



# Healthy Transitions™

FALL 2005 A HEALTHCARE RESOURCE FOR OUR FRIENDS WHO ARE 55-PLUS

## Knowledge of Symptoms Brings Eye Health Into Focus

**M**acular degeneration, which occurs with aging, is a common cause of blindness. Because there are no early warning signs, many do not realize they have the disease until their vision is affected. However, routine eye examinations by an ophthalmologist can help detect macular degeneration in its earliest stages, before any symptoms are present.

“The earlier macular degeneration is diagnosed, the more we can do in terms of treatment and preserving sight,” says Alice Lyon, MD, director of Vitreoretinal Services at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and assistant professor of Ophthalmology at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine.

The macula, a small area in the center of the retina at the back of the eye, helps an individual see fine details. As people age, the macula can develop yellow spots called drusen, the first signs of macular degeneration.

Those most at risk have a family history of the disease; are Caucasians or fair-skinned; smoke or have high blood pressure; or are older than 75.

There are two types of macular degeneration – dry and wet. Dry macular degeneration is characterized by deterioration of the macula and the appearance of blind spots in the center of vision. Wet macular degeneration involves the growth of abnormal blood vessels under the macula, leakage of fluid and, in

### Symptoms of macular degeneration:

- Needing more light to read
- Difficulty reading fine print
- A blurred or blind spot in the center of vision
- Struggling to make out faces and identify people
- Trouble seeing fine details up close
- Viewing straight lines as wavy

some patients, bleeding. The abnormal blood vessels cause rapid, severe and usually permanent vision loss.

In some patients, dry macular degeneration may progress into wet. In either case, individuals feel no pain from the symptoms.



“People dismiss the early signs of macular degeneration as a normal part of aging,” says Lee Jampol, MD, chairman of Ophthalmology at Northwestern Memorial and Louis Feinberg Professor of Ophthalmology at the Feinberg School. “But, those who notice even a slight change in vision should see an ophthalmologist.”

There is no cure for macular degeneration, but its progression can be slowed. In the early stages, some physicians recommend a daily regimen of vitamins and antioxidants. One recent study showed that taking specific doses of vitamins C and E, beta-carotene and zinc with copper can reduce the risk of vision loss and slow the progression of the disease.

Those with dry macular degeneration can take steps to reduce their risk of developing wet macular degeneration. In addition to taking vitamin supplements, Dr. Lyon says eating a diet rich in fruits, fish and green, leafy vegetables can help. Wearing sunglasses and a hat to limit sun exposure also is recommended.

In a case of wet macular degeneration, where abnormal blood vessels already have developed, many options still are available.

Northwestern Memorial physicians use various treatments including laser therapies and medication injections into the eye. Retina specialists at Northwestern Memorial are involved in groundbreaking studies to help people with the disease maintain their sight.

Dr. Jampol recommends seeing an ophthalmologist once a year, beginning at age 60. Those with a family history of blindness should start their annual exams at age 40 or sooner. An ophthalmologist also can check for glaucoma and other age-related vision problems. **M**

## Physician Referral Helps Patients Make a Choice

**A**fter suffering collapsed lungs and a separated shoulder from a bicycling injury while visiting Wyoming, Gerald Avery, 75, received strict orders to see a physician immediately upon his return to Chicago. A Wyoming physician cautioned that he should undergo tests to make sure air travel did not adversely affect his lungs.

Once in Chicago, his wife Linda Avery, called Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Physician Referral Service and reached health consultant Eric Jimenez. Jimenez listened to Mr. Avery’s medical needs and identified at least two potential physicians. One was selected and Jimenez worked to schedule an appointment for the next day.

A year later, when the Averys needed a physician for a different medical situation, Mrs. Avery remembered the positive experience she had with the Physician Referral Service. She called Jimenez, who was able to schedule an appointment.

“I wouldn’t hesitate to call the Physician Referral Service again,” says Mrs. Avery. “They were so helpful. I really trust them.”

Choosing the right physician can be challenging. Northwestern Memorial’s Physician Referral Service helps patients specify the type of physician they want to see. Health consultants walk patients through a selection process, asking about symptoms and exploring the reason for their call.

