

# HEALTH MATTERS

## Senior Health I S S U E

INSIDE:

### Staying Positive During Pandemic

Tips to Manage Medications  
Telecare Reaches Out to Seniors  
Be Prepared for Emergencies  
Nutrition to Combat COVID  
& Much, Much More...



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Monterey County's Health Magazine

December 2020, Volume 8, No. 79



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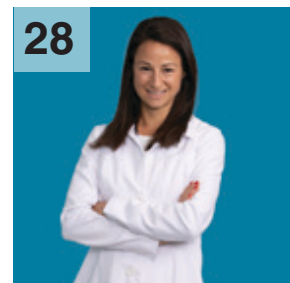
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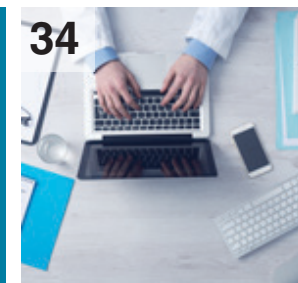
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## Important Statistic

### DID YOU KNOW?

- > Approximately 80% of older adults have at least one chronic disease and 77% have at least two. Four chronic diseases—heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes—cause almost two-thirds of all deaths each year.

Reference: National Council on Aging (ncoa.org)

## Senior Health

**I S S U E**

Rebecca Clarkson of Pacific Grove finds a creative outlet in gardening as a way to keep busy during the restrictions of the COVID pandemic.  
Cover Photo by Randy Tunnell







# Do I have the flu? Or is it COVID-19?

That is a question some of us will ask at the first sign of a cough or fever. Flu season is here now and COVID-19 remains a serious threat. You can stay healthy by taking these simple steps:

1. Get your flu shot
2. Wear a mask
3. Wash your hands
4. Stay 6 feet away from others

This year, taking care of your health is important for you and helps protect everyone else too.

**To find out where you can get a flu shot or for information about COVID-19, call 211.**



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# Editor's Desk



Photo by Susan Gerbic

It will be a winter unlike any other, and we have to be prepared. In any normal year, flu strains circulate and make us sick, but this year we also have the threat of COVID hanging over us.

And as we all know too well by now, seniors age 65 and over are more at risk of becoming seriously ill or dying from COVID-19. People with underlying health issues such as diabetes and heart disease are also more susceptible—again, as seniors tend to have more chronic health problems, this is an additional layer of concern.

But there are things you can do to stay healthy even in a year such as this.

- Get your flu shot. It's a simple thing to do, and protects you from one of the major illnesses of wintertime.
- Be active. Get out and walk or bike. Go to an outdoor yoga class, work in your garden, or find some other outside activity.
- When you think about holiday gatherings, think small, short and outdoors. Social distancing and mask wearing is important, even in small groups.
- Social distancing doesn't have to mean totally isolating. Find ways to connect, like the seniors that we profile in this issue who have found many creative ways to stay in touch while also staying safe and healthy.
- Keep washing your hands, make your health a priority, and hang in there.

Stay strong —

*Kathryn McKenzie*

## HEALTH+ MATTERS

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# CREATING A POST-COVID CALM

**Seniors find ways to adjust to the 'new normal'**

BY MELANIE BRETZ

COVID HAS CHANGED MUCH about our lives, but many local seniors are finding ways to adjust.

Just ask Rebecca Clarkson. The dynamic great-grandmother has had to alter how she does her favorite things, but she hasn't stopped being active.

"I'm a very social person," says Clarkson, a licensed natural health consultant who is on call at Pharmaca and Synchronicity Holistic CBD in Carmel. "The thing I miss most is Saturday night ballroom dancing at Chautauqua Hall in Pacific Grove. For the past 25 years, I've looked forward to that, but I've found new ways to stay in touch with my dance family."

Among the myriad activities that now fill her life are three-times-a-week Zoom exercise classes, shopping and running errands for people who can't get out, gardening and painting, and keeping touch with her 5,000-plus Facebook friends.

"I find and share positive affirmations that encourage people and make them smile," she says. "Every week day, I walk to the Sally Griffin Center in Pacific Grove to pick up lunch, sit outside and socialize with others at a safe distance."

Many people are picking up hobbies they had put on hold, like knitting, crocheting, sewing, gardening and painting. Walking the Recreation Trail and participating in church services online are other favorites.

One group of women who used to meet at the Griffin Center to knit, crochet and share stories re-built their own little community.

"Once the center closed, we missed getting together," says Jill Haylings. "Thanks to Nikki, the program coordinator at the center, we meet in a large room, wearing our masks, sitting at least 6 feet apart to knit, crochet and talk."

"We all stay active in our own ways," says Gisela Nobinger. "Our choir practices in a member's backyard, I hike, do yoga with a friend on my deck and connect with friends and family via Zoom." Others enjoy reading or sitting on the beach meditating to the sound of the waves. And the list goes on.

Sixty-eight-year-old Elaine Frey turned to online meditation classes through Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System, after five years of one-on-one sessions with registered nurse Eva Giedt.

"I was resistant to the online option at first," says Frey, "but am getting more comfortable and able to settle in and find new ways to connect. My inner child is always throwing a tantrum. Meditation helps me stop for a moment to allow things to be what they are. It's like being in the eye of a hurricane where it's calm while the world around you is whirling. I've learned that how we experience life can be different without the circumstances actually changing."



