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TRIP PREPARATION MEANS MORE THAN PACKING A SUITCASE

If summer is your travel season, enjoy it in good health. UCI Medical Center geriatrician Dr. Simin Torabzadeh advises older adults to prepare physically and medically:

- Do at least 10 minutes of walking daily, two weeks or more in advance.
- Obtain refills of prescriptions and take enough to last throughout the trip.
- One month ahead, ask your doctor about immunizations required for foreign countries.
- Wait at least six weeks after events such as a heart attack or surgery to travel.

“Tell your physician you are traveling and where you’re going,” Torabzadeh says. “Your doctor can give you clues as to what you might need.”



Hormone Therapy: Is It Safe?

Studies about postmenopausal hormone therapy have left many older women confused and concerned. But if women are satisfied with hormone therapy’s many benefits, they may be able to continue the treatment.

“If someone started it in her early 50s and she’s now 65, I don’t know that I would change anything,” says Dr. K. Mark Vuchinich, an obstetrician and gynecologist at UCI Medical Center. “As long as they are in overall good health, a lot of women can continue with the therapy.”

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) helps reduce the symptoms of menopause—hot flashes and vaginal dryness—while also protecting against osteoporosis. Many women report additional benefits in keeping their skin supple and hair healthy.

Doctor and patient attitudes toward hormone therapy changed after the landmark Women’s Health Initiative (WHI) study in 2002. WHI showed increases in cases of heart disease, stroke and breast cancer among older women taking hormones for five years or longer. Media reports tended to overstate the risks, Vuchinich says, so patients were scared, doctors stopped prescribing it, and hormone therapy received a black eye.

The WHI study showed that for every 10,000 women who took estrogen and progesterone, eight more cases of breast cancer would result per year. “That’s quite small in terms of absolute risk,” Vuchinich says.



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REGISTER NOW

Fallproof!TM

FallProof! is a 16-session program for medically stable seniors to reduce their risk of falls. Register now for classes beginning **Aug. 15, 2006**. Participants must have medical clearance and undergo evaluation by Aug. 10. Call toll free 1-877-UCI-DOCS (1-877-824-3627) for details and to register.

UCIrvine



A Day of Health

More than 1,400 seniors attended UCI Medical Center's seventh annual "Taking Charge of Your Health Care" event at the Crystal Cathedral in May. Thanks to all who participated. To see more photos, visit www.ucihealth.com/seniorevent.

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In addition, the study did not accurately reflect the typical HRT patient, who is in her late 40s or 50s when beginning treatment, Vuchinich says. The study measured women with an average age of 63 at the start of therapy.

"If a woman wants to stop the therapy, that's fine," Vuchinich says. "She should understand that some of her symptoms may resume for a short period of time — hot flashes, vaginal dryness and perhaps some withdrawal bleeding."

Alternatives to vaginal dryness include lubricants. Drugs such as Fosamax can help maintain protection against osteoporosis. Hot flashes have few alternative treatments, Vuchinich says.

He counsels women to stay with traditional delivery forms of HRT—pills, patches or vaginal creams—and steer clear of implants or injections advertised by pharmacists. These are largely unregulated and vary in quality and dose levels.

"Women on long-term HRT don't need to do anything special, just continue their annual Pap smears and mammograms, and check their overall cholesterol levels and lipids," Vuchinich says. "Hormone therapy might not prevent Alzheimer's or heart disease, as we used to think, but women don't need to be afraid of it. They should weigh the benefits and risks, as with all treatments."

To make an appointment with a physician at the UCI Women's Health Care Center, please call 714-456-2911.