



New CHA program targets lifestyle and learning for seniors



The Center for Healthy Aging at UPMC McKeesport is initiating a new research program called the WELL Program. WELL stands for Wellness for Elders through Lifestyle and Learning. This new program may be of interest to many adults who are struggling with weight gain and mobility. This opportunity could help you age in a healthy way.

A goal of WELL is to identify the effect of physical activity on maintaining independence, such as, the ability to take care of your daily needs and the ability to walk. Another goal of the program is to determine the best way to lose weight while maintaining an ideal amount of muscle through physical activity and healthy eating. Preserving mobility and weight management are central to maintaining a high quality of life. Being able to move and keep your weight at a healthy level will enable you to continue everyday activities such as making a bed, shopping, gardening, recreational activities, and/or playing with grandchildren.

The most recent dietary guidelines for Americans include recommendations for weight, diet, and physical activity throughout life. The participation in physical activity is extremely important for us as we age. The benefits of exercise include:

- Enhanced agility and balance
- Increased muscle strength
- Improved weight control
- Decreased bone loss
- Improved cholesterol levels
- Maintenance of normal blood sugar levels
- Improved heart and lung function
- Decreased risk of chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes, hypertension)
- Improved mood and self esteem
- Decreased depression

Participants will be randomized into one of these two programs: Physical Activity plus Weight Reduction — Half of the participants will receive a weight reduction program that includes a healthy eating plan that limits caloric intake. The addition of a calorie controlled healthy eating plan is an important feature for participants, so that muscle mass will be maintained as weight

loss occurs.

Physical Activity plus Successful Aging Health Education Program — Half the participants will participate in a successful aging health education program that will include information on good nutrition and regular physical activity. Other program topics that emphasize “good overall health” will include information about blood pressure, bone loss and muscle weakness, diabetes, cholesterol, cancer screening, depression, immunizations, social contact and smoking. You may recognize these as the “10 Keys to Healthy Aging.” As with all research programs, participants will not be able to choose what program to which they will be assigned. Your placement into one of these groups will occur by chance and you will have an equal chance of getting into the physical activity plus weight reduction or the physical activity program plus successful aging health education program. Participants will also receive a number of physical and mental tests so that the WELL staff can better understand their needs.

It is never too late to start being more physically active. Researchers have learned that many adults want to take better care of themselves and to have the opportunity to participate in research programs that will improve their health and the health of others in their community. If you are interested in participating in this exciting research program, please call 412-664-2822 to get more information. The program is offered free of charge and is currently recruiting adults 65 and over from the area.

ELIGIBILITY

You may be eligible for the program if you are:

- Age 65 or older
- Overweight
- Not active
- Weight stable (no significant weight loss or weight gain)
- Willing to travel to the Center for Healthy Aging offices at McKeesport Hospital

Be sure to share this information with others who may be interested. The staff of WELL is looking forward to meeting you.

This column was written by Alice Valoski, WELL Program Director. For more information on this article, please call 412624-3139.

CHA is a part of the Department of Epidemiology in the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh. It is one of 33 Prevention Research Centers in the United States funded by the Centers for Disease Control. For questions or more information contact David J. Fetterman, Community Outreach Coordinator at the Center for Healthy Aging at 412-

383-3121 or visit www.healthyaging.pitt.edu.

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