



Employees' Retirement System Communicator

September 2012

No. 9

From the Desk of the ERS Manager

Hello Milwaukee County Retirees!

Included in this month's Communicator are great articles on driving as we age and Breast Cancer Awareness. The Benefits Department Dependent Eligibility Verification period is wrapping up — if you haven't supplied the requested information, please do so. Plans are continuing on the three benefits open enrollment information sessions. The schedule will be available soon. And remember, flu shots will again be available to all Milwaukee County Retirees and their covered adult dependents at no cost to the retiree.

Please call our office at any of the numbers listed in the shaded box to the left if you have questions regarding your pension or healthcare benefits. We are here to help!

Marian Ninneman
ERS Manager

OLDER DRIVERS

When it comes to older drivers, there is good news and bad news. The good news is that older drivers are more likely to wear their seatbelts and less likely to speed, use distracting electronic devices while driving, or drink and drive. The bad news, however, is that there are inevitable age-related declines that occur that can effect driving abilities. This month *The Communicator* focuses on older drivers' risks and steps you can take to reduce those risks.

Changes to Your Body

As we age, joints may get stiff. Muscle strength, range of motion and flexibility diminish. This can make it harder to turn your head to look back, turn the steering wheel quickly or brake safely.

See your doctor if you think that pain or stiffness gets in the way of your driving. Maintain or increase your exercise regimen to improve strength and physical endurance. Monitor diet and nutrition to help stave off further decline.

Changes to Your Vision

It is common for eyesight to change as you get older. Issues include problems with depth perception, night vision, high- and low-contrast vision, and delayed recovery from glare from oncoming headlights, streetlights or the sun. Eye diseases like glaucoma, cataracts and macular degeneration may slowly creep up on you. Some medications can also cause vision change.

Regular eye exams are a must for aging eyes. Your ophthalmologist will want to see you every 1 to 2 years. Many vision problems can be successfully treated. If you need

Contact Information

Employees' Retirement System

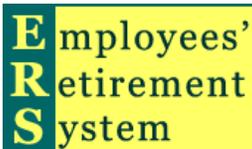
From the Milwaukee area: 414-278-4207
Toll Free: 877-652-6377
Email: ers@milwcnty.com

Life & Health Benefits

Phone: 414-278-4198.
Email: benefits@milwcnty.com

New Retirees

Karen Bodshaug
Sandra Butler
Ralph Engl
Keith Kalberer
Adrienne Kiff
Linda Liston
Kathleen McMahon
Mary Meyer
Margot Oneal
Robin SanAgustin
Ensie Tuck
Patricia Washington
Deborah Weishapl
Mary Zanon



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glasses or contact lenses for distance while driving, be sure your prescription is correct and up to date and, most importantly, always wear them while driving.

Changes to Your Hearing

Hearing is another important sense that can worsen with age, making it harder to notice horns, sirens and even noises from your own car. Since these sounds warn you when you may need to pull over or get out of the way, not being able to hear them can put you at risk.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association recommends having your hearing checked every 3 years after age 50. Medicine or surgery can alleviate some hearing loss. Get a hearing aid to help if your doctor recommends it. Many different types of hearing aids exist so do your homework to be sure you select the right one for you. Keeping the inside of your car as quiet as possible while driving is also helpful. Pay attention to dashboard warning lights that alert you when something is wrong with your car.

Changes to Your Reaction Time and Cognition

In order to drive safely, you must be able to react quickly to other cars and pedestrians. You must also be able to remember what to do in changing situations. Age-related decline in cognitive functioning (the ability to reason and remember) can affect your driving ability. Changes over time might also slow how fast you react and your attention span may be shorter.

Once you notice any of these negative changes in your reactions, defensive driving is recommended. For example, you can leave a bit more space between you and the car in front of you, start braking early when you need to stop, avoid high traffic areas if possible and drive in the right-hand lane on the highway. Consider taking a driver safety or defensive driving course. You may even be eligible to receive an insurance discount upon completing this type of course, so consult your insurance agent or insurance company directly for details. Online courses are available as well including one from AARP (<http://aarpdriersafety.org/>). Another helpful website to check out is <http://seniordriving.aaa.com/>.

Your Medications

Many medications have side effects. You may take something that makes you feel drowsy, light-headed or less alert than usual. Since people tend to take more medications as they age, pay attention to how these drugs may affect your driving.

