



Employees' Retirement System Communicator

September 2014

No. 9

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Employees' Retirement System

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Newly Retired Members

New Retirees

Kristine Bruno

Janice Brylow

Joseph Cooper

Barbara Garth

Karl Howe

Ruth Hozeska

Charles Johnson

Barbara Joplin

Janet Kopacz

Barbara Lathan

Michael Luck

Lynn Marcus

Belinda Mosley

Jackie Player

Bonnie Puetz

Carla Redlin

Geraldine Rodgers

Kirk Swanigan

Christine Trepanier

Mary Van Wie

Charlotte Walker

From the Desk of the ERS Manager

Dear Milwaukee County Retirees,

The election to fill the retiree Pension Board seat is starting as I write this and will close September 30. Please watch for a special mailing the first week of October to find out who will be your Pension Board spokesperson.

Marian Ninneman
ERS Manager

By Vivian Aikin

MEDICAL ALERT SYSTEMS

"I've fallen and I can't get up!" This iconic phrase was first uttered in a 1989 TV commercial for a medical alert system named LifeCall. While the message was an important one, the bad acting turned it into a humorous catchphrase in our pop culture. But falls among older adults are no laughing matter. Falls can result in debilitating injuries like broken bones or head trauma. People who fall and lie helpless for hours or even days may suffer serious complications including dehydration, hypothermia, muscle breakdown, pneumonia, pressure ulcers or renal failure. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one in three adults age 65 and over will fall in a given year. What's more, two-thirds will fall again within six months. Here are some other distressing facts:

- ◆ The risk of falls increases proportionately with age. At age 80, over half of seniors fall annually.
- ◆ Those who fall are two to three times more likely to fall again.
- ◆ Falls account for 25% of all hospital admissions and 40% of all nursing home admissions for seniors.
- ◆ About half (53%) of older adults who are discharged for fall-related hip fractures will experience another fall within six months.
- ◆ Falls are the leading cause of death due to injury among the elderly; 87% of all fractures in the elderly are due to falls.

Falls are not the only danger. Medical emergencies like a stroke, seizure or heart attack can happen at any time. The systems can also help in non-emergency situations in which the user doesn't need an ambulance but needs someone to come to their aid.

Medical alert systems can be an effective tool for people who want to live independently and safely whether in their own homes, with friends or relatives or in a group setting. The devices were first introduced in the 1970s and were very simple, push-button mechanisms designed only to be worn around the neck. When the button was pressed, a call center would be alerted allowing wireless two-way communication. Through technological advances and innovation, today's medical

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alert systems are much more sophisticated. There are now dozens of companies offering medical alert systems. While having so many choices is great, picking the right option for you or a loved one can be daunting.

Here are some ideas on what to look for once you are in the market for a medical alert system:

- ◆ Compare the services and products of several different companies.
- ◆ Avoid companies that require a long term contract and make sure you can cancel at any time without a fee.
- ◆ Watch out for costly activation or equipment delivery fees.
- ◆ You will have to pay a monthly monitoring fee, usually in the \$30 range. Ask if this fee will increase.
- ◆ Match the system with the user's disability. For example, someone who has suffered a stroke may need a device that can be activated with one hand. Also, a choice of a wristband and/or neck pendant is a good idea. Cords around the neck could pose a strangulation risk for some people, while some with skin conditions may find wristbands irritating.
- ◆ Make sure the device has a battery backup in case of a power failure.
- ◆ In addition to wearable options, some systems allow you to mount help buttons throughout your home that will provide two-way voice communication with the call center. This might be a useful option to consider depending on the user's mobility.

Another state-of-the-art option is a motion-sensitive device that can detect a fall and automatically place a call for help without the need for any buttons to be pressed.

- ◆ Look for a provider that offers multiple choices for whom to contact if you need help, from emergency services to a family member or friend who lives nearby.
- ◆ Select a company that has its own monitoring center located in the United States employing its own trained emergency operators (rather than contracting out that function).
- ◆ Avoid any company that uses aggressive, high pressure sales tactics to get your business. Don't agree to any plan if you feel you are being forced into a quick decision.

AARP warns of telephone scams involving medical alert systems. It begins as a robocall with a somber warning of increasing rates of death and injury from falls or other medical emergencies involving people who live alone. It promises a "free" medical alert device and instructs you to "press 1". That's when a live telemarketer comes on the line and asks for your credit card information for a small delivery charge and future monitoring fees. In another variation, the robocall claims the free offer is being made on behalf of AARP. Some will promise that you'll receive \$3,000 in money-saving coupons as an enticement. Yet another tactic is to claim that your doctor has ordered the device for you and they just need your credit card information to complete the transaction. Either way, hang up!

