

HOUSE CALL

KelseyCare Advantage

October 2016

DEPRESSION – RECOVERY AND STAYING WELL

In 2016, *HOUSE CALL* focused on how depression affects one in four seniors age 65 and above. We discussed the importance of knowing the signs of depression, steps needed to treat the illness and the need for professional and family support to help loved ones reclaim their lives. Keep in mind that depression is NOT a normal part of aging. We all feel “down” at times, but depression involves feeling sad for weeks or months. A diagnosis of depression is serious, but treatable.

To help you or a loved one recover from depression and live a happy, healthy lifestyle, follow these sensible steps:

- Communicate with your doctors
- Eat a balanced diet
- Get active, exercise
- Limit alcohol
- Establish good sleep habits
- Stay social; volunteer
- Reduce stress

As you recover from depression, different treatment options are

available –what may work perfectly for one person, may not be the right treatment plan for you. The primary medical treatment for depression is an antidepressant medication program. Your physician may also encourage a therapy program or perhaps a combination of both medication and therapy treatments. It takes time to find the correct treatment program and for it to work. Understand that treatment changes are possible during the course of your recovery. Be open to personal lifestyle changes – avoid bad personal relationships or work overload at home or the office that may worsen depression and slow recovery.

Finally, staying well is the ultimate goal as you recover from depression. Some people experience setbacks with new periods of depression while others never have another depression experience. Follow the sensible steps to good mental health as listed above. Learn what

experiences may start or “trigger” another round of depression. A trigger could be a situation, anniversary date of a loss or event, relationship problem, health issue, financial problem, etc. Depression setbacks may be discouraging, but you can move past them. Try not to blame yourself and focus on your future. Most importantly, find a balance in life that works for you!

Note: This is the 4th article in a series on depression featured in HOUSE CALL this year. Earlier articles are available online in the January, April and July 2016 quarterly issues of HOUSE CALL at www.kelseycareadvantage.com



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEARING LOSS – *Part Two*

In our last newsletter, we discussed the causes of hearing loss and measures we can take to protect against it as well as when it's appropriate to seek medical attention for the condition. In this edition, we take a look at some treatment options.

Before getting into that, however, it's important to point out that there are two primary types of hearing loss:

1. **Sensorineural hearing loss.**

This is the most common type of permanent hearing loss. It occurs when there is damage to the inner ear or the hearing nerve. This type of hearing loss is most often treated with hearing aids;

2. **Conductive hearing loss.** This occurs when there is a decrease in the sound traveling through the ear to the organ of hearing. This can be caused by several disorders, including fluid in the middle ear and can often be treated medically or surgically.

For expertise on this topic, we once again turn to Kelsey-Seybold Clinic audiologist (hearing specialist) Dr. Jennifer D. Kimberly, who treats patients at Kelsey-Seybold's Main Campus and Clear Lake locations.

Dr. Kimberly says the most successful treatment depends on the type of hearing loss. "For sensorineural hearing loss, hearing aids can be very effective," she explains. "The sooner a person gets treatment once it is recommended, the better the prognosis. A person's motivation to want to hear better is a large factor in how effective the hearing aids will be."

Hearing aid technology has improved tremendously over the past two decades, according to Dr. Kimberly. "The majority of today's hearing aids are digital, compared to analog 20 years ago," she says. "Hearing aids have technology to help focus on speech, reduce background noise, and help localize where sound is coming from. Each person has individual needs regarding the styles and technologies needed, which can be discussed with your audiologist."

In addition to the technologies inside the hearing aids, Dr. Kimberly says there are many new technologies, including Bluetooth, that allow a person to answer their cell phone through the hearing aids. Adaptors help with hearing the television and small microphones may be used when in noisy situations, like a restaurant, or when trying to hear from a distance, such as during a lecture.

In addition, new research has shown that using a hearing aid can reduce the risk of mental decline in hearing loss patients. "Several studies suggest that adults with untreated hearing loss can have 30 to 40 percent faster decline in cognitive abilities compared to those without hearing loss, and the greater the hearing loss, the more likely they are to develop dementia," notes Dr. Kimberly.



Next comes the question of cost. Explains Dr. Kimberly: "Many times hearing aids are not a covered benefit by insurance companies, however when you start the process of evaluating hearing and getting hearing aids, it is important to contact your insurance company and find out if you have a hearing aid benefit."

Hearing aids, when fit appropriately, are very helpful in aiding in communication and improving quality of life. "Hearing aids come in several different styles and technologies," says Dr. Kimberly. "They are not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Contact an audiologist for a consultation and to initiate a trial with hearing aids."

For more information about Dr. Kimberly and the rest of the Kelsey-Seybold Audiology team, and to make an appointment, please go to www.Kelsey-Seybold.com and click on "Find a Doctor", then click on "Medical Specialties, Audiology".

A FEW EASY “STEPS” CAN HELP PREVENT FALLS

As we grow older, we run a greater risk of falling. The older we are when we fall, the greater the risk of serious injury. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 250,000 older Americans are hospitalized for hip fractures each year, mostly from falls.

