

Triad NEWSLETTER

SAFETY, CRIME PREVENTION, AND
HEALTHY LIVING FOR OLDER ADULTS

Summer 2023



2023 Triad Conference is October 20

For more than 20 years, RSVP of Dane County's Triad Program and Triad of Wisconsin have organized the Triad Conference to focus attention on the personal and public safety, and health issues that are important to older adults. Participants from all over Wisconsin, both older adults and professionals in a wide variety of fields, from caregiving and advocacy to social work and law enforcement, have gathered to hear presentations and to participate in breakout sessions led by health, safety, and law enforcement experts.

The 2023 conference will kick off at 8:30 with the keynote address to be followed by an exciting group of experts leading trainings and breakout sessions on online and information security for seniors, loneliness and social isolation, modifiable risk factors and dementia, civilian active shooter response training, trauma first aid, banking in the 21st century, and much more. We will be providing Certificates of Attendance to everyone who would like one to document attendance.

Thanks to the generosity of American Family Insurance, we are returning to the spacious American Family Training Center on American Parkway in Madison. We will have an Exhibitors Area, so if your organization is interested in participating as an Exhibitor, please email Mike Thomsen at mthomsen@rsvpdane.org for more information. Finally, *keep an eye on your email for the complete conference program and registration instructions arriving in the near future.* The *Early Bird* admission rate will be just \$30 which includes lunch.

In This Issue

2023 Triad Conference is October 20	1
Welcome, Jeanna Olson and Carole Vincent!.....	1
Managing Diabetes in the Summer Heat	2-3
The Value of Home Safety Assessments	4
Piggy Problems.....	5
Planning for the Future: Advance Directives.....	6-7
Summer House Maintenance Checklist	8

Welcome, Jeanna Olson and Carole Vincent!

Finding volunteers who enjoy writing is a challenge, but two more outstanding writers and editors have joined us in the second quarter. We are grateful they have decided to share their talents with Triad. Jenna and Carole, "Thank You" for volunteering to write and edit for the Triad Newsletter. We can always use more help, so if you're interested in writing please email mthomsen@rsvpdane.org.

Managing Diabetes in the Summer Heat

By Jeanna M. Olson, Triad Volunteer

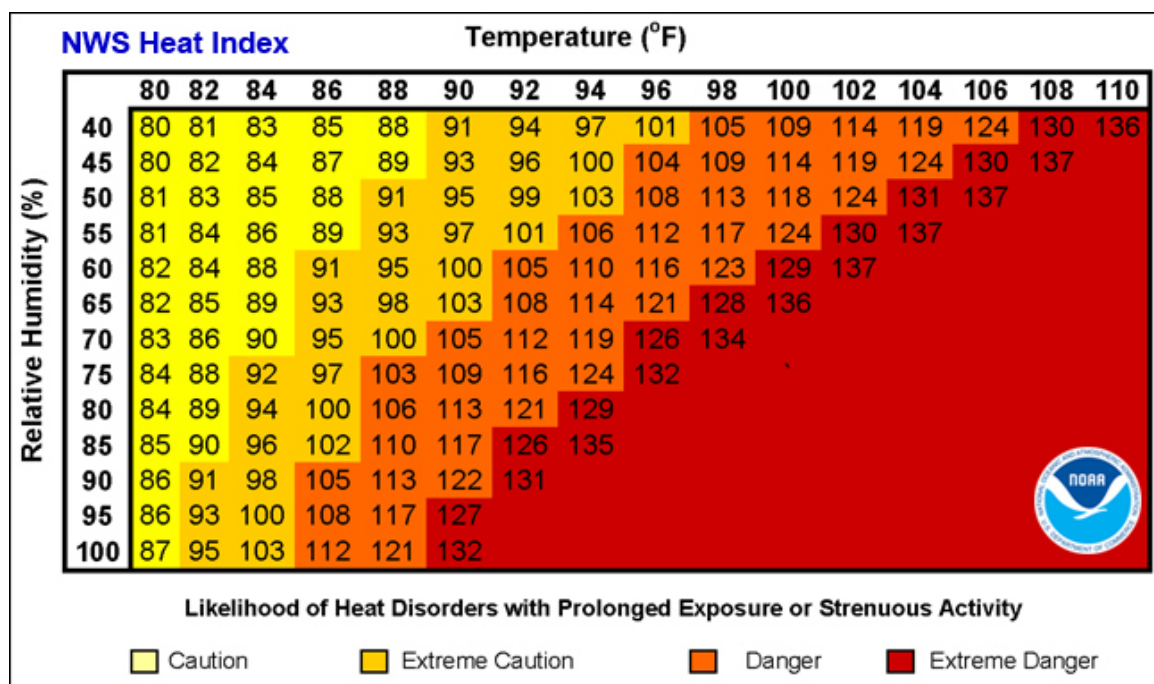
Being a senior and a diabetic in the stifling Wisconsin heat presents extra challenges to diabetes management. Those 65 years and older often find it more difficult to control their body temperature, for instance, and people with Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes often feel the heat more because heat changes how your body uses insulin. Even sweating can be an issue because while the evaporation of sweat on your skin removes heat and cools you down, it doesn't evaporate as well in the humid Wisconsin weather. And it's easier for many diabetics to get heat exhaustion because diabetic complications, such as damage to blood vessels and nerves, can also affect sweat glands and your body's ability to cool down. This article will cover some key advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other health authorities to help diabetics beat the Wisconsin heat.