"Our lives have been altered dramatically," says Marianne Rowe, a licensed marriage and family therapist and teacher and co-founder with Katie Dutcher of Monterey Bay Meditation Studio. She applies the art and science of mindfulness and meditation in classes and her therapy practice, both done via remote sessions.



# AGING AND VITALITY

Keeping minds and attitudes flexible is crucial to well-being

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



GIN WEATHERS

CARMEL REALTOR GIN WEATHERS needed a break, a chance to lift out of the chaos and the constancy of her day and reset her equilibrium. She considered her limited COVID options, got in the car, and started driving south in search of a new landscape.

Weathers stopped for lunch in Oxnard, on a friend's front porch, where the table had been set with linens. She felt, for a moment, she was back in her native South Carolina, as the two caught up, feeling close from a social distance. She later met a friend in Burbank with whom she sat and talked, whiling away the afternoon in earnest conversation, laughing, reminiscing, reconnecting.

Weathers took herself to Hollywood Forever, a celebrity cemetery in the middle of town, where she spent time with Cecil B. DeMille, Charlie Chaplin, Jayne Mansfield, Judy Garland, Valerie Harper, The Little Rascals, and Toto, too. It was quite a crowd, but all were at a social distance, and Weathers felt no risk of contracting COVID.

After a few days, she felt reconnected, with a restored sense of purpose, ready to return to her real estate office in Carmel and to lean into the throes of a booming business. At home, Weathers also finds ways to foster her well-being.

"I am spiritual," she says, "and I read a lot and participate in a centering, prayerful meditation. I also like to walk along Scenic Road, overlooking Carmel Beach, or up into the hills of Carmel Woods."

So much of aging well is about health, says Patricia McDermott, a marriage and family therapist in Monterey. People who are healthy have so many more options than those who are not.

"So many people, as they age, succumb to their aches and pains," she says, "which are real, but this clouds how they age. We are in a really challenging time—not the first—and how we interpret it has a lot to do with how well we'll handle it."

In addition to physical health and well-being, McDermott considers the importance of one's mindset, particularly during the pandemic.

"Even once we can all run around and see each other in person again, it will be different," she says. "The only constant is change. People who don't like change are on the wrong planet. To age successfully, we must have some flexibility, both mentally and physically."

## SUNNY SIDE UP

When COVID came to this county, Ruth Rachel lamented that she couldn't celebrate her late-March birthday. At least not the way she'd imagined. Undaunted, her neighbor Colleen Prince invited everyone on their Carmel street to come out with their lawn chairs, their beverages, and their snacks, and park themselves on their own driveways to participate in a street party in celebration of Rachel.



FOURTH AVENUE FUNFEST IN CARMEL

What became a Friday night ritual continues to this day.

"We've gotten to know our neighbors better than we ever had," says Rachel. "It's quite congenial. We talk about everything but politics, mostly about each other. We really look forward to our Friday night Fourth Avenue Funfest."

Rachel also supports her mental and physical well-being by walking every day, rain or shine, along Scenic Road overlooking Carmel Beach.

"The scene is different every day," she says. "The sun is glinting through a pocket in the clouds, or the sky is clear, and I can see Point Lobos. One day, I took a photo of about 100 pelicans on the rocks. Also, I greet people I know and wave to those I recognize, so I still feel connected these days. All while getting in my 10,000 steps."

CONTINUE TO PAGE 30

# TAKING TIME TO TALK

Local Telecare program keeps people connected

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



YVONNE SCARDINA

YVONNE SCARDINA is a self-proclaimed talker. She's also a listener, which makes her ideal for her voluntary role as a Telecare operator. Provided by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Telecare is a free daily check-in service performed by members of the hospital auxiliary.

Here's how it works. Members of the community, of any age, and for any reason or no specified reason, can register confidentially for this service. With a person's express permission, members of their family may register for them. Then, each morning, for 30 minutes, between 8:30 and 10 a.m., Telecare members receive a friendly call from an auxiliary volunteer.

The call simply may be to say, "Good morning." It may be to check on someone who is convalescing from an illness, dealing with a loss, or feeling lonely—perhaps someone living alone who just wants the security of daily contact.

"There are no prerequisites to receiving a Telecare call," Scardina says. "If you're 20 or 120, it doesn't matter; there is no age requirement. You don't have to have an ailment or live alone. You can sign up for whatever reason. If you simply want a morning call, that's reason enough."

Scardina has spoken with three different people lately who said they have a dog, and they don't want to pass away and have no one notice, while the dog remains in the home without care.

"That's a perfectly good reason for a call," Scardina says. "I have a husband and two cats, but for people who live alone, their pets are their family, and they want to protect them."

Telecare has been in operation for more than 20 years, and Scardina, who joined the auxiliary 10 years ago, has been making morning calls for six years. She never tires of the job or the conversations.

"I love what I do, love talking with people, hearing their stories, brightening their day. When other volunteers take time off," she says, "I take their shifts. If the hospital needed me seven days a week, I'd do it. Telecare is that important to the community, and I'm in it for the duration."

If the member doesn't answer a scheduled call, Telecare volunteers will call back. If they still cannot reach someone, they will call whom-ever the member has designated, preferably someone who lives nearby, and ask them to go check on the person. Upon registering for Telecare, each member lists two alternative people to call. If those people cannot reach the member, then the sheriff is deployed to do a welfare check.

