

TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH

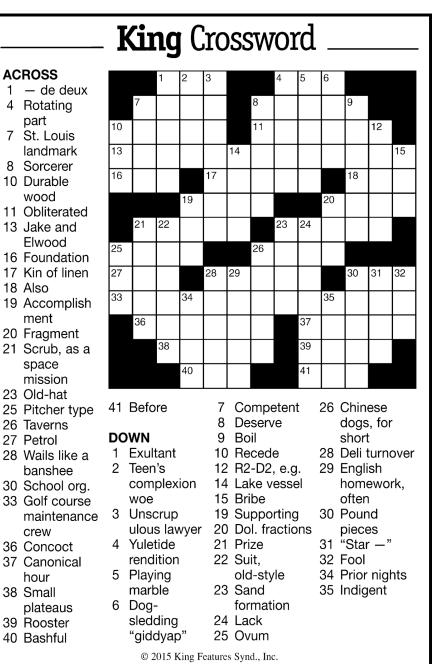
Sleep medications linked to falls

DEAR DR. ROACH: You've discussed sleep aids and your belief that it is best to get off all of this type of medication. I am healthy, 75 (take no meds), exercise with weights, do swimming and running regularly, and since 2007 have been taking an overthe-counter sleep aid called doxylamine nightly with no apparent side effects. Do you see a problem with continuing? — A.B. ANSWER: Unfortunately, I do see a problem. Odds are that you won't have a problem taking this medication; it's cheap and is effective for you. However, there is unequivocal, abundant, incontrovertible evidence that antihistamines like doxylamine or diphenhydramine increase fall risk. If you drive, they increase accident risk. They also can cause confusion.

quitting is small, if I can get enough people to minimize their sleep medications, I know I will prevent some falls. Falls are so often the first step in a progression from health to disability that I want to do all I can to prevent them.

Adequate lighting in the house at nighttime, especially between the bedroom and bathroom, avoiding obstructions like area rugs and the addition of stairway railings and tub grab bars all help reduce fall risk. Exercise programs — like the kind you are doing, but also tai chi - are great at preventing falls. So is getting your eyes checked. No single one of these interventions can prevent all falls. All of them together will prevent many. Your medication list, even a simple overthe-counter sleeping aid, is the best place to start looking to reduce risk of falls. DEAR DR. ROACH: My dad has an extreme case of COPD and is on oxygen. He gets winded just walking across the house. Dad lives in Montana; I live in Florida and would like him to come visit me during the cold Montana winters. I have heard that it would be easier for him to breathe at a lower altitude. But people have told him that if he comes to Florida, he would never be able to go back to Montana because he wouldn't be used to the altitude any longer. Is this true? — D.W.

ANSWER: The lower oxygen levels at high altitude, like some cities in Montana, can be a real problem for people with any kind of chronic lung disease. In those cases, supplemental oxygen or a lower altitude can make people feel better and even live longer. Given that your dad is already on oxygen, a lower altitude would be



Although the benefit to you from

similar to dialing up the oxygen a bit. He may certainly prefer Florida's winters to Montana's.

We begin to be accustomed to high altitude in a few days, but full acclimatization takes weeks. Your dad will be able to return home after his visit.

The booklet on COPD explains both emphysema and chronic bronchitis, the two elements of COPD, in detail. Readers can obtain a copy by writing: Dr. Roach — No. 601W, Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475. Enclose a check or money order (no cash) for \$4.75 U.S./\$6 Canada. with the recipient's printed name and address. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

SALOME'S STARS

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Having second thoughts could be a good thing, even if you're determined to go through with your plans. You might find it worthwhile to take a fresh look at how things have been set up.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Financial matters could continue to be a problem until you're able to straighten out some of the more pesky situations. Once that happens, the rest should be easier to unsnarl.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Family matters once again take center stage, and should be dealt with competently and quickly. And, again, insist on others taking on their fair share of the responsibilities.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Your creative pursuits seem to be running into a roadblock. But rather than blame outside factors, look within to see if you might be holding back your efforts for some reason.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Keep that keen Cat's Eye focused on relevant aspects of this new situation in your life. Don't be distracted by trivial matters. You need the pertinent facts before making a decision.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) As much as you prefer doing things on your own, continue to accept help if you still need to resolve the problem affecting your project. Some cheerful news is about to come your way.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) While you might begrudge the added time it will take to get your project from point A to B to C, etc., you could benefit from the facts that will emerge over this expanded time span.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Regarding your workplace suggestions, be prepared to produce the facts to counter reactions from skeptics who feel your approach SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Savvy Sagittarians will look for work-related answers on their own rather than rely on unproved assumptions. It might take more time to do so, but the payoff is

is unreasonable or even impossible.

worth it. CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Your aspects continue to favor family issues, with special emphasis this week on changes in and around your home. Get everyone to suggest what he or she would like to see done.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) A matter you thought had been settled might still produce surprises. Best advice: Continue to gather facts to bolster your position just in case you need to produce them quickly.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) While your instincts are usually right when discerning 'twixt truth and deception, you could benefit from doing more research on the new "prospect" that you've been pitched.



Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phippa





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