

# GOLDEN YEARS

## PMC's Rock Steak Boxing is helping area Parkinson's patients

### Rock Steady Boxing

The mission of Rock Steady Boxing is to equip our affiliates and empower the coaches to improve the quality of life of people with Parkinson's disease through a non-contact, boxing-based fitness curriculum.

Various studies in the 1980s and 1990s supported the notion that rigorous exercise, emphasizing gross motor movement, balance, core strength, and rhythm, could favorably impact range of motion, flexibility, posture, gait, and activities of daily living. More recent studies, most notably at Cleveland Clinic, focus on the concept of intense "forced" exercise, and have begun to suggest that certain kinds of exercise may be neuro-protective, i.e., slowing disease progression.

### What's a class like?

Training classes, taught by Personal Trainers and Physical Therapists, include an exercise program that attacks Parkinson's at its vulnerable neurological points. While focusing on overall fitness, strength training, reaction time and balance, workouts include: focus mitts, heavy bags, speed bags, double-ended bags, jump rope, core work, calisthenics and circuit weight training. No boxing experience is necessary and people of all ages are invited to participate. Boxers, both male and female, range in age from mid-30's to early 90s.

Rock Steady Boxing is available at Providence Wellness Center for anyone with a formal diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease. Classes are offered 3 days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and the 2 class levels are designed to meet the needs and abilities of all boxers. ( Level  $\frac{3}{4}$  MWF 1:00-2:00 and Level  $\frac{1}{2}$  MWF 1:30-2:30) Initial assessments and routine re-assessments are completed to track the progress of each boxer.

PWC has 18 boxers and if you or anyone you know has been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, we would love to have you join us to fight back together! For more information, please

contact Providence Wellness Center 402-375-7927.

### Instructors

Aaron Lemon PT, DPT /Physical Therapist. I have been a Rock Steady Boxing coach for 3 years. It is such an amazing program to watch individuals in all different stages of their disease push themselves to fight back against Parkinson's. My favorites days are when we are working hard and making a lot of noise so people have to look over to see what is going on, because we take this role as a coach seriously and push our boxers outside of their comfort zone to maximize their potential.

Michael Eaton, ACE Personal Trainer. As a coach, my perspective of Rock Steady is getting to help rescue those suffering from Parkinson's Disease and help prepare them and embark on this journey to better themselves. All of the boxers that you meet along the way start to grow on you and gain an understanding of how much of an impact you are having on their lives, not just the boxers themselves, but their spouses and family members too.

I have been involved with Rock Steady Boxing for over 5 years now. I became a certified coach in February of 2019 and have been actively involved in the program ever since. My favorite memory from class is keeping track of everyone's top speed on the Air Dyne bikes whenever we would have the class do Bike Sprints. As well as hearing some of the boxer's favorite jokes :)

Kimberly Havranek, ACE Personal Trainer. Over the past year as an instructor, RSB has fostered incredible camaraderie between boxers and instructors. The new two-class format allows every boxer to thrive at their own level. As an instructor, it gives me the chance to work one-on-one, building personal connections. I still remember the first time I wore coaching mitts—the boxer's energy and 'all-in' mentality took me by surprise. Even today, I get 'beat up' and love every moment of it.



# FAQ about Alzheimer's disease

The National Institutes of Health reports that incidences of Alzheimer's disease and other dementia increased by roughly 148 percent between 1990 and 2019. By 2020, more than 55 million people across the globe were living

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is perhaps the most widely recognized form of dementia. But even those who are familiar with AD may not know the answers to common questions about it.

**Are Alzheimer's and dementia one and**



with dementia, according to Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI). ADI adds that Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for as many as 75 percent of all cases worldwide.

**the same?**

No. Dementia is an umbrella term that refers to a various conditions that the National Institute on Aging notes affect a person's ability to think, reason and remember. AD is merely one type

of dementia, and additional forms of the condition include Lewy body dementia and vascular dementia.

**What distinguishes Alzheimer's disease from other forms of dementia?**

The David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles reports that Alzheimer's is characterized by progressive memory loss and cognitive decline. In addition, the Alzheimer's Association® notes AD affects the part of the brain associated with learning first, so individuals with the condition often exhibit difficulty remembering in the early stages of the disease.

**Are there other early signs of AD?**

The NIA notes there are some additional early signs of AD, but also points out that different people exhibit different early signs of the disease. Some early signs may include:

- Decline in ability to find the right words
- Vision/spatial issues
- Mild cognitive impairment (MCI):

The NIA notes that signs of MCI include losing things often, forgetting to go to appointments or other events, and struggling to come up with words compared to people in the same age group. The presence of MCI does not necessarily mean a person will develop Alzheimer's,

and certain conditions, including stroke, can increase risk for MCI.