One time, Scardina placed a morning call to a member who didn't answer. By placing an alternative call, she learned that the woman was traveling and would return in a week.

"It's important to know if a member has made plans," Scardina says. "We take notes during our phone call about how the person slept, if they had concerns, what's on their mind. That way, we can read through the notes and follow up on how they feel during our next phone call."

Scardina says she's willing to talk about the merits of Telecare to anyone who's standing still. When the hospital offers a free service designed to help anyone and everyone in the community feel safe and secure and a little less lonely, she's determined to get the word out and looks forward to giving folks a call.

Ever since COVID curtailed hospital visits, Scardina has been placing her morning calls from home. Sometimes she needs to contact Telecare chairman Ron Ferris to access member information kept at the hospital, but otherwise, her conversations are working well while she shelters in place.

"For some of our Telecare members, we are the only people they talk with all day," she says. "It's got to be terribly lonely. If I could, I would stand on the street corner with a huge sign, inviting people to sign up for Telecare. It's that important to our wellbeing."

When not calling Telecare members, Scardina likes to check in with her three children, six grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. "Sometimes, when I call my kids, they think something's the matter," she says. "But I just want to talk." ■

*Telecare is available at no charge. Simply call (831) 625-4557 and request it. For more information about the Community Hospital Auxiliary, go to [www.montagehealth.org/montage-health/volunteer/auxiliary](http://www.montagehealth.org/montage-health/volunteer/auxiliary).*



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# MANAGING MEDS

Organization at home can help avoid drug interactions

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



AS A CLINICAL PHARMACIST in the emergency department at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Ariel Davis understands the importance of medication reconciliation—the process of comparing a patient’s medication orders to all medications and supplements the patient has been taking. This is intended to avoid medication errors, such as duplications, dosing errors, omissions, or drug interactions.

While medication reconciliation is essential in the hospital, Davis says it’s just as important in the home.

When Davis’ father suddenly became disoriented, his sister rushed him to the emergency department, thinking he was having a stroke. Actually, he had accidentally overdosed on a muscle relaxant.

Once her father understood he was to take one pill at breakfast, one pill at lunch, and one pill at dinner, he was fine.

A good way to organize and remember what medications to take and when, says Davis, is to sort medications and supplements into a pill box, designated by morning and evening, or the days of the week.

While it is essential to understand and follow the directions for any prescription or over-the-counter medication, it also is important to know what you’re taking and why.

One of the first steps to better medication management, says Davis, is to gather all medications and supplements into one location, and make a list of what they are, their purpose, and the protocols for taking them. Davis recommends sharing that list with trusted family members and including it with one’s Advance Health Care Directive.

If a patient is brought into the hospital unconscious or in an altered state, someone else needs to be able to convey the patients’ medication regimen.

“When managing medications,” says Davis, “a lot of patients forget about over-the-counter meds—the occasional Tylenol, ibuprofen, or routine vitamins and minerals they take. These are important and are not benign to side effects. They can have interactions with prescription medications.”

Davis also advocates for the use of one pharmacy for all medications. This way, the pharmacist can see everything the patient is taking, and tell if there would be a significant drug interaction with a new medication, or consider the effects of this prescription on medications or supplements already being taken.

“Patients tend to go to multiple doctors,” says Davis, “creating the potential for them to be prescribing multiple or duplicate therapies unbeknownst to a physician or the patient. A primary care physician could prescribe a medication for hypertension, and a cardiologist could prescribe something similar. A pharmacist can address this but only if he or she is asked to fill both prescriptions.”

“IT IS SO  
IMPORTANT  
TO HAVE  
THE WHOLE  
PICTURE”

ARIEL DAVIS

When a patient came into the emergency department with gastrointestinal bleeding, Davis reviewed all his recorded prescriptions and over-the-counter medications but couldn’t identify a reason for the bleed. Upon interviewing the patient, she learned he was taking a large amount of ibuprofen on a daily basis, which is considered a blood thinner.

“It is so important to have the whole picture,” she says.

Nowadays, with the EPIC computer system used by Montage Health, Davis finds it much easier to see the prescriptions written by multiple physicians’ offices, and read progress notes prepared by each physician.

Another potential problem is how medications can be altered by the way they’re stored. Most people keep medications in their bathrooms, but excess moisture and mildew could adversely affect the meds.

“Moreover, hot showers and moisture could potentially disrupt the medication,” Davis says, “breaking it down or causing it to dissolve or clump. Keep medications and supplements in fresh, clean, current, well-marked containers, in a cool, dry place where children can’t reach them.”

Finally, get rid of all medications as soon as they expire. Since a steward of the environment would avoid tossing them in the trash or flushing them into wastewater, they should be properly disposed in designated medicine waste receptacles. Some local pharmacies offer medication disposal bins, and so does Community Hospital.

The hospital’s bin, available to the public, is just inside the double doors of the hospital entrance, where people can safely dispose of unwanted or expired medications. ■





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# BE READY

Alliance on Aging teaches emergency preparedness

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON



Photos by ProPix Media

THE FOLKS AT Alliance on Aging realize the best way to handle an emergency is to be prepared.

