming instead of attending school. After a brief stint in the U.S. Navy at age 18, he returned to Utah in 1959 and met his wife, Rexine.

Paul went to work for the Tooele Army Depot and began a lifelong career as a carpenter. He was a skillful woodworker, eventually attaining the rank of journeyman carpenter, a designation that denotes great expertise. Friends and a few fellow carpenters covered for him, when needed, by reading and completing necessary paperwork. "Some folks didn't realize I couldn't read - I had a good memory and an eye for woodworking and once someone showed me something, I could remember how to do it," he explains.

Upon retirement, Paul became an active volunteer in his church, and spent a good deal of time at the local employment resource center. Although he had no counseling credentials, he had life experiences and good listening skills. "I'd lived through some challenging circumstances and I figured I could use that experience to help other people," he says. Eventually, Paul was asked to take on the role of employment counselor at the center.

Spurred on by helping others to achieve their goals, he decided to tackle one of his own: literacy. Paul contacted a local adult literacy center with the intent of obtaining his GED. "As I took classes and got into the courses, I figured I might as well go ahead and get my full high school diploma."

Over the next four years, Paul took classes necessary to satisfy high school curriculum requirements. Paul spent several hours each day attending classes, studying, practicing his reading and writing skills, and working at the employment center. While pursuing his diploma, Paul overcame dyslexia and the added challenge of several surgeries - without missing a beat in his studies.



Paul and Rexine dressed as Native American Indians for Thanksgiving Dinner, and below, at the 2007 Festival of Trees



Along the way, he developed a love for history, geography, and learning about his family by reading journals written by his ancestors. "I like geography and reading about places that I probably won't ever visit," he says.

Finally, on June 10, 2010, Paul donned a cap and gown with other graduating students at a ceremony at Grantsville High School in Tooele.

Today, literacy has enriched Paul's life - and his ability to connect with others. He enjoys going to the theater and reading various works of fiction and the Bible with Rexine. He is also giving back to society, working at the employment center and talking with others about the value of education. Rexine and Paul's free time is spent with their three grandchildren.

Paul applies that same zest for learning to Senior Circle involvement. Members since September 2002, the couple regularly attend weekly Bingo and other events. "Paul and Rexine are an integral part of Senior Circle," says Advisor Becky Trigg. "They are great ambassadors for the program - they've recruited many new members. They have a zeal for life."



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One of the best parts of travel is meeting new friends - from the locals to your fellow travel companions. With so many wonderful experiences at every turn, travel is always more fun when you **share the journey**.

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# Skipping the Salt

Uncovering hidden sodium can benefit your health

For those who are accustomed to watching fat, calories, cholesterol, sugar and carbs in the quest for a healthy diet, there's another variable to consider: salt. Historically, salt hasn't received the same attention as other well-known offenders. But studies are now focusing on the role of salt on our health – not only for weight control, but also as a common risk factor for many chronic diseases.

Even if you rarely use that salt shaker on your table, it's likely that your diet is loaded with sodium – in places you might not suspect. Health experts, regulatory agencies and food manufacturers are paying extra attention to the health effects of too much sodium and ways that Americans can reduce their intake.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most Americans consume at least 3,436 milligrams of sodium daily; yet we only need a fraction of this amount – 1,500 mg or less – to keep our bodies working properly.

In many cases, we unknowingly load up on salt in our diets. According to the U.S. Department of Health's *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, natural salt in food accounts for only 10 percent of our total sodium intake, and the salt we add during cooking or at the dinner table adds another 5 to 10 percent. That leaves approximately 75 percent of our daily sodium intake coming from processed and prepared foods (such as restaurant and fast foods, and pre-prepared "convenience foods"), because sodium is used as a flavor enhancer and a preservative for frozen and canned foods.