**What causes Alzheimer's disease?**

The causes of Alzheimer's remain a mystery, though research is ongoing and medical professionals have connected some dots. For example, the NIA notes that the presence of the genetic condition Down syndrome increases a person's risk of developing AD. That supports the notion that some cases of AD are caused by a genetic component, which scientists believe may also explain cases of early-onset dementia. The NIA notes that research also indicates late-onset Alzheimer's, which is typically diagnosed in individuals in their mid-60s, is linked to age-related changes in the brain that occur over several decades.

**Is there a cure for Alzheimer's disease?**

No. There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, and the NIA notes that no scientific evidence exists to support claims that various supplements or products like coconut oil can cure or delay the onset of AD.

Tens of millions of people across the globe are living with Alzheimer's disease. Finding answers to common questions about the disease can help individuals and their families manage AD more effectively.



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# Ready for open enrollment? 4 Tips for choosing the right Medicare plan

(StatePoint) With so many Medicare options available, selecting a plan can seem daunting. This year you may be wondering how news of Medicare drug price negotiations, economic uncertainties and other factors may impact your coverage in 2025.

Medicare is the government health insurance program for Americans 65 and older and others who qualify, providing hospital coverage (Part A) and physician visits (Part B) to beneficiaries. Additionally, there are a variety of options that coordinate with original Medicare, such as Medicare Supplement plans and Prescription Drug Plans, or replace original Medicare with Medicare Advantage (MA) plans combined with Prescription Drug Plans.

During this year's Medicare Annual



Enrollment Period (AEP), which takes place between Oct. 15-Dec. 7, 2024, here's what Cigna Healthcare, which serves millions of Medicare customers nationwide, wants you to know:

## Check for plan changes

If your current plan is working for you, you can likely keep it. However, it's a good idea to review your plan every AEP, especially if you've experienced major life, health or financial changes. Any changes to your current plan will be outlined in your Medicare plan's Annual Notice of Change (ANOC) letter, which you can expect to receive in September.

## Research your coverage

There are a few key things to watch for when shopping for a plan. One of them is whether your favorite providers and specialists will be in-network. You should also review each plan's formulary – that is, the list of drugs covered under the plan. You'll want to find a plan that will cover your current medications and any you anticipate your doctor prescribing over the course of the year

ahead. Finally, carefully consider your total spend for your prescription drug plan coverage (i.e., premiums plus pharmacy costs) since the maximum out-of-pocket costs for drugs you utilize will be capped at \$2,000 in 2025.

## Look for value

No matter what the economic outlook is, it's wise to select a plan that provides great value. To that end, you may want to consider an MA plan, which offers quality and affordability. MA plans cover everything original Medicare does, plus more; most also include dental, vision and hearing benefits, prescription drug coverage, and other extras like over-the-counter drugs, transportation to doctor's visits and pharmacies, healthy grocery purchases, and fitness services. MA plans are often available with \$0 premiums, but you'll also want to check on what your annual out-of-pocket costs could be based on your health status.

## Understand your plan

Before enrolling in a particular plan, make sure you understand its ins and outs. Call Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) 24/7; TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048. Or, visit the Medicare Plan Finder website at Medicare.gov/plan-compare. For local assistance, refer to the State Health Insurance Assistance Program at [www.shiptacenter.org](http://www.shiptacenter.org). You can also contact individual Medicare plans, including Cigna Healthcare at [CignaMedicareInformation.com](http://CignaMedicareInformation.com).

"AEP is your opportunity to assess your budget and your health needs and find an option that will work for you and your lifestyle in 2025," says Ryan Kocher, chief growth officer for Cigna Healthcare Medicare.

## What to know about hospice at home

The philosophy behind hospice is that people should be able to live as fully and as comfortably as possible through the last days of their lives, surrounded by loved ones and friends. Hospice treats the symptoms of illness rather than trying to be curative. Hospice also does not try to postpone nor accelerate death.

The American Cancer Society says hospice care is offered by a team of professionals who work together to manage distress, symptoms and spiritual issues. Services also are offered to family members, including access to counselors and bereavement experts. Hospice workers help family members make decisions and plan care.

Hospice is a form of care, rather than a place. Saying a person is going into hospice means he or she will begin to receive this type of palliative care. While hospice can take place in a center that only offers this type of service, a hospice team can work in a variety of settings, including one's home.

Many people receive hospice care at home. VNS Health provides care in spaces patients call home and says that hospice care can include administration of medications, arrangement of equipment (like beds and oxygen) and visits from a hospice care team. A hospice team may include nurses, social workers, physicians, therapists, and even clergy who come to the home to offer support and care.