Read the medicine labels carefully paying attention to any warnings. Unsafe drug interactions are also a concern. Make a list of everything you take (even non-prescription drugs) and review with your pharmacist how they may influence your driving.

Your Car

Another unique challenge for older drivers is the type of car they choose to drive. In addition to the usual criteria when selecting a particular car (like gas mileage or horsepower) older drivers face other problems like simply getting in and out of a car and adjusting the driver's seat once they get there. These concerns

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may sound trivial but air bags make the proper seating position a matter of life and death. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), drivers sitting too close to a steering wheel mounted air bag can be injured, possibly fatally, if the air bag goes off in a collision. When considering the purchase of a new car, research the top options for older drivers.

The CarFit Program

CarFit is a free nationwide educational program created by the American Society on Aging and developed in collaboration with AAA, AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association. Launched in 2005, CarFit offers older adults the opportunity to check how well their personal vehicles “fit” them. A proper fit in your car can greatly increase not only the driver’s comfort and safety but also the safety of others.

CarFit sessions are typically held in convenient community locations like a school or community center. A session usually takes less than 30 minutes including a brief sign-in procedure. The driver pulls into a check-in lane, turns off the engine and spends most of the session behind the wheel. A CarFit volunteer technician then goes through a 12-point checklist to look for potential safety problems, such as whether the head restraint is positioned properly. The driver leaves the session with a copy of the checklist highlighting items addressed during the meeting.

Common problems found include how to properly adjust car mirrors to minimize blind spots when changing lanes. Some older drivers reach with their toes to press the gas and brake pedals, a dangerous practice that can cause leg fatigue and further slow reaction times. Another concern is the need for a line of sight at least 3” over the steering wheel.

To find and register for a local CarFit event near you, go to www.car-fit.org.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there will be more than 40 million U.S. drivers age 65 and older by 2020, up from 29 million in 2005. Driving helps older adults stay mobile and independent. The risk of being injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash increases as we age. To protect

Benefits Update

Breast Cancer — Dispelling the Myths

Breast cancer myths make it hard to know what to believe. Learn the facts, then forget the rest. Your health may depend on it.

Breast cancer is a common fear among women, and knowledge is the best weapon against fear. Sadly, a lot of bad information is out there, which makes it hard to know what to believe. Here is the truth about some common myths.

Myth: Breast cancer is the leading cause of death in American women.

Fact: Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women, but it is not the main cause of death. Coronary heart disease (which causes heart attack) is by far the number one killer of women in the U.S. It kills more

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women than all types of cancer combined. Breast cancer is not even the deadliest type of cancer. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in women.

Myth: Antiperspirants cause breast cancer.

Fact: Some e-mails claim that substances in antiperspirants and deodorants are absorbed through the skin by way of nicks from shaving and can lead to cancer. Neither the National Cancer Institute nor the FDA has found any link between antiperspirants or deodorants and breast cancer.

Myth: I will get breast cancer because it runs in my family.

Fact: You may be at higher risk for breast cancer if other people in your family have had it. But many women who have a family history of breast cancer never develop it. Your doctor or a genetic counselor can help you understand your personal risk for breast cancer and what steps you can take to lower it.

Myth: I don't have breast cancer in my family, so I won't get it.

Fact: Plenty of women who are diagnosed with breast cancer have no family history of the disease. The fact of being a woman is your main risk factor, and the risk rises as you age, especially after menopause. That's why mammograms and clinical breast exams are important for all women as they get older.

Myth: Bras cause breast cancer.

Fact: This rumor has been spread through e-mail and at least one book. There is no evidence that wearing any type of bra causes breast cancer.

Myth: Only women get breast cancer.

Fact: It's rare, but men can get breast cancer. They account for less than one percent of all breast cancer cases. Men who get breast cancer often have an inherited breast cancer gene mutation. When in doubt, check it out

Many myths about breast cancer make the rounds through e-mail and the Internet. Don't believe everything you read. Even if it sounds like it could be true, check the facts

In Memoriam

Please keep the families of these recently deceased retirees and spouses in your thoughts:

*Mabel Brugger
Mary Burt
Luvenia Cooper
Bessie Evans*

*Sammie Glisper
Fannie Grant
Gerald Hausman
Helen Kalkofen*

*Eileen Michalak
Lawrence Pestotnik
Frederick Slater
Albert Townsend*

*Wilma Williams
Charlene Wilson-
Durr*