Other high-sodium sources may surprise you: some breakfast cereals, pancake and waffle mixes, soups, antacids, and baked goods such as breads and pastries (or any bread product made with baking soda). Here's more:

## Sodium Count

One piece of frozen cheese pizza  
450 to 1200 milligrams

Beef hot dog  
446 milligrams of sodium

Salami  
748 milligrams of sodium

Sliced ham  
627 milligrams

Tomato juice, 8 oz.  
340 to 1040 milligrams

Canned soup  
700 to 1,260 milligrams

Excess sodium in the diet poses a health risk because salt causes fluid retention in the body. This build-up of fluid makes the heart work harder and causes blood pressure to rise. High blood pressure affects 65 million Americans, or one in three people. Untreated, it can lead to other serious health problems: heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness.

A March 2010 Stanford University study found that reducing the U.S. population's sodium intake by 9.5 percent could prevent nearly 500,000 strokes and heart attacks. And a *New England Journal of Medicine* study found that the number of heart attacks in the U.S. could decline by up to 13 percent if adults would reduce their daily salt intake by only about half a teaspoon! This reduction would also decrease new cases of heart disease and the number of strokes.

Earlier this year, the New York City Department of Health took the lead on salt education with the National Salt Reduction Initiative (NSRI), a call to action that encourages a voluntary reduction in sodium content by restaurants and packaged-food companies of 20 percent over five years. The NSRI is modeled on a successful program in the United Kingdom, where food makers reduced salt levels by 40 percent or more in some products. The New York City-based initiative now has commitments from 16 companies, including some of the country's largest food manufacturers.

Many of these major food manufacturers and restaurants have already responded to the slew of new statistics and health education campaigns by lowering salt content in many of their products by 10 to 25 percent, including Subway, Starbucks, Campbell Soup Company, Kraft Foods, Heinz, Boar's Head, and General Mills. Campbell's alone has rolled back sodium content in more than 200 of its products.

Concerned about the effects of sodium in your diet and your health? Schedule a physical with your doctor to check your blood pressure, cholesterol and heart

health. You may wish to talk with a nutritionist for help with making good dietary choices to limit sodium in your meals, or visit SeniorCircle.com, click on the "Health Resources" tab and take a risk assessment for Type 2 diabetes or coronary artery disease. Or, take the Weight Quiz or Herb and Spice Quiz to test your knowledge about healthy diets and sodium in the foods we eat.



## Simple tips to reduce sodium in your diet:

- Aim for less than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day - about 1 teaspoon. This includes table salt – and what's already found in a food item.
- Limit frozen meals, pre-packaged lunch meats, cured foods (bacon and ham), foods packed in brine (pickles, olives and sauerkraut), and condiments (mustard, horseradish, ketchup, barbecue sauce).
  - Buy fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables with low or no sodium.
  - Use herbs, spices and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table.
- Limit instant or flavored rice and pasta, frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings.
  - Rinse canned foods, such as tuna, to remove some sodium.
- When available, buy low or reduced sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods.
- When eating out, request that your food be prepared without added salt or MSG.

Source: National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute, [NHLBI.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/sodium/sodium.htm](http://NHLBI.nih.gov/hbp/prevent/sodium/sodium.htm)

## Decoding Sodium

"Reduced sodium"  
Sodium level reduced by 25%

"Low sodium"  
Less than 140 mg per serving

"Very low sodium"  
35 mg of less per serving

"Sodium-free"  
Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving

Source: WebMD.com



# Rewind the Clock...

## Strength Training for Seniors

Let's face it – very few of us stand in front of the mirror and strike a muscle pose. And despite all the anti-aging products on the market, it's an unavoidable fact that we are going to get older. However, studies show that lifting weights can help seniors maintain or regain strength and stay independent for longer.

After age 20, most people lose about a half pound of muscle a year. By the time we're 65, we will have lost 25 percent of our peak strength. This decline may eventually rob seniors of their active, independent lifestyles. According to the National Institute on Aging, "when older people lose their ability to do things on their own, it doesn't happen just because they have aged. More likely it is because they have become inactive."