Home hospice care begins with a team member visiting with a terminally ill person and his or her family. During a visit, needs will be addressed and the hospice team can arrange for desired services. Things may move quickly afterwards, and families may find relief in knowing there is another person on their side to help in what can be extraordinarily stressful situations.

The ACS says home hospice care often requires that someone be home with the patient 24 hours a day, seven days

a week. This primary caregiver will be trained to give much of the hands-on care. Members of the hospice staff will visit regularly to check up and make sure that any symptoms are under control.

Should home care prove too much, respite care gives families time off to recover, and the patient can spend some time in a nursing facility. There is also the possibility for continuous home care, which offers short-term, around-the-clock care at home. Moving an individual to a private facility for inpatient care may be another option if a primary caregiver is overwhelmed.

Home care is an option for those researching hospice services. Families are urged to do their homework to find the best program for their needs.

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# How to make plans for long-term care

Long-term care is an important component of financial and personal wellness planning. Planning for long-term care can help aging individuals maintain their independence and quality of life into their golden years.

According to the National Institute on Aging, long-term care (LTC) involves a variety of services that accommodate a person's health or personal care needs when they can no longer perform everyday tasks on their own. LTC can help people with chronic illnesses, disabilities or other conditions. LTC can be expensive, but planning for such needs can help families avoid financial strain and stress, and also provide peace of mind.

## Types of care

One of the initial steps when planning for LTC is to identify the available options. LTC is multi-faceted and can come in a variety of forms. LTC can involve in-home care, with a care provider coming into an individual's home to offer services like housekeeping and assistance with personal care. In addition, LTC can take place in nursing homes or assisted living facilities. Adult daycare facilities also may be considered part of LTC.

## Payment options

It's important that families recognize that traditional health insurance does not cover the costs associated with LTC. In addition, Medicare cannot be used for LTC in most cases in the United States. It is essential to earmark funds or find alternatives to cover these costs.

According to Medicare.gov, some insurance companies will enable people to use life insurance policies to pay for LTC. Long-term care insurance also merits consideration. This insurance may cover LTC facilities or even home care and medical equipment. Families can explore all their options and find a policy that aligns with their needs and budgets.

Additional financial tools to consider are a Health Savings Account (HSA) or a Flexible Spending Account (FSA), which allow for tax-advantaged savings specifically for health care expenses. Those with limited income can be eligible for Medicaid in the U.S., which can pay for nursing home care. However, it is important to research which homes accept Medicaid as a form of payment.

## Further estate planning

People can work with licensed professionals to solidify long-term care and

financial plans. An estate attorney can help create a durable power of attorney and a living will to ensure that health care and financial decisions are managed according to a person's wishes if he or she becomes unable to do so. An irrevocable trust also could be beneficial in

managing assets and potentially shielding families from LTC costs.

Families should discuss health care wishes and other financial plans as they pertain to long-term care. Early planning can help families navigate caring for aging individuals.

## Compassion is an integral component of palliative care

Various medical and therapeutic treatments are designed to promote health and well-being. Many of these therapies attempt to remove illness or address sickness. But at some point in their lives, people may receive a different form of care known as palliative care.

Palliative care, according to Get Palliative Care, is based on the needs of the patient and not the patient's prognosis. Unlike curative treatments that aim to eliminate illness, palliative care is centered on improving quality of life for patients and their families by addressing physical, emotional and psychological needs. Palliative care focuses on comfort, care and quality of life for those with serious illness. It is designed to improve life for people of any age who need it, not just older adults. The National Institute on Aging says palliative care is interdisciplinary, which means it involves a variety of doctors and care providers who work together with patients and families to address individual goals and values.

Palliative care prioritizes comfort and support, aiming to alleviate pain, manage symptoms and offer holistic care that encompasses the whole person. Some of the hallmarks of palliative care are relief from pain and other symptoms of a serious illness. It also may help a person cope with side effects of medical treatments. Palliative care may be recommended whether a condition can be

cured or not. It is performed alongside other treatments a person may be receiving, says the Mayo Clinic.

Patients with serious illnesses often experience pain, nausea, fatigue, and shortness of breath. Palliative care specialists utilize strategies and medications to alleviate these symptoms, ensuring that patients remain as comfortable as possible. Some of the conditions for which palliative care can be effective include:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Blood and bone marrow disorders
- Dementia
- Cystic fibrosis
- Kidney failure
- Lung disease
- Liver disease
- Stroke

According to a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, patients with serious illnesses who received palliative care lived longer than those who did not receive this care. By focusing on relief and support, palliative care helps individuals and their families confront challenging times.

Those who would like to inquire about palliative care for themselves or a loved one can search the Palliative Care Provider Directory to find options nearby. A conversation with one's doctor also can point patients in the direction of palliative care.