Since 1970, the nonprofit organization has been dedicated to helping senior citizens remain safely in their homes for as long as possible. Programs include Medicare counseling and education, senior peer counseling, nursing home information and advocacy, tax counseling for the elderly, benefits checkups, and a monthly senior outreach luncheon.

This year, Alliance on Aging added a series of emergency preparedness workshops for senior citizens. With the support of Community Emergency Response Volunteers of the Monterey Peninsula, the workshops focused on fire safety and how to handle a PG&E safety power shutoff, as well as the steps to prepare for other emergencies, particularly during a pandemic.

“Our initial goal was to provide four hours of emergency preparedness training, in person, to seniors 80 and above in assisted-living communities and low-income affordable housing projects,” says Meggie Pina, ombudsman program manager for Alliance on Aging. “Then COVID happened.

“While we had to redesign our workshops since we couldn’t go into these buildings, I’m grateful for whatever intuitive part of me proposed this plan since it became only more important to reach out to these communities.”

By shifting the delivery of her workshops to Zoom, Pina was able to provide a lot of information and advice to a larger audience.

“Regarding fire safety and PG&E power-shutdown safety prepared-

“THE TOP  
CAUSES OF  
HOME FIRES  
ARE KITCHEN,  
ELECTRICAL,  
SMOKING  
AND CANDLES”

ness, we reached out to Seaside Fire Chief Brian Dempsey, who shared that the top causes of home fires are kitchen, electrical, heating, smoking, and candles,” says Pina. “He talked about how to prevent these fires and how to create an evacuation plan, including how to exit the home.”

In less than 30 seconds, said Dempsey, a small flame can turn into a fire, which burns at 300 degrees at floor level and 600 degrees at eye level.

It’s important to understand that people ages 65 and above are twice as likely to be killed or injured by fires than younger people. The room can fill with smoke, making it hard to see and breathe, and it’s harder for people to escape a fire if not as quick and agile—or if not prepared. Preparation and planning are the keys to survival.

“PG&E power shutdowns are warranted during high temperatures, extreme dryness and high winds,” says Pina. “The National Weather





Service sends out a warning, which triggers the shutdown, to prevent electrical fires. People who use devices to help sustain well-being—an oxygen machine, power wheelchair, or CPAP machine, can apply for additional notification time before the power is shut off.”

Seaside firefighter Ben Flores went over Cal Fire’s “Ready, Set, Go” plan, to help residents get prepared to escape fire.

Ready refers to creating and maintaining a defensible space around the home, including fire-resistant landscaping, to protect it from flying embers.

Set means preparing all household members for the possibility of evacuation, including keeping an essential-supply kit packed, and making a plan of what to take and where to go.

“The evacuation discussion was extremely important,” says Pina, “so people can understand that an evacuation warning means it is time to pack up valuables and essentials, and be ready to leave. It’s a time to alert family and friends or make hotel reservations. The evacuation order means leave.”

Go means being ready to evacuate when wildfire strikes to ensure the best chance of survival.

Flores also discussed the benefit of having fire and carbon monoxide alarms, how to access and read a Cal Fire incident map to help assess level of danger, and an air-quality app to know when to stay inside, as well as what to do during a fire, and how to safely evacuate and escape the blaze.

In addition to disaster preparedness training, Alliance on Aging has provided COVID-related outreach and materials, beginning with a communitywide collection of masks from a long roster of local organizations, and provided to assisted-living staff and residents, adult-living facilities, and low-income senior affordable housing properties.

“Through our workshops, we discussed the differences among stay-at-home, sheltering-in-place, and evacuation,” says Pina, “plus how to access Monterey County public health information related to COVID-19, how to build a social network and create an emergency contact list, and how to access emergency communication plan templates to use in developing a personalized plan.”

For more information or to learn about future emergency preparedness workshops, visit [allianceonaging.org](http://allianceonaging.org) or call (831) 655-1334.

The Cal Fire “Ready, Set, Go!” brochure can be downloaded at [www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/ready-set-go/](http://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/ready-set-go/). ■



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# COVID PRECAUTIONS

What seniors need to know about virus-fighting nutrition

BY BARBARA QUINN-INTERMILL, MS, RDN, CDE



Wisdom may come with age, but so does our risk for severe illness as a result of the COVID virus, say the Centers for Disease Control.

Statistics show that a 50-year-old has a higher chance of requiring hospitalization due to this virus than a 40-year-old. And a person who is 65 has a lower risk of having a severe illness due to COVID than a person who is 85. According to the CDC, eight out of every 10 COVID-19-related deaths reported in the United States have been among adults aged 65 years and older.

Why is this? The older we get, the more likely we are to have what scientists call underlying medical conditions, which can multiply an older person's risk for a severe response to COVID-19. Conditions like heart disease and Type 2 diabetes, for example, put adults at a higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19.

And just recently, the CDC added overweight, obesity and smoking to the growing list of underlying medical conditions that increase a person's chances of having a severe response to COVID-19.

We can't change our age or cure many of our chronic medical problems. But we can reduce our risk for getting COVID in the first place. Limit close interactions with others. Wash hands often and thoroughly with soap and water. Stay 6 feet apart from anyone who does not live in your household. And wear a mask, especially if you are not able to maintain an appropriate physical distance from other people.

A strong immune system doesn't hurt either. No matter our age, bodies that can resist the harmful effects of viruses and other disease carriers are much more likely to avoid serious illness. And that's where the right nutrition really does count.

