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Caring For Your Skin



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Welcome to the latest issue of the **Caring For Your Skin** Newsletter, that I write biannually to help keep my patients informed of the latest skin care advice, advances and other health related information. In this issue, I address:

- 1) **A new tool that helps you comparison shop for prescription medicines**
- 2) **Vitamin D deficiency and increased risk of dementia**
- 3) **Aspirin lowers the risk of gastrointestinal cancers**
- 4) **Ultraviolet camera lets you see sun-induced skin damage at a young age**
- 5) **How will "Single Payer" affect Vermonters on Medicare?**

A Useful Tool – Helps find lower cost prescriptions

At long last there is a website that helps people find the best price for prescription medications, and these can vary significantly from pharmacy to pharmacy. With more people having high deductible health insurance plans, this website is a useful tool to find lower cost medications. It is also useful for comparing prices on prescriptions not covered by insurance such as cosmetic agents like tretinoin (Retin-A, Renova) and Latisse.

Simply go to the site@ <http://www.goodrx.com>, type in your medication and zip code and it will give you comparison prices among the local chain pharmacies. Below is a photo of the computer screen comparing the cost of sixty 100mg doxycycline monohydrate capsules, in the Rutland area.

The screenshot shows the GoodRx website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with "Search Drug Prices" and navigation links for "How GoodRx Works", "Mobile App", "Discount Card", "More", "Help", and "Register or Sign In". The main heading is "Prices for 60 capsules of doxycycline monohydrate 100mg (generic)". Below this, there is a map of the Rutland area with several red location pins. A "Savings Tip" box states: "Potentially Unavailable: This drug has recently experienced shortages and may not be available at your pharmacy. Please call ahead to confirm availability. Learn more". Below the map, there is a list of pharmacies with their respective prices and discount options:

Pharmacy	Price	Discount	Action
Walmart	\$42.05 with discount	with discount	Get Discount
CVS Pharmacy	\$114 est. cash price, \$55.83 with coupon	with coupon	Get Coupon
Walgreens	\$113 est. cash price, \$59.80 with coupon	with coupon	Get Coupon
Rite-Aid	\$140 est. cash price, \$64.36 with coupon	with coupon	Get Coupon

From this search we find that Walmart has the lowest price (\$42.05), with a discount coupon printed out from this website. Unfortunately this website does not list the cost of prescription medications at the local, non-chain pharmacies or grocery store pharmacies. To see how competitive private pharmacy prices are, we compared the cost of three commonly prescribed dermatology medications: sixty 100mg doxycycline monohydrate capsules; an 80gm tube of 0.1% of triamcinalone cream; and a 45gm tube of 0.025% tretinoin (Retin A) cream. We noted that the private pharmacies are competitive to the major pharmacy chains.

Pharmacy	doxycycline	triamcinalone	tretinoin
Private pharmacy A	\$53.00	\$16.45	\$183.00
Private pharmacy B	\$63.50	\$19.95	\$175.00
Private pharmacy C	\$45.95	\$24.95	\$198.00
CVS	\$55.83 ^c \$114 ^{ecp}	\$11.63 ^c \$27 ^{ecp}	\$42.34^c \$115 ^{ecp}
Rite Aid	\$64.36 ^c \$140 ^{ecp}	\$26.00 ^{ecp}	\$104.14 ^c \$216 ^{ecp}
Walgreens	\$59.80 ^c \$113 ^{ecp}	\$10.22 ^c \$30 ^{ecp}	\$44.95 ^c \$178 ^{ecp}
Walmart	\$42.05^d	\$8.00^d	\$50.36 ^d
Mail Order (Health Warehouse)	Not available	\$15.00	\$225
Difference between highest and lowest price (not counting ecp)	\$22.31	\$18.00	\$182.66

^d discount; ^c with coupon; ^{ecp} estimated cash price without discount or coupon; lowest prices in bold text

You can also search out the price of cosmetic medications, such as **Latisse**, that helps you grow thicker, longer and darker eyelashes.



Unfortunately this site doesn't include the Rutland Skin Center where the price of Latisse is \$109, and beats all the major chain prices by up to \$19, as shown above. We buy it directly from the manufacturer and have minimal markup so that we can provide this product as a benefit to our patients.

Vitamin D may lower the risk of dementia

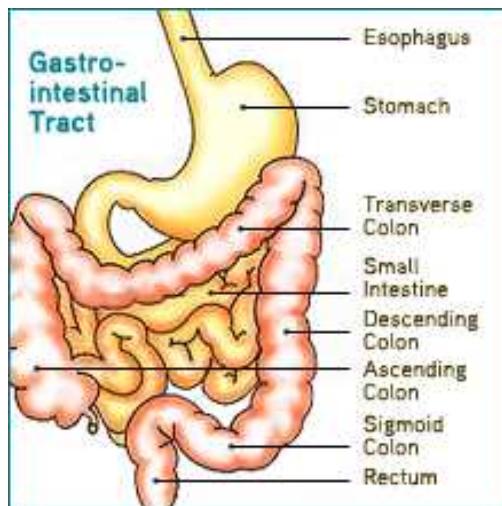


Older adults with too little vitamin D in their blood may have twice the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease as seniors with sufficient levels of the "sunshine vitamin," a new study finds.