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# Cardiovascular fitness and Alzheimer's disease

Dementia is a general term for various brain disorders that can affect behavior, thinking and memory. Among the conditions that qualify as dementia, Alzheimer's disease (AD) is the most common.

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, AD is an irreversible condition that destroys memory, thinking and the ability to carry out daily activities. Although initial AD symptoms may be mild, the disease worsens over time and eventually people with AD will need full-time care. Many people are interested in any ways they can reduce the severity of AD or stave off its progression. Cardiovascular fitness could be an important tool in that fight.

Cardiovascular activity may help lessen the impact of dementia and AD in particular. According to a 2018 study published in the journal *Neurology*, a population-based sample of 1,462 Swedish women between the ages of 38 and 60 was examined in 1968, and then followed up with in various intervals until 2009. Researchers found that women who partook in high fitness regimens saw their age of dementia onset delayed by 9.5 years. Time to dementia onset was delayed by five years compared to medium fitness participants.

Another study from 2020 published



in the journal *Frontiers in Neuroscience* looked at exercise for those who already have AD as a method of slowing the decline in activities of daily living (ADL). The study found that ADL decline was slower among individuals who engaged in an hour of aerobic exercise training twice a week compared to those in the non-active group. However, there was no effect on behavioral symptoms, depression or nutritional scores.

Aerobic exercise programs aimed at improving cardiovascular fitness seem to have moderate effects on cognitive function among healthy older persons. But data from current randomized control trials are insufficient to show that these improvements are due exclusively to improved cardiovascular fitness. Still, incorporating cardiovascular exercise in all stages of life is important. Here are a few notable ways exercise could affect

AD outcomes.

- **Improved blood flow:** Regular cardiovascular exercise facilitates blood circulation to the brain. Better blood flow delivers adequate oxygen and nutrients to the brain, which is important for maintaining cognitive function.

- **Risk factor reduction:** Cardio helps manage several risk factors associated with AD, such as diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure. By lowering these risk factors, individuals may reduce their likelihood of developing forms of dementia.

- **Reduced inflammation and oxidative stress:** Physical activity can reduce inflammation and oxidative stress in the body, each of which are linked to neurodegenerative diseases. The American Brain Foundation says high levels of inflammation of the brain may accelerate brain aging and contribute to the progression of neurodegenerative diseases like AD, Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia.

- **Improved sleep:** Regular exercise can help promote more regular sleep patterns, which improves mood and cognitive health.

Although cardiovascular exercise cannot prevent dementia, it may help delay its onset.



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# How to choose a hospice facility

Hospice programs are designed to provide care to those facing end-of-life illnesses and offer support for such individuals' families and caregivers. The hospice philosophy is a relatively recent one, at least in the United States. According to Harvard Medical School, in the 1970s a growing number of terminally ill people were dying alone in hospitals. In response to that, the hospice movement began to offer services that would enable individuals to die free of pain and with dignity. Resources were available to families facing tough decisions.

Hospice is fully covered by Medicare in the United States for all eligible patients and is covered by most Medicaid and commercial insurance plans. Canada has universal health care, which provides basic health services without user fees. Palliative care, which hospice care falls under, is a basic service in all provinces and territories, so it's likely these services, when provided in a hospital, will be covered. Hospice care provided outside of a hospital in Canada may not be free of charge.

Choosing a hospice provider is an important decision. Depending on where a person lives, there may be a variety of

hospice options, and each may differ in a number of ways, including quality of care. The following tips can help families as they seek hospice facilities.

- Start with a state or national website. Organizations like the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization offer databases of hospice providers across the U.S. This enables families to filter their options by provider type as well as geographic location.

- Determine the care outcome. You can decide which type of services will be needed for your loved one. Hospice programs can manage pain and symptoms; provide drugs, medical supplies and equipment; teach family members how to care for loved ones; help with emotional and spiritual aspects of death; and provide services like speech and physical therapy. Identifying the desired course of hospice treatment ensures families ask the right questions when visiting facilities.

- Know the screening requirements. Ask about the qualifications of hospice workers and volunteers as well as the level and type of training they receive before being placed with families.

- Determine caseload and how busy the hospice provider may be. Some hos-

pices assign a certain number of patients to each staff member, while others offer only one-on-one assignments. This can affect how flexible scheduling may be.

reviews of hospice providers. It may be easy to go with an initial recommendation, particularly when you want to offer fast relief to a loved one. However,



- Where does care take place? Hospice services may occur in hospitals, skilled nursing homes, private residences, or specialized hospice centers. Identify which scenario works for you and find services that align with it.

families should read reviews and verify referrals before choosing a facility.

Taking the time to evaluate various factors pertaining to hospice care ensures that families choose a provider that emphasizes compassionate, high-quality care.