Even the best medical alert system is only as effective as the person using it. Whether the device is for you or a loved one, it's important to keep in mind that it must be worn at all times, including in the bathroom or outside, to be helpful. Industry research shows that in the majority of falls, push-button medical devices are never activated. Reasons for this may be panic or forgetfulness. While the newest devices are designed to help overcome this problem, to get the most out of any medical alert system the user must understand how to properly use the device and be committed to its life-saving potential.

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FLU SHOTS

Milwaukee County will be offering free flu shots to all Milwaukee County retirees and adult dependents the weeks of **October 6, 2014 and October 13, 2014**. Please see schedule below. A representative from the Employee Benefits Division will be present at all sessions to answer any benefit questions you have about your **current benefits**.

OPEN ENROLLMENT 2015

This year's open enrollment period and informational sessions will be held from **December 8, 2014 through December 17, 2014**. Retirees are welcome to attend any of the sessions listed below; **attendance is optional**. Watch for additional information in the coming months.

Monday, December 8 Wilson Park Senior Center – Main Hall 2601 W. Howard Avenue	Wednesday, December 10 Clinton Rose Senior Center 3045 N. Martin Luther King Drive	Monday, December 15 Washington Park Senior Center – Main Hall 4420 W. Vliet Street
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Staff Contributions:

Denise McCaskill, Retirement Specialist

Fill up on Fresh Fall Fruits and Vegetables

Summer ended, and the fall season began on September 22. Fall comes with multiple colors of leaves and the availability of colorful fresh fruits and vegetables. According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "Fruits and vegetables are sources of many vitamins, minerals and other natural substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases". It is beneficial to eat fruits and vegetables of a variety of colors. Fruits and vegetables contain unique health components that are essential to our health. Eating fruits and vegetables of many colors provides a wide range of valuable nutrients, like fiber, folate, potassium, and vitamins A and C. Some examples include; green spinach, orange sweet potatoes, black beans, yellow corn, purple plums, red watermelon, and white onions".

According to experts:

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Red, orange and yellow fruits and vegetables

- ◆ Reduce prostate cancer risk
- ◆ Lower blood pressure
- ◆ Reduce tumor growth
- ◆ Reduce LDL cholesterol levels
- ◆ Support joint tissues in arthritis cases

Green fruits and vegetables

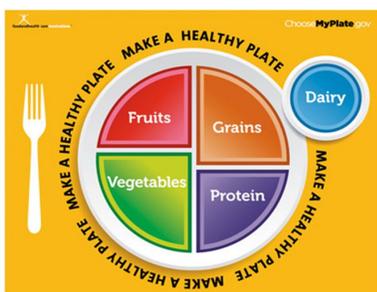
- ◆ Reduce cancer risk
- ◆ Support retinal health and vision
- ◆ Boost immune system activity

Blue and purple fruits and vegetables

- ◆ Fight inflammation
- ◆ Limit the activity of cancer cells
- ◆ Are cancer fighters in the digestive tract

White fruits and vegetables

- ◆ Reduce the risk of colon, breast and prostate cancers
- ◆ Balance hormone levels
- ◆ Reduce the risk of hormone related cancers



How to judge if you are getting a good dose of all the goodness fruits and vegetables provide? A meal should consist of half the plate filled with colorful fruits and vegetables (5 servings a day) and the other half of grains and proteins.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/>

Fruits and vegetables that are available and are best flavored in the fall are:

Apples	Celery	Mushrooms	Star Fruit
Bananas	Cranberries	Onions	Sweet Potatoes
Beans	Cauliflower	Oranges	Tomatoes
Beets	Egg Plant	Papayas	Turnips
Brussel Sprouts	Grapes	Pears	White Potatoes
Broccoli	Honeydew Melon	Peppers	Winter Squash
Butternut Squash	Kiwi	Pumpkins	
Cabbage	Lemons	Radishes	
Cantaloupe	Limes	Spinach	

Not only are fruits and vegetables good for your health, Fall is the perfect time to shop for the many fruits and vegetables that are at their ripest and can be canned or placed in freezer bags for easy access later. Visit your local markets today!

Newly Retired Members Cont'd

*Kaye Wallace
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Greg Zuchowski*