Strengthening exercises involve working against a force which can come from your own body, weight machines, free weights or barbells, a body bar, resistance bands, a stability ball, or water. When performed properly, weight lifting or strength training is safe and effective. You may even enjoy it!

### It's never too late to start

No matter how old you are, exercise can improve your quality of life, and even a small investment of time and effort will produce noticeable improvements. The American College of Sports Medicine now recommends weight training for all people over age 50, and even people well into their 90s can benefit. A group of nursing home residents ranging from 87 to 96 years old improved their muscle strength by almost 180 percent after just eight weeks of weight lifting. Adding that much strength is almost like rolling back the clock. Even frail, elderly people find their balance improves, their walking pace quickens, and stairs become less of a challenge.

### Before you start

Before beginning any exercise regime, it's essential to get the okay from your doctor who will review your health history for any problems that could make weight lifting unsafe. If you have any conditions such

as arthritis, osteoporosis, high blood pressure or heart disease, you'll need to learn the types of exercises you can and can't do.

### RULE OF THUMB:

- If you can't repeat eight weight exercises in a row, the weight is too heavy. Try a lighter weight.
- If you can lift a weight more than 15 times in a row, the weight is too light; — get one slightly heavier.
- Don't increase the weight you lift by more than 10 percent at any time.



### Get instruction

If you've never lifted weights before, a good video or a fitness trainer can show you how to lift weights correctly so that you don't hurt or pull anything. Instruction on proper technique and body form is

*continued on page 18*



## Renew your Senior Circle Membership Online - in Minutes!

Online or by phone, it's easier than ever to renew your membership – or to join Senior Circle!

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- 2) by electronic check.

Also, you can now renew your membership by calling the membership services line at 1-800-211-4148 to pay by phone.

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*continued from page 17*

very important to help you enjoy the exercise without risking injury.

### Warm up

Start with no weights – or light weights – to practice the exercises and condition your body. You can use dumbbells, machines or resistance bands.

### Tips

- Begin with light weights – three or five pounds – and build up gradually. Muscles need time to repair. Don't train the same muscle group two days in a row.
- Lift weights for all muscle groups (chest, back, shoulders, arms, abs and legs) at least two non-consecutive days each week.
- Do each exercise for at least one set of eight to 12 repetitions. As you progress and become stronger and the exercises become easier, add more sets (with rest in between) and increase the amount of weight.
- Always stretch muscles after you do a strengthening exercise. Stretching helps increase blood flow to your muscles, minimizing aches and pains.

After several months of resistance training, most men and women will increase their muscular strength by 20 to 40 percent, according to the American Council on Exercise. Working out in a gym with other people is encouraged, as occasional help from a fellow trainee is available, along with the guidance from fitness professionals. As long as you continue working your muscles, they'll continue working for you.

*Sources: American College of Sports Medicine, National Institute on Aging, American Council on Exercise*

## Health benefits of weight lifting

- **Bone Health** Weight-bearing exercises boost strength, balance, and agility, making it less likely that you'll suffer a fall and a devastating fracture. Also, weight training builds bone mass in the spine and the hip, so it's especially important for people with osteoporosis.
- **Weight loss** Although lifting weights doesn't burn many calories, it does rev up your metabolism, resulting in a toned physique, making it easier to maintain a healthy weight.
- **Muscle** Weight training helps slow age-related decline in muscle strength, and also decreases the fat tissue that accumulates in the body.
- **Heart** By controlling body composition, strength training helps to strengthen the heart and reduce the risk of heart disease and high blood pressure.
- **Back** Weight training strengthens the back and helps increase flexibility, easing back pain.
- **Arthritis** By strengthening the muscles, tendons and ligaments around your joints, weight lifting can dramatically improve your range of motion. It can also cut down on pain by increasing the capability of muscles surrounding the afflicted joint, which eases stress on the joint itself.
- **Diabetes** Weight lifting helps control blood sugar levels.
- **Other benefits** Include improved posture and physical appearance; increased energy and ability to perform tasks; helps ease mild to moderate depression; and helps many people sleep better.