Our immune system needs Vitamin C, for example, to form the antibodies that track down foreign invaders and signal the immune system to get to work. At every age of life, we need to eat at least one Vitamin C-rich food daily to maintain adequate stores of this essential immune-enhancing vitamin. Oranges, strawberries, red and yellow bell peppers and kiwi fruit all fill the bill.

Protein forms the framework of every molecule in our immune system. Protective antibodies are made from protein. So are T-cells, the immune system's fighter jets. Good sources of high-quality protein include seafood, meat, poultry, eggs, soy, beans, nuts and dairy foods. Zinc is a respected yet tricky mineral in the immune system's arsenal. A deficiency of zinc in the diet can cripple the immune system and make one more susceptible to certain diseases. Yet excessive amounts can be harmful as well. Best to get this important nutrient in foods such as oysters, red meat, poultry, baked beans, chickpeas, and nuts (such as cashews and almonds), say experts at the National Institutes of Health. Supplements should be taken at the advice of your health provider.

Depending on which study you read, Vitamin D may or may not be another important player in helping our bodies resist the ill effects of the COVID virus. Some reports have shown a higher incidence of severe illness in COVID patients with low stores of Vitamin D. Other studies are not so sure.

We do know, however, that Vitamin D deficiency is not uncommon in older people. Adult women and men and women need 600 and 800 IUs (15 to 20 mcg) of vitamin D daily, the amount found in many multivitamin formulas. Food sources include fish and fish oils and vitamin D-enriched milk or soy beverages.

As usual, a diet that balances protein foods with a colorful array of vegetables, fruit and whole grains is the best way to equip older bodies in the fight against COVID-19 and other maladies that come our way. A combination of healthful foods (plus supplements if warranted) is the best approach. ■

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*Barbara Quinn-Intermill is a registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes educator. She is the author of "Quinn-Essential Nutrition: The Uncomplicated Science of Eating." Email her at [barbara@quinessentialnutrition.com](mailto:barbara@quinessentialnutrition.com).*





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# REHAB ROBOTICS

Exoskeleton helps stroke and spinal injury patients walk again

STAFF REPORT



PATIENT MICHAEL RAWLINGS TRIES OUT A ROBOTIC EXOSKELETON. PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIVIDAD

NATIVIDAD SAM KARAS Acute Rehabilitation patient Michael Rawlings recently volunteered to get strapped into a device that can only be described as something out of a science fiction movie.

Shiny stainless steel coupled with hydraulics and black Velcro straps encased his legs. A device strapped around his midsection resembled an extra-large industrial back support belt often used by workers and weightlifters.

Physical therapist Sudha Shorian placed a walker in front of Rawlings. He grabbed it with both hands. Another physical therapist adjusted Rawlings' legs. Then, Rawlings slowly leaned forward.

That's when the device Rawlings was strapped into sprang into action. With a loud clicking noise, the robotic exoskeleton propelled Rawlings upright. A few minutes later, he was taking small steps. It was the first time Rawlings had walked in a month, following three back surgeries over three decades.

Indego is an adjustable lower-limb exoskeleton device that enables stroke and spinal cord injury patients, and those with other debilitating neuromuscular disorders, to stand and walk early on in their rehab.

The artificial intelligence robotic device, once strapped to the patient's waist and legs, can help patients like Rawlings go from sitting to standing and walking. These are patients who would otherwise be unable to do either of these activities following spinal cord injuries, stroke or other issues.

Shorian is among several physical therapists at Natividad's award-winning rehabilitation unit using the state-of-the-art \$125,000 FDA-approved device to provide gait therapy, a type of physical therapy that improves a patient's ability to stand and walk, for patients with lower extremity weakness.

The software for the exoskeleton operates through an app on Shorian's smartphone, which offers a variety of options, settings and an-

alytics on patient and device performance that clinicians can use to improve treatment plans in real time, allowing tailored treatment for each client. Therapists can also log onto a dashboard so they can track a patient's progress over time.

Shorian explains that using the robotic device helps patients stand up sooner, which prevents patients from losing range of motion and bone density and has the added benefit of helping maintain blood pressure and cardiovascular health. It can also help with recovery time, decreasing pain and regaining confidence.

"We are very excited to use the Indego Therapy exoskeleton on our patients and help them accelerate their road to recovery," Shorian says. "Many of our patients haven't stood or walked for months or years. This device is getting them upright and mobile, which has a tremendous benefit on their overall health and medical outcomes."

The Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center at Natividad is dedicated to offering the highest level of rehabilitation, and offers physical and cognitive therapies, including physical, occupational and speech therapy. The center is fully accredited by The Joint Commission and the Commission on Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities for commitment to quality, best practices and patient satisfaction.

The center's multidisciplinary team includes specially trained nurses, physiatrists, neuropsychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, social workers, speech-language pathologists and a therapy activity coordinator. Two main programs are offered: general rehabilitation and stroke rehabilitation.

The Sam Karas Acute Rehabilitation Center is part of Natividad, a 172-bed hospital owned and operated by Monterey County, offering inpatient, outpatient, diagnostic and specialty healthy care. For information on the rehabilitation center, see [natividad.com/acuterehab](http://natividad.com/acuterehab). ■





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# PLANNING IN ADVANCE

Health care directive lets loved ones know how to handle medical decisions

BY LIZA D. HORVATH



LIZA D. HORVATH

THE CORONAVIRUS has been commanding our lives, curtailing our lifestyles and canceling our plans for nearly nine months. Yet until now, we've been dealing with the pandemic during daylight saving time.