Consistent exercise plays an essential role in controlling blood sugar. Using the National Weather Service Heat Index, which is available here <https://www.weather.gov/safety/heat-index>, can help you

plan your outdoor activities. Watch out for temperatures over 80 degrees in the shade with 40percent relative humidity or greater. And keep in mind that the heat index can be 15 percent higher in full sunlight.

Check your blood sugar before, during and after you are physically active, and hydrate, hydrate, hydrate. Diabetics tend to become dehydrated more quickly than non-diabetics because their higher glucose levels tend to increase urination and thus cause dehydration. So, drink plenty of water even if you are not thirsty. Remember the three Ls – loose, lightweight, and light-colored – when it comes to clothing, especially when you exercise. And try to exercise early in the morning or take it inside to an air-conditioned gym, mall, or big box store. Air-conditioned libraries are good places to go if you want to get out of the sun and just hang out.

Did you know that sunburn can also raise blood sugar? The American Academy of Dermatology recommends using water-resistant, 30+ SPF sunscreens with UVA and UVB (broad spectrum)



protection. They suggest using creams for your face and gels for hairy areas such as your scalp, back and chest. Harmful health effects from UV radiation increase in people over fifty, and the risk for diabetic retinopathy is higher with more than five hours of daily sunlight exposure. When buying a pair of sunglasses, be sure the tag says that they have 100 percent UV protection. Check out the American Academy of Ophthalmology's Tips for Choosing the Best Sunglasses: <https://bit.ly/aaosuntips>.

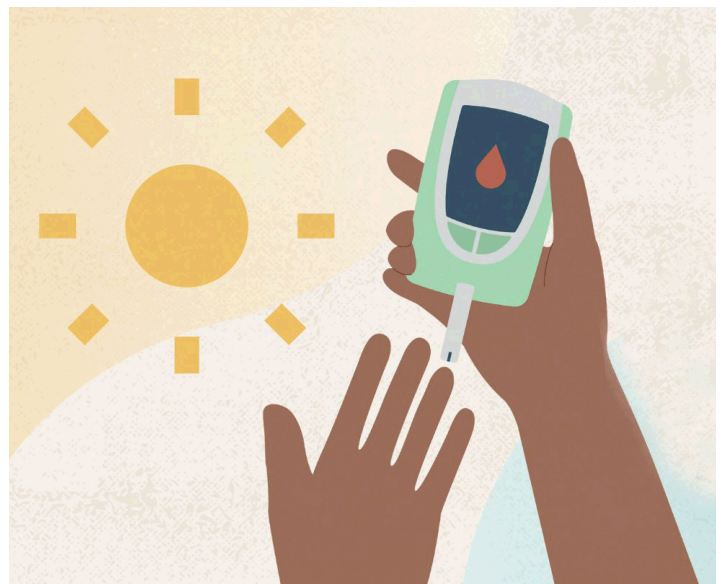


Diabetes medication, equipment and supplies also need protection from the sun, heat, and humidity. Don't store glucose test strips at temperatures over 90 degrees and check the label for specific brand recommendations. A 15-minute exposure to high temperatures and humidity can significantly affect the performance of glucose strips and meters. Most oral diabetes medication should be stored at room temperature, between 68 to 77 degrees. Insulin will break down at temperatures higher than 95 degrees and should NOT be kept in hot cars or in direct sunlight along with other diabetes medication and supplies. You can toss a cooler in the car when travelling, but don't put insulin directly on ice or gel packs. There are cooling bags and travel cases



specifically designed for diabetes supplies which along with a "go bag" should be easy to access in case of power outages or emergency evacuations.

Approximately 392,965 adults in Wisconsin are living with diabetes and with resources such as the American Diabetes Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are valuable sources of information to help you manage the disease year-round. Visit the CDC's Managing Diabetes in the Heat website at <https://bit.ly/cdcdiabheat>. You can also ask your doctor or dietician about diabetes education classes or use this ADA search tool <https://bit.ly/adasearch> to find a class or workshop close to you.