# Surfing The Web

Be sure to protect your body...take precautions!



**Can't figure out the cause of that nagging headache? Neck or back pain? Shoulder strain? The cause may not stem from a physical activity, but too many hours surfing the Internet or checking e-mail. Computers offer convenience and make certain communication more efficient, but time spent in front of a computer can take a toll on your health.**

Over the past 25 years, computers have become an integral part of our daily lives, whether used for work or play – from keeping up with family and friends to surfing the Internet for daily news. However, this explosive growth has brought with it a special set of health issues related to the ergonomics, or body positioning, associated with computer use.

"Most people who use computers in the workplace have been cautioned about proper body mechanics, such as support for the wrists and hands, proper keyboard placement, chair height, and screen height,

relative to the person's line of vision," says Mistie McBride, PT, MS, Director of Rehabilitation Services at Big Bend Regional Medical Center in Apline, Texas. These recommendations apply to all computer users, for professional and personal use, office or home setting.

However, the laptop computer has brought with it a whole new set of issues when it comes to body positioning. "Because it's typically smaller than a desktop computer, and the keyboard and screen are attached and close together, the design doesn't promote good body positioning while using it," explains McBride. How many of us have seen people in an airport or restaurant, hunched over the screen, with their laptop precariously perched on their lap? And, laptops continue to grow in popularity. Recent computer industry data shows that laptop sales are overtaking sales of desktop computers.

According to McBride, injuries associated with computer use commonly center around the muscles, tendons and nerves of the body parts most used when

we're online: the wrists, hands, shoulders, neck and back. The injuries result not only from the positioning of the body, but the frequency and duration of certain body movements. Overly repetitious movements can lead to muscle fatigue or injury, especially if the movement involves stretching your range of motion or awkward body positioning. These injuries are called repetitive stress injuries (RSIs).

Traditionally seen in competitive athletes, RSIs are now showing up among computer users. The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation classifies RSIs as pain, an uncomfortable condition or an injury that occurs in the musculoskeletal and nervous system, as a result of chronic use of a body part – used either normally or abnormally (i.e., in an unusual position). These injuries may also be referred to as repetitive strain, cumulative trauma disorder (CTD), or overuse syndrome. The American Optometric Association has even coined a term for computer-related eye injuries – computer vision syndrome (CVS) – which refers to vision problems linked to extended computer use: dry, irritated, or inflamed eyes, headaches, and blurry vision.



#### Typical injuries include:

- **Carpal tunnel syndrome** – swelling or compression of the nerve in the wrist that affects blood flow, resulting in pain, tingling, and numbness in the hands
- **Ganglion cyst** – a swelling or bump on the wrist, resulting from leakage of joint fluid
- **Tendonitis** – tearing or inflammation of the tendons that connect bones to muscles
- **Bursitis** – inflammation in the cushioning area between the bones, tendons, joints and muscles (similar to "tennis elbow")

Symptoms of computer use are different than fatigue. "Fatigue can result from sitting in the same position or

doing the same activity for a long time, but symptoms go away after a break," explains McBride. "If the pain persists after a few minutes or hours away from the computer, does not go away after a night of rest, or interferes with daily activities, it's a good idea to have the affected area checked by your doctor."

As of 2009, nearly 120,000 households in the U.S. had a home computer, and three in five households – more than 68% – have home internet access.

With proper precautions observed, computers can make our lives easier in many ways. Heed these tips from the American Industrial Hygiene Association for minimizing computer-related pains and strains:

- **Position computer equipment** – including seat, keyboard and mouse, to minimize strain on your hands, arms, back and neck. Your body should form 90-degree angles at your elbows, knees and hips.
- **Place the monitor** so that the top of the screen is two to three inches below your line of sight.
- **Don't multi-task.** Avoid perching the phone on one shoulder while on the computer.
- **Maintain good posture** – with a slight reclining angle of 100 to 110 degrees, not a straight 90-degree angle. Your torso and neck should be vertical and in-line, your thighs approximately horizontal, and your lower legs vertical.
- **Use a properly adjusted chair** with firm lower back support. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the backrest should conform to the natural curve of your spine, and provide adequate lumbar support, and the seat should be comfortable and allow your feet to rest flat on the floor or footrest.
- **Take frequent breaks** from the computer at least every 15 to 20 minutes. Walk, stretch, shrug your shoulders, and roll your head from side to side.
- **Exercise regularly.** Poor physical condition is linked to repetitive stress injuries.
- **Minimize stress.** Stress may cause you to tense muscles or hunch shoulders while on the computer.