It's common for most of us to plan ahead so our future has a chance to unfold as close to what we envision as possible — think saving for our dream home, our children's education and our retirement, or creating a will that outlines where assets go when we're gone.

It's far less common, and perhaps less comfortable, to plan ahead for a time when we might not be able to make decisions about our own health care. Fortunately, there's a way — one that comes with plenty of support from local resources — to make your wishes known. It's called an Advance Directive.

By completing an Advance Directive, you can spare your family and friends the extra emotional pain and stress of not being able to carry out what they know you want.

While the names and formats vary, the purpose of the California Advance Health Care Directive (Advance Directive for short) is the same — a way to state your wishes for care in the event you're unable to speak for yourself because of an injury or illness.

And because the unexpected can happen, there's no reason to wait until you're up in age or seriously ill. If you're at least 18, you can have an Advance Directive. It can always be updated later if your situation or wishes change.

An Advance Directive includes:

**Power of Attorney for Health Care** — name a person you trust to act as your decision-maker or agent when your doctor deems you can't make decisions for yourself. This person has responsibility for ensuring your Living Will instructions are followed, but cannot go outside your wishes, has no control over your finances and can't be held accountable for your bills.

**Living Will** — outline your personal instructions about medical care in the event you can no longer speak for yourself.

There are different levels of care you can outline in your Living Will and other documents:

**Life Supporting** care keeps your lungs and heart functioning if they can't work on their own. Common examples are CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) that tries to restart your heart and lungs if they've stopped, and respirators that pump air into your lungs.

**Life Sustaining** care keeps you alive longer than you would be able to be without treatment when you have a fatal illness. Examples include treatments like dialysis or feeding by a tube or IV.

**Life Enhancing** care doesn't include life support or life sustaining treatments, only those that manage pain and symptoms, and hospice care.

If you do not want life supporting care, you can complete what's called a Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) order. The Physicians Order is similar to a DNR but allows you to be more specific about your wishes for medical intervention.

Advance Directive forms, and help with completing them, are available at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System and Natividad Medical Center. Some organizations combine the choices into a single document while others have separate forms for different designations.

Check the end of this article for a handy list of websites where you can download and print the forms in English or Spanish. If you'd like help, specially-trained Service League Volunteers at SVMHS can walk you through the process, you can attend one of the workshops offered by Community Hospital, or NMC will put you in touch with a social worker.

If you don't have Internet access, ask a friend to print out the forms or visit your local public library. Or just stop by the hospital and ask for a copy.

Be sure to talk with your family and caregivers about your decisions to avoid surprises and send a copy to your physician, your designated agent and family members, bring a copy when admitted to a hospital, and keep the original in an easy-to-access place. Planning ahead with an Advance Directive not only ensures that your wishes will be followed, it also makes things a little easier for your loved ones.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

CREATING A POST-COVID CALM

"None of us expected that life would be like this—wearing a mask, physical distancing, limiting our movements—especially for this long," Rowe says. "Not knowing how long these requirements will be in place can add stress. Feelings of disorientation, sadness and being cranky are normal human responses to change.

"We may describe these feelings as being 'on edge' but the edge is where we can explore new resources, relationships and possibilities. We adapt to our new normal as we discover what we hadn't noticed before and remember what is really important to us. And reconnect more deeply with ourselves, each other and the Earth."

Rowe suggests taking a contemplative slow walk—wandering with no agenda or destination, exploring gardens or other local places that are new to you. Sit by a tree or on a bench, take off your shoes, touch the Earth and just be. Develop a daily practice around the transition points of the day. Watch the sunrise and set an intention for the day.

Think about qualities like kindness, acceptance and compassion that you want to be expressed through you during the day. At sunset, pause and transition from doing mode to reflecting on a highlight of your day, what inspired you and how you inspired or nourished someone else.

"We all have a need for connection and to find a sense of stability and balance," says Rowe. "Practices like meditation, contemplation and reflection, journaling, yoga, walking, taking an online course or joining a book group can be helpful in restoring a sense of connection."

She suggests that another way to connect is to write a note or email a friend or family member letting them know the ways your life has been graced through your relationship: "This act is mutually beneficial. It's a gift for both the recipient and the sender."

This is a practice familiar to Rebecca Clarkson. "I'm on the phone a lot calling people who are out of touch and alone, especially those who don't have access to the internet," she says. "Reaching out to others, making sure they know they're thought of and important gives me a sense of normalcy and helps keep me positive and engaged." ■

*Melanie Bretz lives in Monterey and has written on a wide range of topics, including health care, during a writing career spanning more than 30 years.*





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# MEE ADDS ORTHOPEDIST

Dr. Molly Meadows joins South County medical system

STAFF REPORT



DR. MOLLY MEADOWS

ORTHOPEDIST Dr. Molly Meadows recently launched her practice and newly re-launched the orthopedics program at Mee Memorial Healthcare System in King City.

As the on-staff expert, Meadows is seeing patients of all ages to diagnose and treat orthopedic-related medical conditions.

With a career focus and specialty training in pediatrics and adult sports, Meadows completed medical school at Columbia University, did five years of residency at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago and two years of fellowship at Stanford's Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Redwood City.