Most falls happen at home, according to the National Safety Council, which offers the following common-sense tips to minimize the risk of tripping and falling:

- Remove floor clutter, such as small furniture, throw rugs, electrical cords and pet toys/treats;

- Wipe spills up immediately;
- Above floor level, stair rails on both sides of the staircase provide double protection.
- Use non-slip adhesive strips on stairs and non-skid mats or appliques in the bath/shower;
- The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recommends toilet safety frames and rails to make sitting and rising easier. Place slip-resistant flooring and install wall grab bars for support and use lower bathtubs for better access. For standup showers, use

a “curbless” entrance and wider stall space.

- Ensure proper lighting throughout your home to reduce the risk of accidents in the dark. NAHB recommends the following:
- Install light switches by all entrances to halls and rooms, fixtures with at least two bulbs in vital areas such as exits and bathrooms and switches placed in easily accessible locations;

While these measures are in no way guaranteed to prevent falls, they will definitely lower the risk.

DIABETIC MONITORING SUPPLIES *Preferred Brand Change For 2017*

KelseyCare Advantage would like to notify all of our members of a change to your benefits in regard to diabetic glucose monitors and supplies. Starting January 1, 2017 KelseyCare Advantage Essential, Essential+Choice, Rx, and Rx+Choice plans will no longer cover the Bayer brand glucose meter, test strips, and supplies. The most common examples are the Bayer Contour and Bayer Breeze test kits (including test strips and supplies). We will continue to cover the Roche brand for diabetic monitors and supplies (Accu-Chek).

In addition we will be adding the LifeScan (OneTouch) meters and supplies to our preferred

list of monitors. The coinsurance (copay) for the preferred brand of diabetic supplies (Accu-Chek and OneTouch) will remain at 0% or zero dollars. KelseyCare Advantage will no longer cover non-preferred brands (all other brands).

The table below summarizes the benefit changes that will take place.

If you are currently using a Bayer brand product or any other non-

preferred product, we recommend that you talk to your doctor before January 1, 2017 so that your doctor may determine which preferred brand product (LifeScan or Roche) will be appropriate for you.

For additional questions or assistance, please contact us at (713) 442-CARE (2273) between the hours of 8am – 5pm, Monday – Friday.

	2016	2017
Preferred Meter and Test Strips	0%	0%
Preferred Brands	Bayer & Roche	Roche & LifeScan
Non-Preferred Meter and Test Strips	10%	Not covered
Lancets, Lancet Devices and Control Solutions	0%	0%

MANAGING YOUR ASTHMA/COPD



For those who suffer from asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), prescription medications can bring quick relief and lasting control. The key, however, is to use the medication(s) exactly the way your doctor told you. If you have recently been hospitalized for a COPD attack, make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible to ensure that he or she prescribes the correct medication for you.

One of the most effective treatments for asthma and COPD is an inhaler, which enables you to easily breathe medicine through your mouth directly into your lungs. The medicines that inhalers deliver to your body help fight inflammation or swelling inside the lungs. It is important to learn how to use your inhaler properly, including when to use it. Your doctor should explain the process that is right for you.

Not all inhalers are alike. The **maintenance inhaler**, also

known as a preventer or controller, contains medications that are taken every day for an extended period of time to maintain control of persistent asthma/COPD. Maintenance inhalers need to be used every day, even if you think you are starting to feel better. They are not designed to bring immediate relief. Many people stop using their maintenance inhalers sooner than the doctor wants because they forget to use it, do not get immediate relief or think that their health is improving.

Another type of inhaler is called a **rescue inhaler**, also known as a reliever. This kind of inhaler can be life-saving, so it is important to keep it within easy reach at all times. The rescue inhaler helps relax and open the breathing tubes in the lungs, and provides immediate relief of asthma symptoms like dry cough, chest tightness, shortness of breath and wheezing. Unlike the maintenance inhaler, this one does not have long-term benefits.

Using inhalers can sometimes become confusing. Proper use of a maintenance inhaler should prevent further attacks. Using too much or too little medication, using medication too often or not often enough, and using the wrong medication for the wrong condition are all examples of improper use. If you think you may be taking your medications incorrectly, call your doctor right away and ask him or her about your prescription.

For patients with asthma/COPD, it is very important to pay attention to your health. That includes making lifestyle changes that reduce symptoms, such as practicing good hygiene (frequent hand-washing, for example), getting scheduled flu and pneumococcal vaccines, staying out of crowds during winter, maintaining good nutrition and a regular exercise program. Above all, if you smoke, get help to STOP as soon as possible! Here are some additional tips to help keep your asthma/COPD symptoms in check:

- Ensure you schedule regular follow-up visits;
- Talk to your doctor about a written Asthma Action Plan that tells you exactly what to do to prevent and treat symptoms;
- Ensure you receive training in how to correctly use asthma medications and devices;
- Avoid environmental triggers, including tobacco smoke and other airborne irritants, to which you may be sensitive.