The research -- based on more than 1,600 adults over age 65 -- found the risk for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia increased with the severity of vitamin D deficiency.

But the findings aren't enough to recommend seniors take vitamin D supplements to prevent mental decline. "Clinical trials are now urgently needed in this area," said study researcher David Llewellyn, a senior research fellow in clinical epidemiology at the University of Exeter Medical School in England.+ From: <http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/news/20140806/low-vitamin-d-levels-may-boost-alzheimers-risk-study-finds>

Aspirin lowers the risk of gastrointestinal cancers



A new [study](#) in *Annals of Oncology* finds that the benefits of daily aspirin may outweigh the risks, at least when it comes to cancers of the digestive tract . bowel, stomach and esophageal.+

They found that aspirin over 10 years can cut bowel cancer incidence by 35%, and deaths from the disease by 40%. Esophageal and stomach cancers rates were each reduced by 30% . and deaths from these cancers by 50% and 35%, respectively. There was some evidence of a reduction in lung, breast, and prostate cancers, too, but it was weaker.

The risk of heart attack was also reduced by about 18%, as was stroke, albeit to a lesser degree (and deaths from stroke were actually increased).

The team found that it took about three years to see any health benefit of daily aspirin, and ideally, they say, one would take between 75-100 mg for at least five years to reap the fuller effects. Between 50 and 65 years of age, one would need to take aspirin for up to 10 years for it to be the most effective. In fact, the authors calculate that if everyone over 50 took aspirin daily for 10 years, 122,000 deaths might be prevented over a period of two decades.

There was some increased risk of bleeding (from 2.2% to 3.6%), but it was relatively minimal, compared to the positive effect on cancer and cardiovascular risk. It's not clear if there's an age after which aspirin would no longer be beneficial.

Whilst there are some serious side effects that can't be ignored, says Cuzick, taking aspirin daily looks to be the most important thing we can do to reduce cancer after stopping smoking and reducing obesity, and will probably be much easier to implement.

Our study shows that if everyone aged between 50-65 started taking aspirin daily for at least 10 years, there would be a 9% reduction in the number of cancers, strokes and heart attacks overall in men and around 7% in women. The total number of deaths from any cause would also be lower, by about 4% over a 20-year period. The benefits of aspirin use would be most visible in the reduction in deaths due to cancer.

From:
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2014/08/06/when-it-comes-to-cancer-the-benefits-of-aspirin-may-outweigh-the-risks/>

In a previous ***Caring for Your Skin*** newsletter we mentioned a study showing that people who took a daily dose of aspirin had a 24 percent lower rate of developing cancer after three years and were 37 percent less likely to die from the disease after five years. Aspirin also reduced the risk of any cancer spreading to other organs by 36 percent and certain types of tumors by 46 percent. For the beneficial effect, the aspirin had to be taken every day, but could be either the mini-dose 80 mg, or full size 325 mg pill. **A more recent study shows that post menopausal women that take an aspirin a day may have up to 30% lower risk of developing melanoma than those that don't take aspirin daily.** From:

<http://www.skincancer.org/news/melanoma/aspirin>

Check with your primary care provider before starting a daily aspirin regimen.

Ultraviolet camera lets you see sun-induced skin damage



Unfortunately most of us get years of sun exposure before we become aware of the deleterious affects it has on our skin. Most of us get well past 40 years of age before we start to see the wrinkles, age spots, pre cancers and worse yet skin cancers. If only we could see some of the damage earlier on, we might start to take better care of our skin and use sun protective measures routinely. Ultraviolet cameras can reveal sun damage at a much earlier age than detectable by our eyes under normal visible light. The images above show sun induced pigmentary changes that are a harbinger of more significant sun damage that will come in the years ahead. I suggest you share the following link with friends and loved ones who you think should be more attentive to protecting their skin from the sun. Perhaps it will help them realize the importance of sun protective measures. The following video clip is well worth watching. <http://petapixel.com/2014/08/14/this-incredible-short-film-shows-what-your-aging-skin-looks-like-to-a-uv-camera/>

How will “Single Payer” affect Vermonters on Medicare?



Act 48, the law passed in 2011 that set in motion the conversion to a single payer health care system in Vermont, has language that Vermont will seek a waiver from the federal government to roll Medicare patients into the single payer plan. <http://ethanallen.org/10-9-14-seniors-medicare-single-payer/> What this means to Vermonters aged 65 and over has not yet been defined but seniors should be prepared to ask questions about what this means to their health care coverage. Will the benefits be the same? Will there be co-pays and deductibles? What additional taxes will seniors have to pay to support the single payer system? What happens to supplemental secondary insurance policies? Will seniors be free to use hospitals and doctors in other states, or will they have to seek prior approval? There are many other questions that need answers, including the details of how Vermont will finance the single payer health care system. Governor Shumlin has promised that after his two year delay, he would reveal the financing plan for the single payer plan during the 2015 legislative session. Stay tuned.

Hope you have an enjoyable Thanksgiving & Christmas/Hanukkah, and good health in 2015.



DPM