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# Senior Care News

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## Vitamin D: The Sunshine Vitamin

Older Alaskans are at a strong risk of not producing enough vitamin D. Both age and lack of sun contribute to lack of Vitamin D.



Vitamin D usually comes through contact of the sun's UV rays with a person's uncovered skin. UV rays strong enough to promote Vitamin D

production only occur six months out of the year in Alaska (April to September). Cloud cover during these months also reduces UV energy. Staying indoors by a sunny window will not result in more Vitamin D because UV rays do not go through glass.

Very few foods contain Vitamin D in an amount which contribute to health: cod liver oil, fatty fish (such as salmon), and, to a lesser extent, whole egg and beef liver. Fortified foods such as milk and some cereals contain lower levels of Vitamin D.

Older adults 50 and above have less ability to produce Vitamin D than their younger counterparts. The answer for most seniors

is to take a Vitamin D supplement, usually 1000 to 2,000 units/day or more. Ask your doctor for a recommended amount for you.

To know whether you are deficient in Vitamin D, you can ask your doctor for a Vitamin D blood test which will tell you your level.

Why is Vitamin D important? Research indicates that not having sufficient Vitamin D can contribute to causing cancer, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, autoimmune diseases, diabetes, depression, osteoporosis, muscle weakness and wasting, and dental disease. Recent studies indicate Vitamin D may also play a role in reducing the risk of Parkinson's disease.



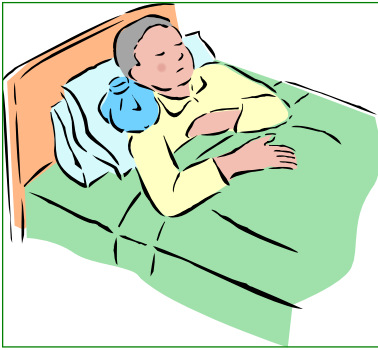
### Help With Medicare Costs

The Medicare Savings (Buy-In) Program helps Medicare beneficiaries with limited income and resources pay their Medicare costs. If your income is between \$1,148 and \$1,543 monthly, and you have \$4,000 or less in resources, you may qualify. If a couple's income is between \$1,538 and \$2,069, with resources of \$6,000 or less, they may qualify. Contact the Division of Public Assistance, **1-800-478-3537**.

## Bed Rest and Bed Sores: Practical Tips for Caregivers

When an elder is confined to bed or a wheelchair for long periods of time, a serious side effect can be pressure ulcers or bedsores. Bedsores are both very painful and difficult to cure, so the best action is prevention.

Bedsore develop on the body's pressure points: elbows, knees, heels, head, buttocks, and tailbone. They may begin with a breakdown of the skin from restricted blood flow.



**Recognizing bedsores:** Look for a reddened or purple area of unbroken skin which stays red even after pressure is relieved. Often the skin will feel warmer than surrounding skin. This is the first stage of a pressure ulcer.

**Call the doctor immediately to begin treatment.** Left untreated, the bedsores may eventually ulcerate and will probably result in the senior being hospitalized.

**Prevention: The main reason for pressure ulcers is not repositioning the elder regularly.** If the senior cannot move himself, help him change positions every **two** hours, going from lying on his back to his left side to his right side to his back again, and then repeat again. At each repositioning, also have the senior wiggle his toes and move his arms and legs. That will help blood circulation which helps prevent bed sores.

## Upcoming Events Across Southeast

### **Gustavus Community Health Fair**

Saturday, April 11, 8am-12pm, Gustavus School

### **Haines Community Health Fair**

Saturday, April 18, 8am-11am, Haines School

### **Juneau Family Caregivers Support Group**

Tuesday, April 14, 7-8pm, The Bridge Adult Day Center, 1803 Glacier Hwy. Call Senior Information and Caregiver Resource Center, 463-6177.

### **Juneau Guidance through Grief**

Juneau Home & Hospice Care 's eight-week bereavement support group, Thursday s, April 9-May 28, 6:30-8:30pm. Call HHCJ at 463-6109 or e-mail Sandra.Harris@ccsjuneau.org.

### **Juneau Community Health Fair**

Saturday, April 25, 9:30am-2pm, Nugget Mall

### **Ketchikan Family Caregiver Support Group**

Ketchikan Senior Center. Call Nicole: 225-8080

### **Sitka Family Caregivers Support Group**

Pioneer Home Manager's House. Call Brave Heart Volunteers: 747-4600

### **Wrangell Community Health Fair**

Saturday, April 4, 7am-12pm, Nolan Center

### **Yakutat Community Health Fair**

Saturday, April 4, 8am-12pm, Yakutat High School

## Still Struggling with Taxes?



AARP volunteers are helping seniors and others with their federal tax returns. Sites are open across Southeast Alaska through April 15. The volunteers are trained, and their help is free.

### **Craig**

Craig City Youth Center, 3rd & Spruce, Saturdays, 10:30 am - 2 pm.

### **Juneau**

Mendenhall Library, Mendenhall Mall, 9109 Mendenhall Mall Road, Sundays, 12 noon - 4 pm.

**Shut-ins, please call 789-9337.**

### **Ketchikan**

Rendezvous Senior Center, 2441 1st Ave., Saturdays, 10 am - 1 pm.

Ketchikan Parks & Rec Center, 601 Schoenbar Rd, Thursdays 6 pm - 8 pm.

Metlakatla Tongass Credit Union, 1 Milton St. Call 886-5975 to make an appointment.

Tongass Credit Union, 2000 Tongass Ave, Upstairs Conference Room, Saturdays 11 am - 2 pm.

### **Wrangell**

Wrangell Nolan Center, 296 Campbell Drive, Tuesdays, 1 pm - 5 pm.

This newsletter is published by the Senior Information / Caregiver Resource Center, 895 W. 12th St., Juneau, AK 99801. A Program of Southeast Senior Services, Catholic Community Services, Juneau, AK.

To add or remove your name from our mailing list, email [seniorinfo@gci.net](mailto:seniorinfo@gci.net) or call 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177 (toll free in Alaska).

## How to Be a Healthier Family Caregiver

Here are some tips for Family Caregivers, especially those feeling stress, grief or anger.

- **Have “me time” regularly. At least once a week, do something you enjoy for yourself.**
- **Ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, your church or others.**
- **Be specific about the help you want, whether it’s dinner fixed or a movie rental. Most caregivers need help with laundry, shopping, and cleaning.**
- **Watch your own health, especially your eating, sleeping, and exercising habits.**
- **Use respite care, whether it’s formal through an agency or informal through family and friends.**
- **Take advantage of training opportunities that give you more knowledge and skills.**

## Respite Care Grants Available

The Family Caregiver Program may be able to provide respite for Juneau, Ketchikan, Sitka, Hoonah, and other Southeast Alaska Family Caregivers. To see if respite care is available in your community and to apply, please contact the Senior Information/ Caregiver Resource Center at 463-6177 or 1-866-746-6177 toll-free .