

KEEPING WELL

A JOURNAL OF WELLNESS AND GOOD HEALTH CARE

SUMMER 2011

MEMORY LAPSE

A simple slip or a serious concern?

IN TV shows and movies, an older, absent-minded character can make us laugh. But it's hard to deny: Sometimes the joke hits a little close to home.

Let's face it. Who hasn't worried about keys we can't find, faces we can't place or words we can't coax past the tip of the tongue?

Is it normal forgetfulness, or is it an ominous sign of eventual dementia?

Experts on mental health and aging say that a certain amount of memory loss comes with the territory. Just as age affects your muscles and bones, your brain also changes as you get older.

And while that can lead to occasional forgetfulness, it doesn't necessarily mean you're on a path to Alzheimer's disease. In fact, Alzheimer's occurs in fewer than 1 in 5 people age 65 or older, according to the American Psychological Association.

For many people with age-related memory issues, the problems are, thankfully, more mundane. Perhaps you don't learn new things as quickly or remember information as easily as you once did. Or you might find it harder to do several things at once or to jump back and forth from one task to another.

In addition, some memory problems are linked to specific health issues. For example, anxiety, depression, vitamin deficiency and side effects from medication can all contribute to forgetfulness, as can disorders of the thyroid, kidney or liver. Often, when those underlying issues are addressed, memory improves.



▲ Val Verde Regional Medical Center hosts Alzheimer's Support Groups for people who have loved ones with the disease. The group meets every fourth Monday at 6 p.m. in the Memorial Conference Room at Val Verde Regional Medical Center. The next meeting is July 25. For more information, call Jeanette Gallegos at **830-778-3739**.

When to seek help for memory loss

Are memory problems just an annoyance, or are they a cause for serious concern? It's not always easy to tell, but there are some signs to watch for.

For example, experts say someone with significant memory problems may:

- ▶ Get lost in a familiar place.
- ▶ Forget the names of loved ones.
- ▶ Have trouble with everyday chores, like paying bills, bathing or fixing a meal.
- ▶ Ask the same question over and over again in the same conversation.
- ▶ Take much longer to do a task they used to do easily.
- ▶ Lose track of dates or even the time of year.

Talk to your doctor if you or a loved one shows signs like these or if you have other concerns about memory loss.

Sources: Alzheimer's Association; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

What else can help?

To help boost your memory and mental skills:

- ▶ Make a list. Write down the things you need to do, and mark them off as you do them.
- ▶ Find your groove. It's easier to remember routine tasks—like taking medications—if you do them at the same time every day.
- ▶ Stay physical. Exercise, such as brisk walking, may help boost and maintain brain function.
- ▶ Listen up. It's easier to get confused if you don't hear well. Use a hearing aid if you need one.

Finally, if you are concerned that a health issue could be affecting your memory, make an appointment with your doctor. If a medical problem does exist, it's in your best interest to start treatment as soon as possible.

Numbers to know



Val Verde Regional Medical Center
801 Bedell Ave.
Del Rio, TX 78840
830-775-8566
info@vvrvc.org
www.vvrvc.org
Customer care:
830-703-1717
Education/ staff development:
830-778-3635
Geriatric mental health (Heritage Program):
830-778-3629
Hospice:
830-774-4580
Human resources/ job line:
830-703-1716
Imaging center:
830-703-1743
Pastoral care:
830-775-8566, ext. 2253
Patient accounts:
830-778-3690
Public relations:
830-778-3651
Rehabilitation services:
830-703-1729
Respiratory care:
830-703-1742
Safe Kids:
830-778-3632

VVRMC events

Val Verde Regional Medical Center (VVRMC) is dedicated to the health and well-being of our community. In order to help you stay well, VVRMC is proud to offer a variety of health-related seminars through the Community Health Education Series.

Upcoming programs include:

- Cardiac Rehabilitation**
- ▶ Wednesday July 27, noon
Presented by Billy Don Jones, MD, Vista Verde Medical Plaza
- Planning Ahead for Our Parent's Care Needs**
- ▶ Tuesday, August 23, at 6 p.m.
Presented by the Briscoe Resource Center

Cancers That Affect Women

- ▶ Wednesday, September 28, noon
Presented by Susan Taylor, MD, Rio Bravo Cancer and Blood
- All classes are held at VVRMC. They are free, and food will be provided. Call education/staff development or go to **www.vvrvc.org**.



Carefree summer

When you're planning a vacation, keep your kids' safety in mind

ARE you planning a vacation with the family?

Travel safely with the following tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Safe Kids USA.

Buckle 'em up. Whatever your mode of transportation or destination, think about how your children will travel safely. Bring car and booster seats along, if needed.

Kids who ride in car seats should also use them on planes. A label on the car seat should say whether it's certified for air travel.

Booster seats, which require shoulder belts, won't work on a plane. Aircraft only have lap belts. Children who use boosters should sit directly on the airplane seat with the lap belt buckled across their thighs or hips.

And while airlines allow children 2 years and younger

to ride on a parent's lap, the AAP recommends that children have their own seats.

Pack a crib. Bring a folding travel crib for babies, if possible.

Surveys by Safe Kids show that many hotel cribs are damaged or defective. And a borrowed crib may not be up to current safety standards.

Childproof. If you'll be staying with family or friends, encourage them to install electrical outlet covers, cabinet locks and other child-safety devices. Or bring your own.

Bring the right gear. Pack helmets, pads and other safety equipment for children who will be biking, riding scooters and doing other activities on your trip.

One more thing to remember, of course: Have fun!



Illness doesn't take the weekend off. Neither do we!

Val Verde Health Clinic is now open in Del Rio and offers weekend hours. The clinic provides efficient, high-quality care for situations that are not life-threatening. You do not need an appointment.

Visit Val Verde Health Clinic for minor illnesses and injuries, such as:

- ▶ Cuts and lacerations.
- ▶ Sprains and strains.
- ▶ Colds, fever and flu.
- ▶ Earaches.
- ▶ Rashes.
- ▶ Stomachaches, vomiting and diarrhea.
- ▶ Back pain.

The clinic is at 1200 Bedell Ave. (at the corner of Bedell Avenue and 10th Street).

Call 830-775-7555 for more information. Count on Val Verde Health Clinic to provide thoughtful, thorough care for your entire family.

It's swim season: Keep kids safe

What's the best equipment for keeping kids safe around water? Your eyes.

It only takes a moment for children to get into trouble in the water. Watch them closely, advises Safe Kids USA. Avoid distractions like reading or talking on the phone.

Other safety tips:

- ▶ If your child can't swim, stay within arm's reach.

- ▶ Don't rely on water wings or other pool toys to keep kids afloat.
- ▶ Teach children that swimming is only allowed with adult supervision.
- ▶ Drain wading pools when they're not in use.
- ▶ Don't let older kids dive into water that's less than 9 feet deep.
- ▶ Get kids into swimming lessons after age 4 years, and consider lessons for kids ages 1 to 4.

KEEPING WELL

KEEPING WELL is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of VAL VERDE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, 801 Bedell Ave., Del Rio, TX 78840, telephone 830-775-8566, website www.vvrmc.org.

Frank Larson
President, District
Board of Directors

Marc Strode
Chief Executive Officer

Francine Piña
Director of
Public Relations

Information in KEEPING WELL comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

Copyright © 2011 Coffey Communications, Inc.

CUT26819h

SUMMER 2011