Staying Healthy During Spring Gardening and Cleaning

Spring is the time to freshen up the yard and house after winter. Although gardening and yard work may feel great, KelseyCare Advantage Medical Director, Donnie Aga, M.D. advises the use of common sense to avoid injuries.

Tool Time
“Injuries from gardening and yard work can be serious, especially for older adults,” says Dr. Aga, chief of Internal Medicine at Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. “For example, hand tools, power tools, and ladders all make yard work a lot easier, but these are also common ways that people become injured.”

Keep the following in mind when working with tools.
• **Hand tools.** Gardening tools are pointed or sharp metal objects. Make sure they are clean (i.e. not rusty) and in good repair. Avoid leaving tools unattended or on walkways.
• **Power tools.** These tools are powerful but potentially dangerous, because they run on electricity or flammable liquids. Always wear eye safety protection, never use electric tools in the rain, and use extension cords with caution.
• **Ladders.** The higher the ladder, the bigger the fall, so use caution. Never use the top rung as a step. Also, if you feel dizzy or lightheaded, do not climb a ladder.
• **Preparation.** Dress appropriately with gloves and a hat to protect your hands and face, and consider wearing long pants and sleeves. Also, always use sunscreen!

Poisonous Plants and Critters
“Our yards are a little piece of nature,” says Dr. Aga. “But not all of the plants and animals are friendly, so take the necessary precautions.”

Here are a few suggestions.
• **Critters.** Use insect spray liberally. If it’s daytime, avoid nocturnal animals like raccoons and possums. They might be sick or dangerous.
• **Poison Ivy.** Poison ivy can cause rashes, but it can also cause anaphylaxis, a life threatening allergic reaction. Poison ivy characteristically grows in wooded areas as a vine or small bush; the leaves are in clusters of three; and the leaves have fine “hairs.” If you are clearing brush, avoid skin contact with poison ivy or any clothes that touch it.
Electronic Medical Record: A Cutting-Edge Tool for Quality Health Care

In recent years, legislation from the federal government has encouraged health care providers to transition to electronic medical record systems (EMR), while phasing out paper charts. But did you know that Kelsey-Seybold Clinic has been ahead of this trend?

In 2007, Kelsey-Seybold Clinic began using an EMR system called EpicCare for most patient care documentation needs. EpicCare was developed by Epic Systems, one of the nation’s leading developers of health care management software.

While some patients may be apprehensive about having their medical information stored electronically, it’s important to know that EMR can help improve the quality of your health care in many ways. For example, EMR can help:

- **Improve medical safety and reduce errors.** People age 65 and older take an average of four prescription medications a day. The EMR alerts doctors of medication allergies, potential drug interactions, and detrimental side effects of prescription and over-the-counter medications.

- **Improve the speed and accuracy of ordering tests and getting results.** Through the EMR, doctors can order lab and radiology tests, and results go directly to a patient’s chart as soon as they are available. This can decrease the time it takes the doctor to make a diagnosis and start treatment.

- **Improve preventative health care.** The EMR improves doctors’ ability to identify patients at risk for certain diseases, such as breast cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease and diabetes. The EMR can also generate reminder notices of regular screenings, which can lead to early intervention and more effective treatments.

- **Improve communications between health care providers.** The EMR has tools that allow for faster and more accurate communication among all health care providers, including doctors, nurses, therapists and technicians.

Want to communicate electronically and securely with your doctor’s office? When you join MyKelseyOnline, you can email your doctor’s office, make your own appointments with Kelsey-Seybold Clinic primary care physicians and an expanding list of specialists, view your health summary, current medications and most lab results and request prescription refills. In less than five minutes, you can sign up for free. Just visit www.mykelseyonline.com to activate your account.

How secure is MyKelseyOnline? All communications between you and your Kelsey-Seybold Clinic health care provider using MyKelseyOnline are carried over a secure, encrypted connection. Encryption means the information is encoded in such a way that no one can read it during transmission. Your health records are stored behind a firewall to prohibit unauthorized access. In addition, MyKelseyOnline access requires a unique ID and password that you create yourself.
HEAR, HEAR! Hearing aids available through Kelsey-Seybold Clinic

If you think you have a hearing problem, see your primary care doctor first. He or she may send you to a Kelsey-Seybold audiologist, a licensed healthcare professional who specializes in treating hearing loss. These professionals will guide you through testing for hearing loss and help find the appropriate hearing aid, if necessary.

Fortunately, KelseyCare Advantage Essential and Essential+Choice plans (and some employer plans) have an annual allowance toward hearing aid expenses, which is applied at the time of service when hearing aids are purchased through Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. If you obtain hearing aids through other vendors, you may be required to pay in full and submit a receipt to KelseyCare Advantage to be reimbursed, up to the amount of the allowance for your particular plan.

If you have a KelseyCare Advantage plan without an allowance, you can still get a 20% discount on your hearing aids if you purchase them through Kelsey-Seybold Clinic. If you have questions about this benefit, please call our Concierge Service at 713-442-9540.