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# Home care opportunities aAbound in Northeast Nebraska

By Andrea M. Trautman from the Home Instead® office serving Northeast Nebraska.

Throughout the ongoing job challenges of today's economy, one industry remains in demand: in-home caregiving. Caregiving services help ensure

that aging adults are safe and protected in the comforts of their homes from the risks of isolation such as loneliness and malnutrition, that can sometimes occur when a senior is faced with the effects of aging or illness.

- Hospice support
- Specialized in-home care service
- In-home care for chronic conditions

The demand for home care has grown exponentially over the last several years and continues to grow. Home health and personal care aides who provide important personal care and companionship assistance represent one of the fastest growing job categories in the nation, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In fact, this job sector is projected to grow by 25 percent in the 10-year period between 2021 and 2031, much faster than the average job growth, the Bureau reported.

With more Northeast Nebraska older adults and families seeking support, Home Instead of Norfolk, NE is looking to fill a variety of permanent caregiver positions in the area.

The role is ideal for individuals seeking long-term job stability with a flexible schedule and supportive environment as well as continued opportunities for career growth.

Care Professionals may serve as an extension of the healthcare system and play a critical role in keeping vulnerable Northeast Nebraska aging adults safe and healthy at home. Care Pros can help older adults and their families with such support as:

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- Bathing
- Toileting
- Transferring
- Continence
- Companionship
- Meal preparation
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For more information about career opportunities at Home Instead, training and benefits, or to apply for a caregiving position, visit [HomeInstead.com/104](http://HomeInstead.com/104) or call 402-379-8225.

For more information about Home Instead, contact local owner, Andrea M. Trautman by phone at 402-379-8225 or go to [www.homeinstead.com/104](http://www.homeinstead.com/104)

## What to know about exercise and dementia risk

Three seconds go by in a flash, but that's enough time for another person to join the masses already diagnosed with dementia. According to Alzheimer's Disease International, every three seconds someone in the world develops dementia, a condition that more than 55 million people were living with in 2020.

The World Health Organization notes that various diseases and injuries that affect the brain can contribute to dementia. As menacing a threat as dementia presents, individuals are not helpless against it. In fact, exercise, which can help lower risk for heart disease, stroke and various other conditions, can be a valuable ally against dementia as well.

### What is the link between exercise and dementia?

Dementia remains something of a mystery, but the Alzheimer's Society notes that evidence is now strong enough to support the assertion that lack of physical exercise increases a person's risk of developing dementia. The Alzheimer's Society also notes that researchers have discovered improvements in thinking and memory and reduced rates of dementia among middle-aged and older adults who exercised compared to those that did not.

### Is cardio the most effective exercise at lowering dementia risk?

Speaking with CNBC, Silky Singh Pahlajani, a clinical professor of behavioral neurology and neuropsychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine, noted that cardiovascular exercise, often referred to as cardio, can provide the biggest benefit for brain health of any form of exercise. Cardiovascular exercise can increase heart rate, which helps deliver oxygen

cells to the brain. The National Institutes of Health notes that oxygen shortages prevent the brain from working as well as it should, and a 2023 study published in the journal Redox Biology found that oxygen abnormality plays a crucial role in the occurrence and progression of Alzheimer's disease.

### How should aging adults approach exercise if they have been largely sedentary?

Middle-aged and older adults who have not been physically active throughout their adult life but want to begin incorporating exercise into their daily routines are urged to speak with their physicians prior to beginning a fitness regimen. Preexisting conditions may make it difficult, if not impossible, to engage in certain forms of exercise. A personal physician can consider a patient's unique medical history and then recommend certain exercises that won't put him or her in jeopardy of suffering an injury or illness. A gradual approach to exercising is typically best for individuals who have lived a sedentary lifestyle. Starting off slowly with a short walk or light physical activity like gardening can help the body acclimate to physical activity at a safe pace. As adults bodies' become more accustomed to exercise, men and women can then gradually increase the intensity of their workouts, switching from walking to jogging on a treadmill when possible.

There is no cure for dementia, but adults are not helpless against the various forms of the condition. Researchers have discovered that preventive measures like routine exercise can be an effective way to reduce dementia risk.



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# Six tips to stay on top of fraudster's latest tricks

(StatePoint) Identity theft is reportedly a growing threat as fraudsters evolve to be savvier and more sophisticated. There have been more than 1,300 data breaches already in 2024, according to the Identity Theft Resource Center.

It's no surprise an Experian survey found that many consumers are wising up to the risk, with over half the U.S. adult population saying they're highly concerned about identity theft and fraud.

"As fraudsters continue to become more sophisticated, it's critical that you take matters into your own hands and protect your personal information," said Michael Bruemmer, vice president of Experian Global Data Breach Resolution and Consumer Protection at Experian.