Health consultants inquire about a wide range of criteria including age, gender, office location, educational background and clinical interests, according to Gina Minas, manager of Health Resources. “Patients can be very specific with their requests to obtain a referral to a physician who most closely matches their needs and preferences.”

A rotating database shows all participating physicians who fit a patient’s criteria and every caller receives a minimum of two referrals. All physicians in the referral service accept Medicare and Medicaid and health consultants



Eric Jimenez and other health consultants help patients find the right physicians.

audit physician profiles at least once a year to ensure the database contains up-to-date information including what insurance plans they accept. At the patient’s request, consultants can schedule appointments and offer directions or assistance finding a hotel room in the area, if needed.

In addition, the Physician Referral Service can register patients for wellness and nutrition classes and can

provide information on support groups that are offered through Northwestern Memorial. Health consultants also screen patients for clinical research trials. “We are the front door and provide one-stop shopping for physician referral and hospital resources,” Minas explains. **M**

To contact the Physician Referral Service, call 312-926-8400 or toll free at 877-926-4664 (4NMH).



# Healthy Transitions Fall 2005 Calendar of Events

Learn about a variety of topics from renowned caregivers at Northwestern Memorial Hospital. To register or obtain information for any of these events, call the Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at **312-926-8400**, Monday through Thursday between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. or Saturday between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m.



## Health Education

### Understanding Peripheral Artery Disease C1

**Speaker:** Mary McDermott, MD  
**Monday, September 12; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Peripheral artery disease is characterized by pain in the legs when walking a short distance, although some people experience no symptoms. Because the condition involves artery blockage it also puts individuals at greater than average risk for heart disease and stroke. Mary McDermott, MD, an internist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and associate professor of Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, will review the risk factors, symptoms, diagnostic tests and available treatments for peripheral artery disease. Dr. McDermott also will share information on a federally funded research study she hopes will improve the endurance of patients suffering from this condition.

### Colon Cancer C2

**Speaker:** John A. Martin, MD  
**Friday, September 16; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the country, in part because less than 40 percent of the general population undergoes regular screening. John A. Martin, MD, gastroenterologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and associate professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School, will lead a discussion about screening methods, risk factors and the role of diet and exercise in risk reducing.

### Exercise and the Personality C3

**Speaker:** Peggy Mitchell, MS  
**Thursday, September 22; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Exercise is important for good health at any age. Peggy Mitchell, MS, a registered clinical exercise physiologist and manager at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute, will help you identify your exercise personality type and walk away with a plan to get started and keep going.

### Understanding Chest Pain C4

**Speaker:** Albert J. Miller, MD  
**Friday, September 30; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Distinguishing between the various causes of chest pain can be confusing. Albert J. Miller, MD, cardiologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and professor of Clinical Medicine in Cardiology at the Feinberg School, will explain chest pain with emphasis on pain from the heart. Learn more about the pains not indicative of a heart attack and how to determine when you should take action.

### Oral Health and Aging C5

**Speaker:** Reena Patel, DDS  
**Monday, October 3; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Maintaining good oral health is important for remaining healthy. Join Reena Patel, DDS, general dentist at the Northwestern Dental Center and associate clinical professor of Dental Surgery at the Feinberg School, to understand the connection between dentistry and medicine and learn the risk factors for oral disease. Treatment solutions, oral disease and missing teeth also will be discussed.

### Bowel Incontinence C6

**Speaker:** Amy L. Halverson, MD  
**Monday, October 17; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Accidental bowel leakage occurs in approximately 10 percent of all women and 40 percent of women with urinary incontinence. However, most individuals are too embarrassed to discuss this problem with their doctors. Amy L. Halverson, MD, colorectal surgeon on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Surgery at the Feinberg School, will discuss symptoms, evaluation methods and treatment strategies for this medical condition.

### Managing Stress Before It Manages You C7

**Speaker:** Lyssa Menard, PhD  
**Thursday, October 20; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Keeping up with daily activities and health concerns can be stressful. Join Lyssa Menard, PhD, health psychologist at Northwestern Memorial's Wellness Institute and assistant professor of Psychology and Behavioral Medicine at the Feinberg School, to learn about the effect stress has on a person's health and talk about coping techniques.

