

Health Notes

By Audeen Wagner



EXERCISE!

Has your doctor told you lately that you need more exercise? Most of us could benefit from a regular exercise program to improve general health and to prevent any number of physical problems.

One way to do this right here in Vernonia is JAZZERCISE. What a fun way to get loosened up, dancing and exercising to music for an hour. Jazzercise combines elements of dance, kickboxing, resistance movements, ballet, jazz, yoga, Pilates (use of specialized apparatus such as weights), and more. It's for people of every age and fitness level.

Jazzercise is a fast-growing, worldwide organization, and it certainly seems to be a popular movement in our area, thanks to Penny Costley, who owns the franchise for Jazzercise in Vernonia. She is bursting with ideas for helping Vernonians get more active. Penny and Orissa Burghard are both certified Jazzercise instructors, and are high-energy, enthusiastic ladies. They are kept busy with a dozen or more sessions every week. You can find a class dancing away at 6:00 a.m. some mornings, and there are evening and daytime classes – even a couple that are called Jazzercise-Lite, geared at a slightly slower pace for those with physical limitations. "We encourage everyone to increase the intensity of the workouts gradually...starting slowly and increasing in intensity over time," Penny says, "and always going at your own speed."

A one-hour session involves about 30 minutes of aerobic exercise designed to increase cardiovascular fitness and burn calories, followed by a cool-down segment to reduce heart rate, a strength training segment for muscle-toning, and a stretching portion for flexibility.

By the way, here's a formula for calculating the number of calories burned per cardio portion of the workout: Multiply 0.060 calories x minutes x weight; so, for example, a 150-lb person can burn approximately 270 calories per half hour ($0.060 \times 30 \times 150 = 270$ calories burned). Wow.

Penny Johnson, one of the regulars, says that when people tell her they can't do Jazzercise because they 'have a back ailment or whatever,' her reply is, "I have a back problem, too, and I can do a whole lot of things now that I couldn't do before Jazzercise!"

So, try dancing your way to health, to increase your energy level, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, lose some weight, strengthen and tone muscles, increase strength, flexibility and balance, and experience a feeling of health and of well-being. Sound like fun? Contact Penny Costley (503-429-0196, or email at pcostley@agalis.net) for more information.

MAMMOGRAM

The next visit of the mammogram to Vernonia will be on Wednesday December 14. The van will be in the parking lot at Providence Vernonia clinic all day. This screening is an effective way to detect breast cancer in its earliest stage. Please phone the clinic at 503-429-9191 for an appointment.

Driving and getting older – what to do

Going someplace? You probably think of getting into your car and driving off. But as we age, it's smart to consider any changes in ability we've had, how these changes might be related to safe driving, and what we can do about them. They could be anything from our general health to our vision, reaction times, or even thinking speed.

The University of Michigan has produced the Driving Decisions Workbook under a grant from the federal government and General Motors. The workbook takes up concerns that seniors expressed over the course of the study that produced it.

It is especially valuable because it offers practical solutions to many problems older drivers face.

Indicators: The Workbook notes that having or almost having been in traffic accidents or starting to get tickets can be an early warning sign of driving problems. The most frequent problems of older drivers include failure to observe signs and signals, careless crossing of intersections, failure to yield, changing lanes without regard for others, improper backing, and driving too slowly. Inattention and having too much information to handle at once seem to be the root of most of these conditions.

Vision: As we age, we experience declines in our vision. These declines relate to our ability to read traffic signs, re-

cover our focus at night, quickly detect brake lights, and correctly judge the speed and location of other cars around us. Other problems may include reduced peripheral or side vision, decreased sensitivity to light, and problems with depth perception. While some vision problems are not correctable, many problems can be corrected under a doctor's care. It is important to get regular eye exams.

Thinking: Our brains "slow down" as we age. You may be having a problem with "divided attention," the ability to do two things at once, such as keeping track of your driving speed and what other cars are doing at the same time, or with "selective attention," the ability to ignore what is not important while focusing on what is important. The speed of your thinking and decision-making may have decreased. You might be having problems with your memory.

Your Body: Your body can lose some of its flexibility or muscle strength and "reaction time," the time it takes to move in response to something hap-

pening on the road, can increase. Fortunately, studies show that these can often be improved through exercise and stretching. Check with your doctor or senior center about programs that might help.

Medical Problems: Some medical conditions can interfere with your ability to drive safely. For instance, people treated for diabetes are at risk for low blood sugar, which can lead to impaired judgment or loss of consciousness. Having had a stroke may result in partial or complete paralysis, weakness, or mental difficulties. Tremors, slowness of movement, and rigidity are part of Parkinson's disease. Both seizure disorders and syncope involve a sudden loss of consciousness. Sleep apnea and narcolepsy can cause excessive sleepiness.

Medications: As we age, our body chemistry changes and drugs have stronger effects than when we were younger. We also tend to take more medications. In high doses, or when combined, drugs can im-

See page 27



Look good in pictures.

(Without having to suck in your stomach, turn to the side, hold out your arm, and stick out your chin.)

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