To help you avoid becoming a victim of fraud, there are a few key tips you should follow:

## Create strong passwords

Create strong passwords for every account you have and don't repeat passwords. If you reuse the same password across multiple accounts and a criminal gets ahold of it, they can potentially wreak havoc on your personal and financial life. A password manager can help you create unique passwords and store them so you don't need to remember them all on your own.

## Protect personal documents

Keep all your personal documents out of the hands of fraudsters, especially your social security card, as it can quickly open the door to identity theft. Leave your social security card in a safe place at home—don't carry it with you. Additionally, check your mail every day to prevent theft of potentially sensitive data. Shred paperwork with personal information on it before throwing it away. Also, consider having statements delivered electronically so there are fewer physical documents with your information on them.

## Watch out for phishing scams

Phishing uses fake text messages, emails, phone calls or other types of communication that look like it comes from a reputable source. The fraudster's goal is to make you click on a link or open an attachment and share your personal information. After clicking the fake link and using your login credentials, the scammer can

gain access to your account. To protect yourself from these types of scams, never click on a link or open an attachment from someone or

a company that you don't recognize or that looks suspicious. Additionally, if you receive notice that your personal information was involved in a data breach, be cautious about hackers who may imitate the company you received the breach notice from. To verify the legitimacy of the communication, identify the correct phone number by looking at physical statements or by logging into your account through a verified portal and call or email the company separately.

## Use caution when answering calls

Criminals may try to call you and pretend that they are with a company you are associated with in order to have you provide your personal information. Never provide information over the phone. Instead, ask for the person's name and where they are calling from. Hang up and call the company back via the phone number listed on its website to verify if the call was legitimate.

## Regularly check your credit reports

Regularly checking your credit reports is a good financial and security habit. Staying updated on what is in your reports will help you spot any suspicious activity, like new accounts you don't recognize, and help you act quickly to combat further fraud.

## Leverage tools to combat fraud

Experian data found that only 30% of people are currently using an identity theft protection product or service. This shows that too many people are missing an opportunity to keep themselves and their identity safe. Experian offers free and paid identity protection products that can be an extra layer of protection. Experian IdentityWorks monitors for activity on your Experian credit report and will alert you if there are any changes. It also monitors for your information on the dark web and provides easy access to lock and unlock your Experian credit file.

You can check your Experian credit report for free and enroll in identity theft protection at [www.Experian.com](http://www.Experian.com).

"Identity theft should be taken seriously by everyone. Being proactive and following key steps can help you stay ahead of fraud before it occurs," says Bruemmer.



## Intergenerational event

From youth at Rainbow World to residents at Countryview Care & Rehabilitation, a large group took part in a Color Walk late last month. The youth led the group around the facility while members of the Wayne FBLA were stationed at several spots to coat attendees with colored chalk. The event is held annually as a change for the generations to get together.



# Early voting at county election offices begins

Early in-person voting for the general election began Oct. 7 at Nebraska county election offices.

“County election offices are open and prepared to welcome voters to their offices,” Secretary of State Bob Evnen said. “Nebraska voters should be ready to present their acceptable photo ID when they vote.”

Nebraskans can vote early in person at their county election office through Nov. 4. Voting in person at the county election offices is not available on Election Day, November 5. County election office addresses and contact information are available here. More information about early voting is available here.

## Voter ID

Voters must present an acceptable photo ID before voting. Acceptable IDs include, but are not limited to:

- Nebraska driver’s license
- Nebraska state ID
- U.S. passport
- Military ID
- Tribal ID
- Hospital, intermediate care facility, assisted-living facility or nursing home record
- Nebraska political subdivision ID (state, county, city, school, etc.)
- Nebraska college or university ID

(public or private)

The ID must have the voter’s name and photo. IDs can be expired. The new law does not require Nebraska voters to re-register to vote if their information is up to date.

Nebraskans can get a free state ID from the Nebraska Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). If the person was born in Nebraska and needs a free certified copy of their Nebraska birth certificate to get a free state ID, they can contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). A birth certificate is not a valid form of voter ID.

Voter ID educational material is available in English and Spanish at voterID.nebraska.gov.

## What’s next?

Oct. 18 – Deadline to register to vote online (by midnight), by mail (post-marked by Oct. 18), at a state agency (DMV, DHHS, Dept. of Ed.), via deputy registrar or via personal agent.

Oct. 25 – Deadline to register to vote at county election offices (by 6pm local time).

Oct. 25 – Deadline to request an early voting ballot be mailed.

Nov. 4 – Last day to vote early at a county election office.

Nov. 5 – Election Day. Polls open at 8am CT/7am MT and close at 8pm CT/7pm MT. Early ballots are due back to county election offices by the close of polls.