### Heart Failure Prevention and Treatment C8

**Mihai Gheorghide, MD**  
**Monday, October 31; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Heart failure describes a common condition in which the heart's pumping action begins to fail. An estimated one out of every 10 individuals age 80 and older has the condition. Mihai Gheorghide, MD, medical director of telemetry, associate chief of cardiology and chief of Cardiology Clinical Services at Northwestern Memorial and professor of Medicine at the Feinberg School, will discuss the risk factors and preventive treatment methods for heart failure.

### Macular Degeneration C9

**Speaker:** Manjot Gill, MD  
**Friday, November 11; 11 a.m. to Noon**  
Macular degeneration is a common cause of deteriorating vision that causes a slow loss of central vision. Manjot Gill, MD, an ophthalmologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Ophthalmology at the Feinberg School, will provide an overview of this condition with a focus on the latest treatment options.

## Workshops

### How to Handle Medical Bills

**Facilitator:** Yvonne Henry  
**Tuesday, September 6; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Tuesday, September 27; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**  
Overwhelmed by the paperwork associated with medical bills? Find it difficult to understand Medicare's explanation of benefits? This session, led by a Northwestern Memorial Billing Inquiry Unit representative, will help you keep it all straight.

### Health Insurance: Am I Covered?

**Facilitator:** Yvonne Henry  
**Wednesday, October 19; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Wednesday, November 2; 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.**  
While Northwestern Memorial cannot recommend a specific health plan, this workshop will help you evaluate your current plan and learn more about Medigap insurance.

## Conferences

### Developments in Parkinson's Disease

**Saturday, October 29; 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
Registration required; seating is limited; lunch is provided

### Stem Cell Research in Parkinson's Disease: Today and Future

**Presented by:** Jack Kessler, MD, neurologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and chair of the Department of Neurology and Clinical Neurological Sciences and professor of Neurology at the Feinberg School

### Innovations in Restorative Surgery for Parkinson's Disease

**Presented by:** Joshua Rosenow, MD, neurosurgeon on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Neurological Surgery at the Feinberg School

### Medications Update and Alternative Therapies

**Presented by:** Tanya Simuni, MD, neurologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and medical director of Northwestern University's Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Center

### How You Can Make a Difference: Parkinson's Awareness and Advocacy

**Presented by:** Carol Walton, executive director of the Parkinson Alliance

### Town Hall Meeting: Research on Memory Loss

**Thursday, November 3; 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**  
Registration required; seating is limited; lunch is provided  
Join the Northwestern Cognitive Neurology and Alzheimer's Disease Center and the Northwestern Memorial Healthy Transitions program to learn about the science of memory and how to keep your memory sharp as you age. Learn about current research and programs and services for individuals dealing with memory loss.

**Moderators:** Jay Gottfried, MD, PhD, neurologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial and assistant professor of Neurology at the Feinberg School; Sandra Weintraub, PhD, ABPP-CN, professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Neurology at the Feinberg School; Darby Morhardt, MSW, LCSW, ACSW, research assistant professor and director of education at the center.

## Special Programs

### Ask the Pharmacist

**Tuesday, October 25; 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.**  
Bring your questions and your medications for an individual consultation with a Northwestern Memorial registered pharmacist.

## Research

### Exercise Study for Patients with Blood Flow Problems to the Legs

Researchers at the Feinberg School are conducting a study on the impact of exercise for men and women with reduced blood flow to the legs. Participants must have documented blood flow problems to the legs (also known as peripheral vascular disease, peripheral artery disease or intermittent claudication). Eligible participants may have the opportunity to receive free exercise training three times weekly at a health club.

- Transportation available
- Costs of transportation or parking reimbursed
- Only patients with documented blood flow problems to the legs are eligible

Please call the division of General Internal Medicine at Northwestern University at 312-695-2394.

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Healthy Transitions is published by the Division of Public Relations, Marketing and Physician Services, Northwestern Memorial Hospital, as a service to the community. For more information about Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please visit [www.nmh.org](http://www.nmh.org).

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This publication is not intended to replace the advice of your personal physician.

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To register and obtain location information for all events, call 312-926-8400.

Northwestern Memorial Hospital is a community of caregivers who welcome, respect and serve with dignity all people without regard to race, color, gender, national origin, religion, disability, age, veteran status or sexual orientation.