The Value of Home Safety Assessments

By Sarah Kruse, Communications Coordinator,
Sharing Active Independent Lives (SAIL), a program of AgeBetter, Inc.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among adults aged 65 and older, and the age-adjusted fall-death-rate is increasing. A Dane County public health report from 2016-2020 showed that falls were found to be the highest underlying cause of injury-related death in Dane County. As older adults, what are we to do to avoid being a part of these alarming statistics?

According to the CDC, Home Safety Assessments are among the leading evidenced-based strategies for the reduction of falls among older adults. (Other strategies include regular exercise that focuses on maintaining balance, reviewing medications

usually performed by an occupational therapist, social worker, or other trained individual. Generally, it involves a walk through your home with you while reviewing a checklist of potential falls risks, including things such as:

- Pathways
- Lighting
- Potential trip hazards
- Moving items from tall shelves and cabinets to more accessible locations
- Stairways
- Bathrooms



Reviewing recommendations following a home safety assessment.

at least annually to avoid adverse medication reactions, maintaining blood pressure levels, and having annual hearing and eye exams.) A Home Safety Assessment takes about an hour and is

At the end of the assessment a list of suggestions is provided along with resources to assist in making adjustments to improve safety.

(Continued on Page 5, bottom)

Piggy Problems

By Rick Larson, Triad Volunteer

This little piggy went to market

This little piggy stayed home

This little piggy had roast beef

This little piggy had none

This little piggy cried wee wee wee all the way home.

I remember that rhyme from my childhood. My grandmother would pinch each one of my toes and recite the ditty to my eternal delight.

Now, these many years later, I look down at my piggies and what do I see? Toenail fungus. Ugh! My grandmother would be appalled, unless she were also cursed with the fungus.

You hardly notice it when it starts. It begins with slight discoloration of some toenails. After a while, you see your toenails thickening and some awful crud building up underneath. It's pretty common in older people and it made me think twice about wearing sandals or flip flops. It's pretty unattractive (an oxymoron).

Like any blemish, sufferers want it gone, but getting rid of toenail fungus is tough business. It might be easier flying to Mars.

There are lots of over-the-counter remedies promising to bring the fungus to its knees in a week or two, but don't you believe it. It generally takes months and months of dedicated use to stop the fungus with these remedies. There's no magic bullet.

Some sufferers have tried home remedies to kill the fungus. Vicks Vaporub, mouthwash and even tee tree oil are just a few. Studies indicate that their effectiveness is hit and miss. For some, especially Diabetes patients, toenail fungus may require professional attention from a podiatrist. These foot doctors can evaluate your condition, trim the offending nails or even remove them. A podiatrist can also prescribe topical and oral medication to treat the condition. But know that the treatment still takes months and the oral med can have side effects such as nausea, headaches and even liver damage.

So if your little piggies are victims of dastardly toenail fungus, be nice to them. Keep them clean, trimmed and have a podiatrist's phone number standing by. Most of all, be patient.

(The Value of ... from Page 4)

AgeBetter, Inc., is currently in the pilot phase of establishing a "Safe at Home Program" to offer Home Safety and Medication Assessments. Since SSM discontinued their similar program in 2022, there has been a gap in this service in Dane County. Partnering with Madison College's Occupational Therapy program and with grant support from the Madison Community Foundation, AgeBetter has been offering assessments since March. Executive Director Ann Albert is pleased with how the pilot

project is progressing so far. "The impact of the assessments will be safer living environments, more behaviors leading to a decrease in falls among older adults, and increased referrals and connections to community resources to help mitigate falls and other risks to loss of independence. We are pleased to be offering this necessary resource."

For more information or to schedule an assessment, contact Ann Albert at info@agebettertoday.org or by calling AgeBetter at 608-230-4445.

Planning for the Future: Advance Directives

A Program Summary by Jane Bannerman, Triad Committee Member

This Triad program was presented on May 17, 2023, by Deanna Rymaszewski, a clinical educator and social worker with Agrace, a nonprofit community-based health care agency that provides hospice and supportive care services. Watch the full program on our YouTube channel. <http://youtube.com/@triadsofdanecounty>. Here is a list of some frequently asked questions that were answered by Deanna.

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is making decisions about the healthcare you want to receive if you are facing a medical emergency.

What is an Advance Directive or Power of Attorney for Health?

An Advance Directive is a legal document that details your wishes and appoints an agent to make healthcare decisions on your behalf if you are unable to make the decisions yourself.

Who should complete an Advance Directive?

Everyone who is over the age of 18 should complete an Advance Directive. This is very important, however few people take the time to discuss this important topic with loved ones and to complete the forms.

What forms must be completed?

- Power of Attorney for Health Care: A legal document created to assign an agent/surrogate decision-maker for the principal should they be unable to make their own medical decisions.
- Living Will: A legal document created by the principal to state their preference for life sustain procedures and feeding tubes if the person is

in a terminal condition or persistent vegetative state.