# What’s the best way to find the right services at the right time at the right price?

Locating care for an older adult can be a difficult and confusing task, especially if you have never had any experience in finding and setting up services for an older person who may need help.

The staff at the Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging, through information and assistance, will answer your questions about services and make a referral to the appropriate program. The services are individualized based on the strengths and needs of the older person.

Through the Aged and Disabled Resource Center (ADRC) an Options Counselor can provide unbiased information that is relevant to an individual’s needs, preferences, and goals. This is done through information, referral, and options counselling.

The staff through the Care Management Program are experts at finding the most appropriate care for an older adult and can offer assistance for complicated situations.

The Aged and Disabled Medicaid Waiver Program is a service system that provides care options in the home or assisted living as an alternative to nursing home placement.

To access the aging network anywhere in the United States, call the ElderCare Locator at (800) 677-1116.

The Northeast Nebraska Area Agency on Aging (NENAAA) is one of eight Area Agencies on Aging in Nebraska. NENAAA is composed of 22 counties in Northeast Nebraska.

Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Cherry/City of Valentine, Platte/

City of Columbus, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Rock, Stanton, Thurston, Wayne

The following is a list of services that may be available:

- Chore Service
  - Care Management
  - Respite Care
  - Transportation
  - Personal Care
  - Outreach
  - Housekeeping
  - Health Promotion
  - Socialization
  - Legal Assistance
  - Congregate Meals
  - Information and Assistance
  - Home-Delivered Meals
  - Family Caregiver Support
  - Aged and Disabled Medicaid Waiver
  - Emergency Response System
  - Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) (Medicare Fraud)
  - SHIP (State Health Insurance Program)
  - Ombudsman (Advocate for Nursing Facility Residents)
  - Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
- Eligibility for some services may require a person to be 60 years or older to qualify, but other service options can be discussed.
- Services are provided under the Older Americans Act (OAA), the Nebraska Community Aging Services Act, Care Management and/or the Aged and Disabled Medicaid Waiver.



## Hillcrest Care Center & Assisted Living



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# “Prairie Doc or Prairie Bot?”

By Jill Kruse, DO

Artificial Intelligence or A.I. has gone from Science Fiction to a reality. This technology continues to evolve and find new applications in the world, including the world of medicine.

With any new advancement, there are pros and cons to be considered when implementing it into regular use, especially in medicine.



Based on Science, Built on Trust

In 2023 the Journal of Medical Internet Research published an article where they had ChatGPT take 2 of the 3 USMLE exams. Step 1 is taken by third year medical students and all physicians must pass all three tests in order to become licensed as a physician. The program was given 4 different practice tests and scored between 44 to 64.4% correct. Over 60% is considered a passing score. The headlines read that ChatGPT passes medical boards.

While this headline was shocking, reading the article gives more nuances to that declaration. There were three different AI programs used, and only one had a passing score for one of the four sample tests, the easiest step 1.

When the exams themselves were broken down, the AI was able to answer the “easy” questions with the greatest accuracy. Questions were graded on a score from 1 (easy) to 5 (difficult). However, it was unable to answer any of the level 5 questions. When the program was given a “hint”, the performance

increased to 22% correct of the level 5 questions. Students taking the test do not get hints.



**The Prairie Doc**  
By Jill Kruse, DO

For this article I decided to ask ChatGPT to list “5 ways AI will improve the practice of medicine in the next 5 years” and “5 ways AI may harm the practice of medicine in the next 5 years.” Here is what the program came up with.

Here are the 5 ways ChatGPT thought AI could improve the practice of medicine

- 1) Improved diagnostics and early detection;
- 2) Personalized treatment plans;
- 3) Efficient administrative workflows;
- 4) Virtual health assistants and remote monitoring;

5) Drug discovery and development.

Here are the 5 ways ChatGPT thought AI could worsen the practice of medicine

- 1) Over-reliance on AI;
- 2) Bias in algorithms;
- 3) Privacy and data security risks;
- 4) Job displacement and role redefinition;
- 5) Increasing costs for AI implementation.

AI is a tool that can be used. Like any tool in medicine, it needs to be tested for safety, accuracy, and effectiveness before widespread implementation. While ChatGPT could easily write this entire article for me in a matter of seconds, it would not be providing you with the personal connection or with the level of reverence and responsibility that each Prairie Doc feels.

We take our motto to provide you

with health information that is based in science and built on trust very seriously. We will watch as this technology develops and advances. We embrace progress while holding fast to our prairie roots of connection and community. You do not need to worry about Prairie Doc being replaced by Prairie Bot.