ASK DENISE

Q. *How can I find out whether my prescriptions will be covered in 2017?*

A. You should have received member materials in the mail for the new benefit year beginning January 1, 2017. The 2017 Abridged Formulary is enclosed with the 2017 Annual Notice of Change/Evidence of Coverage documents. Please review the Abridged Formulary to identify changes that may affect the drugs you take. These changes include copay adjustments, the addition or removal of drugs and/or restrictions on drugs. The Abridged Formulary is a partial formulary and includes only some of the drugs that KelseyCare Advantage covers. For a complete listing of all covered prescription drugs, please visit www.kelseycareadvantage.com or

call Member Services to request a copy of the Comprehensive Formulary. You may reach us at 713.442.CARE (2273). We're available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

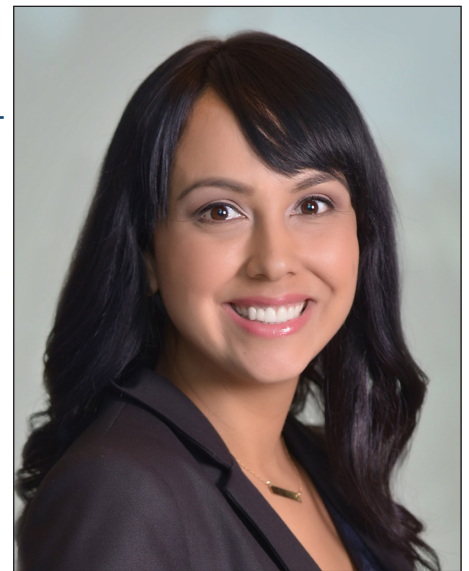
Q. *I reviewed the 2017 List of Drugs but did not find my prescription. What do I do?*

A. At the beginning of each calendar year, the plan can provide you with a one-time, temporary transition supply of a drug when the drug you take is no longer on the Formulary and/or the drug has a new restriction. Before this supply ends, speak to your physician to determine whether you should change the drug you are currently taking or request an exception from KelseyCare Advantage to continue coverage.

Don't leave the Pharmacy without your medication! You may be eligible for a transition supply. You or your pharmacist can call the Optum Rx (formerly known as Catamaran) number on the back of your ID card 24/7 to determine if you qualify.

Q. *Will I pay a deductible each time I fill my prescriptions?*

A. No, you begin in the Deductible stage when you fill your first prescription of the year. The Rx and Rx+Choice Plans each have a Deductible stage. The deductible is \$50. During the deductible stage, you pay the full cost of your drugs. Once you have paid \$50 for your drugs, you enter the Initial



Denise M. Jonathan,
Pharm. D., R.Ph.

Coverage stage, where you pay copayments or coinsurance for your prescriptions. If you are in a program that helps pay for your drugs, the deductible may not apply to you.

Q. *Why is it important for me to know how much my drugs cost?*

A. Knowing the total cost of your drugs will help you plan how much you will pay out of pocket during the year for your drugs. The total cost of your drugs effects when you enter the coverage gap and how much you will have to pay out of pocket while you are in this stage of coverage. Understanding the total cost will help you anticipate how much you will be spending on your drugs throughout the year. Once you have identified which drugs are concerns for you financially, you can discuss them with your doctor to determine whether there are any lower cost alternatives that may be appropriate for you.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR DENISE?

With each quarterly newsletter, Denise answers questions that are submitted by KelseyCare Advantage members. If you have a general pharmacy or prescription question, please submit them to HouseCall@KelseyCareAdvantage.com.

Advice provided by Denise is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice or a guaranty of treatment, outcome, or cure.

PREPARING FOR AN ELECTIVE SURGERY? CONSIDER THESE TIPS.

Unlike emergency surgery, elective surgery gives you a chance to prepare for your hospital stay. Here are some helpful tips:

Understand Your Elective Surgery

Discuss the procedure with your surgeon. Be clear about what you should do prior to and after the surgery including any medications or supplements that you should start or stop. Take notes. Studies show people forget over 50% of the medical instructions given to them.

- Go grocery shopping prior to your surgery. Eat well-balanced meals to help your body prepare for recovery. Make sure you have stocked your pantry with both healthy food items and food and beverage items you like since your appetite may be diminished following surgery.

Get Your House Ready

Clean your home in advance—so you won't be

tempted to sweep, mop or vacuum and cause harm to your healing body. Set up a bedroom downstairs if climbing stairs are prohibited. Organize cupboards so that glasses, plates, etc. are lower and easily reached without straining. Have a footstool by your bed or walker by your chair to assist you. Gather entertainment items!

- Pack light. Bring comfortable clothing (tee shirts, sweat pants, socks, bathrobe, slippers, etc.) for your hospital stay. Carry a small amount of cash for vending machines. Bring the same toiletries you would take on a trip. Don't forget lip balm and saline nose spray since hospital air can be dry. For better sleep, you may want to bring your own pillow or a white noise machine to mask the hospital sounds. Bring your prescription medication with you to avoid being billed by the hospital!

To learn more about elective surgery, contact your Kelsey-Seybold Clinic doctor.

Important Plan Information