Looking to bridge into a practice, she was excited when Dr. Robert Valladeres, Chief Medical Officer at MMHS, reached out to convey to her the real need in the community for these services.

"The opportunity to join the MMHS team as the organization was beginning to build this specialty area was really appealing to me," says Meadows.

Her practice at MMHS also aligns with her broader humanitarian interests, having served on several mission trips to Honduras, Bolivia and Ethiopia with organizations such as Operation Rainbow that connect rural and underserved areas with specialty services and providers. Meadows knew from a very young age that she wanted to be an orthopedist.

"As a gymnast growing up in Berkeley, I saw a lot of injuries that resulted from taxing the body and thought it amazing how doctors could put the musculoskeletal system back together," she says.

Due to the complexity of this system, surgeons currently tend to focus on certain areas of orthopedics, says Meadows. "While you can still find some professionals that do it all, the trend today is towards specialization in order to really perfect one's technique, and studies have shown this to be more effective in achieving great outcomes."

Pediatric orthopedists typically diagnose and treat the full spectrum of conditions, from the rare, such as congenital issues and bone deformities, to the more common conditions, like broken bones and athletic injuries such as anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus tears (the piece of cartilage that acts as a shock absorber between the shin and thighbone) and kneecap dislocations.

Typical adult conditions that she treats include rotator cuff tears, ligament injuries, and meniscus and cartilage injuries. Many of Meadows' joint surgeries can be done arthroscopically, using a minimally invasive procedure where instruments are inserted via small incisions and a fiber optic tube, reducing downtime and scarring.

Her approach as a new hire has been to meet as many patients as possible, get to know them, exhaust all non-surgical treatment possibilities first (this often involves physical therapy) and then perform surgery when absolutely necessary.

Currently, most of Meadows' cases come from primary care referrals within the MMHS network, but the organization is widening its reach to expand these services throughout the South County community. Meadows loves working with the patients and staff at MMHS.

"The patients are so very grateful as this service has not been available for some time—it's very rewarding to work with people who are thankful!" she says. "The medical and support staff have been so gracious and welcoming and I am eager to offer expert orthopedic services to first-time patients in need of orthopedic care or athletes preparing to get back in the game."

Mee Memorial Healthcare System includes a hospital in King City that provides emergency services, 25 acute care beds and 48 skilled nursing beds, and three comprehensive outpatient clinics; two adjacent to the hospital (Adult Medicine and the King City Clinic, for Internal, Pain and Family Medicine) and the Albert and Donna Oliveira Clinic, a full-service primary care facility in the city of Greenfield.

MMHS is the primary healthcare organization serving rural communities of Southern Monterey County. Overall, our healthcare professionals serve a population of nearly 80,000 within an area spanning over 55 miles between the agricultural communities of Soledad to Bradley.

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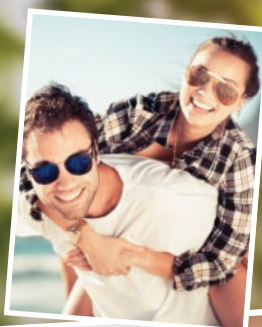


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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

KEEPING VITAL AS WE AGE



SYLVIA ORTIZ AND CHARLIE

Sylvia Ortiz loves the feeling of the water as she slides into the pool, something she does at least five days a week. Moving, weightless through water, reaching, rolling, stretching, is ethereal, she says, as she swims with enough resistance to propel herself, working her muscles and opening her joints, without overtaxing anything.

It does the same for her mind, she says, allowing her to let go of the demands of the day and just be.

"Everything seems a little easier to handle on days that begin with outdoor swimming," she says, "followed by a walk on the beach with my little dog, Charlie."

## CREATIVE CONNECTIVITY

It's very important, says McDermott, particularly in a time when we are being asked to stay socially distant and to shelter in place, that we make the effort to get engaged and stay connected.

"We need to encourage seniors not to say, 'I'm too old to learn to Zoom, Facetime, Skype.' These are wonderful ways to stay connected to friends and family," McDermott says. "Seeing people on a screen makes all the difference; it feels like we've actually been together."

Another way to feel vital at this time, she says, is to connect with a world outside the home, by engaging in meaningful work—not necessarily employment, but activities that foster creativity, reach out to others, make a difference. Volunteering helps those in need and also bolsters the volunteer.

And, by all means, she says, laugh. As often as possible. There is optimism in laughter as well as joy, paired with a sense of engagement with whatever was funny or whoever made us laugh. ■

*Lisa Crawford Watson lives with her family on the Monterey Peninsula. She specializes in writing about art and architecture, health and lifestyle, and food and wine.*

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**Alex Holmes, MD** - Cataract Surgery

**Kevin Chen, MD** - Retina Surgery & Macular Diseases

**Martha Ryan, MD** - Cataract Surgery

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# FREE ONLINE WORKSHOP URGES FIRE PREPAREDNESS



Photo by ProPix Media

The Fire Safe Council For Monterey County and Wanda Vollmer of Peace of Mind Preparedness have developed a free workshop, "Wildfire and You," to help inform Monterey County residents, including seniors and those with disabilities and their relatives, friends, and caregivers, about how they can prepare for wildfires and help protect lives and homes.