Where can you get the Advance Directives forms?

Advance Directives forms are available from your attorney, doctor, or hospital. And the State of Wisconsin Dept of Health Services has forms available, free of charge, that you can fill out here: <https://bit.ly/dhsadvdir>. You should watch this entire Triad program to get help in filling out the forms or get help from your healthcare provider or a lawyer.

What are the Healthcare Agent's duties?

When you are unable to do so, the healthcare agent, on your behalf, is empowered to

1. make choices about medical care for you.
2. review and release medical records for you.
3. arrange for medical care and treatment for you.
4. make decisions on living arrangements for you.
5. decide which health providers can provide treatment for you.
6. arrange for comfort measures for daily living for you.

What are the requirements to be a healthcare agent in Wisconsin?

A prospective healthcare agent must be at least 18 years of age and be cognitively able of making decisions. Your healthcare agent cannot be:

1. your healthcare provider,
2. an employee of your healthcare provider or of your healthcare facility,

3. the spouse of your healthcare provider or of an employee of your healthcare provider or facility.

Can you have more than one agent at a time?

It is not recommended to have more than one agent because if they do not agree the decision would have to go to court to resolve the disagreement.

Can Wisconsin Advance Directives be used in other states? And does Wisconsin accept a Power of Attorney from another state?

In general, Wisconsin Advance Directives can be used in other states, and Wisconsin accepts Advance Directives from other states if they address the three specific questions about nursing homes, feeding tubes, and care of pregnant women.

Who can be a witness for the Power of Attorney for Health?

A witness must be over 18 and cognitively capable. The witness cannot be your healthcare agent. Moreover, the witness must not be related to you, entitled to any portion of your estate, or directly financially responsible for your health care. And the witness should not be your healthcare care provider or an employee of your healthcare facility with the exception of a chaplain or a social worker.

When to review your Power of Attorney for Health?

Advance care planning is an ongoing dialogue where our wishes may change as we get older. It is important to keep in touch with your healthcare agent and update your Advance Directives as needed. Some important events at which we should consider updating our plan are

1. the death of a loved one.
2. after a divorce especially if your healthcare agent was your former spouse since the Power of Attorney for Health is invalidated by the divorce.
3. if you are diagnosed with a serious health condition.
4. if you move.
5. or at least once every ten years.

Who should have a copy of my Advance Directives?

You should give a copy of your Power of Attorney for Health to your Healthcare Agent, your healthcare provider, and to your healthcare system. If you travel, carry the Power of Attorney for Health with you.



Summer Home Maintenance Checklist

By Mike Thomsen, Triad Coordinator

When the weather is warm and sunny, doing a little maintenance on your house is probably the last thing on your mind. Summer, though, is the perfect time to do many maintenance jobs precisely because the weather is so nice.

- 1. Have the air conditioner inspected, cleaned and maintained.** There is no time better to have your air conditioner checked than on a hot, steamy summer day, especially if you have a whole-house dehumidifier. Look at the weather forecast for the next ten days and try to schedule a checkup and cleaning on a day that is likely to really hot, humid day to see if your air conditioner is working at its best. It's usually far better to pay for regular annual checkups and maintenance than to wait for a breakdown and incur major repair costs. By the way, be sure to replace the filters as recommended by the manufacturer.
- 2. Check the main water shutoff valve.** The valve should be located near the water meter. Make sure it is working properly. And, when you are away from home for an extended period of time, consider shutting off the water supply coming into your home. A water pipe that leaks for an extended period of time, or breaks while you are away from home, can cause a great deal of damage that could be expensive to repair. So, consider shutting the water off while you're traveling.

- 3. Remove lint from the inside and outside of water hoses and the clothes dryer vent.** Lint may build up inside of and around the hose that drains water from your clothes washing machine. It can become a problem if enough accumulates to restrict the flow of water from the washing machine. Also, dry lint that accumulates in the dryer vent is extraordinarily flammable. Reduce the risk of a house fire by keeping your dryer vent clean.
- 4. Have your trees and bushes pruned.** A falling branch, if it's large enough, can damage your roof, tear off a rain gutter, break a window, or even fall on you or a passerby. None of these possibilities sound like good things to happen anytime. Keep in mind, though, that it's better to prune some trees, such as oaks, at certain times of the year, so consult a reputable arborist to understand the health and structural integrity of your trees, and to get the timing right.
- 5. Clean your air vents.** Your home has a lot of air vents in the walls, floor, and even ceiling. Cleaning them regularly is a healthy idea that gets rid of dust, dirt, pollen, spider webs, hair, and many allergens. Dust also provides cover for mildew and mold to develop. And, if the dust gets thick enough, it can even increase the cost of heating and cooling your home.



***We hope you find the Triad Newsletter interesting and useful.
- Ellen Nelson, Volunteer Editor and Triad Committee Member***