Moved Recently?

If so, it’s very important to let KelseyCare Advantage know about your change of address. Having your current information on file helps us to:

• Communicate with you about important benefit information
• Properly advise you on provider services in your area
• Keep you up-to-date on KelseyCare Advantage news
• Ensure you are enrolled in a county in the KelseyCare Advantage service area. If you ever move out of Harris, Fort Bend, Montgomery or Galveston (Mainland) county, you can enroll in another Medicare plan that serves your new county.

To update your address or phone number, just call 713-442-CARE, option 2 or toll-free 1-866-535-8343 (TTY/TDD 1-866-302-9336), 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
Understanding Eye Exam Co-Pays

In 2012, the rules regarding copays for eye exams changed for KelseyCare Advantage members. So here is what you should know before your next visit to the eye doctor.

Basically, there are two different kinds of eye exams.

- **Routine check-up.** This exam is generally recommended once a year. During this visit, patients have a thorough eye exam, including dilation of the pupils so the doctor can get a good look at the interior of the eye. Most KelseyCare Advantage plans have a $0 copay for this kind of visit to the doctor.

- **Diagnostic exam.** This exam occurs when you have a specific problem with your eyes. Your doctor will try to discover what is wrong and determine how to treat it. In years past, there was no copay for this type of exam. However, in 2012, most KelseyCare Advantage members will have a specialist copay for this kind of visit to the doctor.

So the next time you schedule an eye appointment, keep in mind that you may need to be prepared for a specialist copay, if your exam is not your annual eye exam. Have questions about how your vision benefit works? Our Concierge team is here to help. Call us at 713-442-9540 anytime between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Suggestions?

Thank you for reading our quarterly House Call member newsletter. Do you have topics you would like to read more about in our newsletter? We invite you to email us at House.Call@Kelseycareadvantage.com with ideas and/or topics you would like to see in future editions. If you have a personal issue and would like a personal response, please contact the KelseyCare Advantage Concierge at 713-442-9540.

Important Phone Numbers to Remember

KelseyCare Advantage Concierge
713-442-9540
For personalized assistance with physician selection, benefits issues, billing questions

Fraud, Waste and Abuse Hotline
713-442-9595
The Travel Bug
Medical costs may be part of your journey

For many seniors, travel is a big part of their retirement plan. And while getting sick when you travel is never part of your plans, it does happen. So, what do you need to know about your KelseyCare Advantage benefits before you go? Here are a few highlights.

World-Wide Emergency Coverage
Here is the good news. When you travel away from home (even overseas or on a cruise ship) KelseyCare Advantage will cover your urgent or emergency medical care at 100% of the Medicare reimbursement rate. However, here is the bad news. Medicare rates often do not cover the entire cost.

For example, most cruise ships today have medical services onboard, sometimes even advanced diagnostics and surgical care. If you need these services, you will have to pay them and then request reimbursement from KelseyCare Advantage. However, the cruise ship is not obligated to accept Medicare rates. Therefore, if they charge more than the Medicare rate for a procedure, you will have to pay the difference. The same is true for treatment by doctors and hospitals in foreign countries.

Travel Insurance
What to do? Well, the best solution is to invest in good travel insurance if you are going overseas or on a cruise. Make sure that you buy insurance that specifically pays for any medical expense over and above what Medicare covers.

Additionally, KelseyCare Advantage does not pay for any extra expenses you incur because of your illness. For example, you may need to rebook your flight home, or stay extra days in your hotel if you cannot travel. Travel insurance can also help with reimbursing those expenses. But again, make sure you read the fine print, and confirm that the insurance policy is appropriate for where you are going and the coverage you might need.

A Friendly Reminder…
Always continue to pay your monthly Medicare Part B premium!

This premium is what you pay directly to Medicare to have Part B coverage, and you need it to stay enrolled in KelseyCare Advantage.

If you have questions about your Part B premium, please call us at 713-442-CARE (2273), option 2 or toll-free at 1-866-535-8343. TTY/TDD users should call 1-866-302-9336.
Dear KelseyCare Advantage Members

Welcome to the latest edition of House Call, our exclusive member newsletter. This issue offers some great tips on staying healthy and getting the most out of your KelseyCare Advantage benefits.

Navigating retirement can be complicated, because it's a whole new phase of life. But in this issue, we show you how KelseyCare Advantage can make your retirement just a little more simple. For example, KelseyCare Advantage members can:

- Get assistance with paying for emergency medical expenses when traveling, even overseas; and
- Take advantage of allowances or discounts on hearing aids

This issue also helps clarify some topics that might be confusing: eye exam copays, hearing aids, Electronic Medical Record systems (EMR) and more. We also offer a few reminder tips on safely tackling your spring gardening and yard work.

If you have any questions about KelseyCare Advantage, please call our Concierge Service at 713-442-9540. Our trained staff can offer you personalized assistance in resolving a wide range of questions and issues.

In good health,

Marnie Matheny
President, KelseyCare Advantage

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