**ALABAMA**

**DeKalb Chapter, Fort Payne**

Tom and Joann by the last monument at “the little Jerusalem” at the Ave Maria Grotto in Cullman, Ala.



**KENTUCKY**

**Three Rivers Chapter, Louisa**

Luke and Fay Kitchen stop to enjoy the sights during a recent trip to the Kentucky State Fair.



**TENNESSEE**

**Dyersburg Chapter, Dyersburg**

Dyersburg’s August birthday girls celebrate!

**Lake Granbury Chapter, Granbury**

L-R: Shirley Throne, Kathy Tucker, Barbara Osborn, and Mary Ellen Arlington at White Sands National Monument in Ruidoso, NM.



**Flowers Chapter, Dothan**

Madeline Nelson, Judy Mitchell, Bette Harrison and Lucy Cline prepare to board a train to visit President Jimmy Carter’s hometown of Plains, Ga.



**NEW JERSEY**

**Salem County Chapter, Salem**

L-R: Jane Bell, Marion Finlaw, Ruth Bradway, and Frances Sims while on the chapter’s *Royal Caribbean Cruise*.



**SkyRidge Chapter, Cleveland**

L-R: Wilma Wingard, Joyce Steele, Pat Thompson, and Judy Massengale sold baked goods to benefit the Alzheimer’s Memory Walk.



**Navarro Chapter, Corsicana**

Carolyn Chapman tries a hat on for size in a gift shop in Niagara Falls.



**South Baldwin Chapter, Foley**

Hard-working and fun-loving Senior Circle Ambassadors: (seated) Sandie Bennett and John Proctor; (standing) Marilyn Aronowitz and Sandra Hogeland.



**NEW MEXICO**

**Alta Vista Chapter, Las Vegas**

Rosalie Obregon and Sandra Trujillo tour a garden with Ron Ice on a day trip to Ice’s Tea Room in Alcalde, N.M.



**TEXAS**

**Abilene Regional Chapter, Abilene**

Member Walter Meller (right) won “People’s Choice” in the “Bobby Larry Throw Down” contest with Abilene Regional Medical Center’s Dietetics Chef Bobby Larry (left). The

fundraiser benefitted Relay for Life, March of Dimes, and Alzheimer’s Association and teams were comprised of physicians, employees and volunteers.

**Weatherford Chapter, Weatherford**

Vic Williford took a two week motorcycle trip to the Canadian border – a total of 4,400 miles covering six states.



**ARIZONA**

**Western Arizona Chapter, Bullhead City**

L-R: Charlotte Nelson, Linda Goolsby and Darlene Poweziak had a thrilling ride rafting down the Colorado River in the Black Canyon area.



**Carlsbad Chapter, Carlsbad**

L-R: Judy Waldrop, Elaine Janis, Linda Purpura, Jackie Rayroux, and Myrtle Griesemer are ready to hear country music performer Roy Clark at the Spencer Theater in Alto, N.M.



**PENNSYLVANIA**

**Easton Chapter, Easton**

Members “Rock Around the Clock – Fifties Style” at Senior Fest 2010 in Allentown.

**Hill Chapter, Hillsboro**

Long-time Senior Circle members, Marie and Newman Lloyd, recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary.



**UTAH**  
**Mountain West Chapter, Tooele**

Dorothy D. James and Marilyn Cummings let members spin the wheel for prizes at the chapter’s 9th Annual Anniversary Picnic.





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