The "Wildfire and You" online workshop takes about 30 minutes to complete and can be taken at any time, at no cost, by going to this web page and following the simple instructions: [www.firesafemonterey.org/workshops.html](http://www.firesafemonterey.org/workshops.html).

More than 100,000 of Monterey County's residents live in the county's rural areas, which encompass about 1.6 million acres in county jurisdiction and are largely covered with hazardous accumulations of wildfire fuels.

The focus of the "Wildfire and You" workshop is to help Monterey County residents prepare their property for wildfire by creating effective defensible space, reducing wildfire fuels, and by home hardening, helping homes and communities withstand the impacts of wildfires and safely evacuate when needed.

Fire Safe Council For Monterey County is a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) non-profit organization committed to protecting lives and property from harm by wildfires, and to educating the public on wildfire dangers and how to reduce them. It supports projects that help make homes, neighborhoods, and communities fire safe by management of natural and man-made resources. Learn more at [www.firesafemonterey.org](http://www.firesafemonterey.org). ■

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Bulletins, News & Events in the Community

## DOCTOR'S NOTES

### Stay safe from COVID during the holidays

Health officers from the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, Napa, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Sonoma, and the city of Berkeley today issued joint recommendations for staying safe during the holidays. The recommendations cover gatherings and travel with recommended steps to reduce risk.

"With COVID-19 case rates rising around the country, we must keep up our efforts to reduce transmission," says Dr. Edward Moreno, Monterey County Health Officer. "When people who live in different houses or apartments gather at the same time and the same space, the risk of COVID-19 spreading goes up, even if the people are relatives or friends. Please celebrate safely this year and protect yourself, family and friends by using face coverings, keeping a distance, and gathering outdoors."

The joint recommendations advise the public that if you gather in person, keep it small, short, stable and outdoors. Also, nonessential travel, including holiday travel, is not recommended. Travel outside the Central Coast and Bay Area will increase your chance of getting infected and spreading the virus to others after your return.

For those who are traveling, there are tips to help avoid catching COVID-19 or spreading it to fellow travelers. If you travel outside the Central Coast and Bay Area, it is strongly recommended that you self-quarantine for 14 days after your return if your activities while traveling put you at higher risk of getting COVID-19.

The safest way to celebrate this holiday season is virtually or with members of your household. Gathering with people outside your household—even extended family—increases the risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. There are many ways to enjoy the holidays with loved ones without gathering:

- Enjoy holiday traditions at home with your household
- Decorate your home and/or yard
- Share a virtual meal with family and friends
- Host online parties and/or contests
- Prepare meals using traditional recipes and deliver to family and neighbors
- Attend holiday movie nights at drive-in venues
- Visit holiday-themed outdoor art installations
- Participate in drive-by events where everyone stays in their vehicles

Go to [co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=97961](https://co.monterey.ca.us/home/showdocument?id=97961) for more specific tips and information on how to connect safely during the holidays.

### Natividad Foundation donates 5,000 masks to ag

In response to the ongoing need for masks, Natividad Foundation has purchased and donated 5,000 masks to agricultural workers serving the Central Coast. The masks were donated to multiple companies

and were distributed through the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California. Funds for the masks came from a grant from the Community Foundation for Monterey County's COVID-19 Relief Fund.

"We are grateful to Natividad Foundation and the Community Foundation for their continued partnership and this generous donation of high-quality, comfortable masks that our members can provide to their employees," said Abby Taylor-Silva, Vice President, Policy and Communications of the Grow-Shipper Association.

Throughout the pandemic, GSA has been focused on the health and wellness of agricultural workers on the frontlines. One of its top initiatives has been securing and distributing facial coverings.

"This year our agricultural workers have had to work through a pandemic, endure extreme heat and wildfire smoke," said Jennifer Williams, President & CEO of Natividad Foundation. "Protecting farm workers and their families who make up the backbone of America's Salad Bowl is crucial."

To learn more about how GSA is serving Central Coast agricultural workers, go to [www.growershipper.com](http://www.growershipper.com). For more information on Natividad Foundation, visit [www.natividadfoundation.org](http://www.natividadfoundation.org).

### South County medical system offers flu shot clinics

There's never been a more important time to get a flu shot, so King City's Mee Memorial Healthcare System is extending its clinic flu vaccinations for the communities of King City and Greenfield.

Flu shots are available from 2-5 p.m. Dec. 4 and 18. Appointments are necessary please call ahead. Fees may apply.

The King City Clinic is located at 210 Canal St. (info at 831-385-7100). The Albert and Donna Oliveira Clinic is located at 467 El Camino Real, Greenfield. (info at 831-674-0112).

It's likely that flu viruses and the coronavirus will both spread this winter as people begin to move indoors. A flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19, but there are many important benefits, such as reducing the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and more; and saving precious healthcare resources for patients with COVID-19.

Of highest priority for the Mee Memorial Healthcare System is keeping its community healthy. This includes offering an extensive array of medical and preventative services with a commitment to the highest possible standards, the best available technology, and the care of skilled professionals.

The Mee network includes a hospital in King City including emergency services, 25 acute care beds and 48 skilled nursing beds, and three comprehensive outpatient clinics; two adjacent to the hospital (Adult Medicine and the King City Clinic, for Internal, Pain and Family Medicine) and the Albert and Donna Oliveira Clinic, a full service, primary care facility in the city of Greenfield.

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