Jill Kruse, D.O. is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices as a hospitalist in Brookings, South Dakota. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org) and on Facebook, Instagram, and Threads featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB), providing health information based on science, built on trust for 23 Seasons.



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## Did you know? Strokes

The World Stroke Organization reports that a person suffers a stroke once every three seconds across the globe each day. Globally, there are roughly 12.2 million new strokes each year, and one in four individuals age 25 and older will have a stroke at some point in their lifetime. In its “Global Stroke Fact Sheet 2022,” the WSO reported that the number of individuals who will have a stroke in their lifetime had increased by 50 percent over the previous 17 years, which underscores a need for the general public to better understand stroke and its controllable risk factors. Such variables include avoiding smoking, eating a healthy diet, minimizing if not eliminating alcohol consumption, and avoiding a sedentary lifestyle.



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# Variables that could elevate your risk for stroke

The World Stroke Organization notes that more than 12.2 million individuals experience stroke each year across the globe. Perhaps even more telling, the WSO reports that, globally, one in four people over age 25 will have a stroke in their lifetime.

Stroke is indeed a threat to public health. However, despite the prevalence of stroke, individuals are not helpless against it. Various risk factors for stroke are within individuals' control, and it's never too early for adults to prioritize stroke prevention. With that in mind, the following are some of the most common risk factors for stroke, courtesy of the WSO.

## Elevated systolic blood pressure

The American Heart Association notes that an elevated systolic blood pressure means the upper number on a blood pressure reading is between 120 and 129. Systolic blood pressure measures the pressure your blood is pushing against the artery walls each time the heart beats. Individuals diagnosed with elevated systolic blood pressure are urged to discuss the ways to lower that number, as the American Stroke Association notes high blood pressure is the most significant controllable risk factor for

stroke.

## High body mass index

A 2022 study published in the journal



PLOS One found that body mass index was associated with stroke risk among diabetes patients. The study found that the risk of ischemic stroke, which occurs when a blood clot or fatty plaque blocks a blood vessel in the brain, was higher among

obese patients compared to patients who are overweight or normal-weight.

## Smoking

The WSO reports that someone who smokes 20 cigarettes a day is six times more likely to have a stroke compared to a non-smoker. One of the links between smoking and stroke risk surrounds carbon monoxide and nicotine. Smoke from

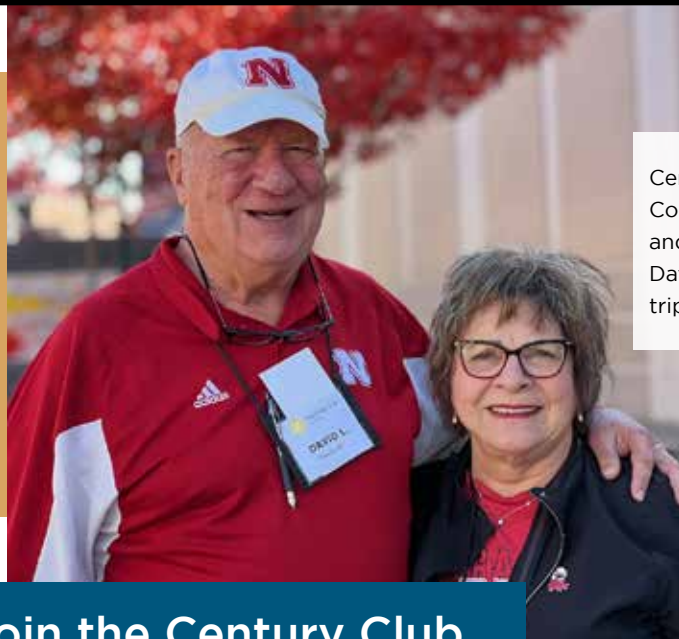
cigarettes contains both carbon monoxide, which reduces the amount of oxygen in a smoker's blood, and nicotine, which makes a smoker's heart beat faster. Those variables combine to raise blood pressure, which has already been noted as a significant risk factor for stroke.

## Alcohol consumption

A 2022 study published in the journal Neurology examined the link between alcohol consumption and stroke. The study found that high levels of alcohol consumption are associated with a higher risk for all types of stroke, and even moderate intake, defined as between seven to 14 drinks per week for women and seven to 21 drinks per week for men, was associated with higher risk for all types of stroke.

These are not the only common risk factors for stroke. In fact, the WSO reports high fasting glucose, air pollution, low physical activity, poor diet, high LDL (i.e., "bad") cholesterol, and kidney dysfunction are some additional common risk factors for stroke.

Though stroke affects more than 12 million individuals across the globe each year, many of its more common risk factors are manageable. More information about stroke is available at [stroke.org](http://stroke.org).



Century Club Coordinator Kaki Ley and Bank Chairman Dave Ley on a group trip to Branson.

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