

# Are you bothered by asthma or allergies?

Asthma and allergies are at epidemic proportions in America. They affect so many Americans now that the White House has designated May as Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. The statistics surrounding these conditions can be overwhelming. In fact, in the past 20 years, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), the number of Americans with these two chronic conditions has doubled. That brings the current estimate of afflicted people to 60 million. Last year alone, there were approximately two million emergency room visits and nearly half a million hospital stays due to asthma/allergy attacks. So, in this month of awareness, the real question is: what can be done to reduce and prevent the symptoms (and resulting attacks) of these devastating diseases?

Asthma is a disease of the lungs in which the airways become blocked or narrowed causing breathing difficulty. Asthma is commonly divided into two types: allergic (extrinsic) asthma and non-allergic (intrinsic) asthma. There is still much research that needs to be done to fully understand how to prevent, treat and cure asthma. But, with proper management, people can live healthy and active lives.



Tree, grass and weed pollen — abundant in the month of May — are commonly inhaled outdoor allergens.

Allergies are diseases of the immune system that cause an overreaction to substances called “allergens.” Allergies are grouped by the kind of trigger, time of year or where symptoms appear on the body: indoor and outdoor allergies (also called “hay fever,” “seasonal,” “perennial” or “nasal” allergies), food allergies, latex allergies, insect allergies, skin allergies and eye allergies. People who have allergies can live healthy and active lives.

The best treatment is to take your condition seriously by learning all you can from your doctor and through research. Some tips to help prevent attacks are:

- Identify and eliminate the triggers in your environment that can cause an allergy or asthma attack.
- Use the correct methods to clean and sanitize your home (e.g., steam cleaners, air purifiers, HEPA-grade vacuums).
- Use preventative and treatment medications. Asthma is a chronic condition, so you should take any preventative medicine prescribed by your doctor as directed.

Never stop taking your medicine just because you “feel better.” Asthma symptoms can lie dormant in your system for long periods and only become apparent when triggered.

Knowing what environmental elements can trigger your allergy or asthma attack means that you are now empowered to make changes to create an indoor space that is symptom free. May, as Allergy and Asthma Awareness Month, is an excellent time to become more aware of your condition, treatment options, and new products that can help you live more symptom free.

#### Sources:

- Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, [www.aafa.org](http://www.aafa.org)
- Sylvane Learning Center, [www.sylvane.com](http://www.sylvane.com)

## Coming Soon in the Village

St. George Village provides life enriching programs for its residents. Join us for this upcoming event:

- June 8, 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. — The Saint Joseph’s Hospital Mobile Mammography Unit will be on-site at SGV. Reservations for mammography appointments are required. Contact Cathy Parker at [cparker@stgeorgevillage.com](mailto:cparker@stgeorgevillage.com)



# Well worth it: be healthy and fit

At St. George Village, your health and well-being matter! Our wellness program is one of the many ways we support the overall health of our residents.

Wellness Coordinator Cathy Parker says that the program works to address the needs of all residents. “St. George Village is a community that embraces the concept of aging well,” she explains. “We make sure to offer classes on every fitness level for our residents, whether they’re in shape, have been inactive for a long time or are, perhaps, recovering from an illness.”

SGV’s schedule of fitness classes includes an introductory general exercise and stretching class each weekday at 10:30 a.m. Parker says this class is a great way to get a little of everything — standing and sitting exercises, some cardio work to get heart rates up, and some stretching to manipulate joints.

Other classes offered at SGV include a strength class that works on building stamina, especially in the legs; line dancing, a fun way to

Several tai chi classes take place at St. George Village each week. The gentle movements of tai chi offer many health benefits, including stress reduction.



build stamina while challenging the brain to remember the steps; a theraband class, featuring seated exercises, to build strength in arms and legs; a cardio class, also done seated, that gets the heart rate up by moving arms and legs; and a variety of tai chi and yoga classes that improve conditioning and flexibility through gentle movements.

Residents are encouraged to take advantage of the beautiful indoor saline pool at SGV. “The pool offers so many health benefits,” says Parker. “You weigh one-third less in the water than on land, so the buoyance helps with exercising

painful joints and backs.” SGV provides water aerobics classes in the pool several times a week, but residents may also use it for free swims, water walking, or resistance strength training using water bells.

The walking path around the lake offers residents an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors while getting exercise.

In addition to fitness opportunities at SGV, Parker teaches a six-week class on “Aging Successfully.” Keeping the brain engaged and active is one aspect that the class addresses. (For some

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# Residential Confidential



SGV resident Breda Kosakowski's macular degeneration may have affected her eyesight, but not her fitness level!

nifying glass for reading menus in restaurants. But some things were a little trickier to figure out, such as food preparation.

"When I'd make a salad, I used to tease my husband about what he might find in it!" she laughs. "I couldn't see the food I was chopping on my white cutting board. But using a black cutting board solved the problem."

**B**reda Kosakowski has been living with macular degeneration for the past 11 years. The disease, which causes loss of vision in the center of the visual field and leaves only peripheral vision, is a major cause of visual impairment in older adults.

Undaunted by her diagnosis, Breda still lives independently and has found many aids to help her cope with her vision loss, such as a talking watch, a magnifying screen for reading books and magazines, and a mag-

In addition, Breda, who enjoys the fitness classes at SGV, was concerned that her disability would affect her ability to participate in physical activities. "I particularly love line dancing, but worried that my impaired vision would keep me from being able to follow the steps," she explains. "But we practice the steps before we try the dance and the instructor counts for us. I found my vision loss didn't really affect me. I can still dance!"

Breda adds that her fitness activities have contributed to her overall

good health. "When I went for my most recent annual physical, I told my doctor about all of the exercise I get here at St. George Village," she says. "I said that I do line dancing, yoga, tai chi, strength training, cardio and stretching. My doctor threw up her hands and said, 'Whoa!' She was very impressed."

Breda has also revived her poker playing skills since coming to live at SGV four years ago. "I love poker! Some friends found 'jumbo' poker cards for me and the other players call out the cards as they're dealt," she explains. "I just have to remember everything they say!"

Although Breda continues to visit her eye doctor on a regular basis, her eyes have been stable for quite a while. She considers herself fortunate. "As long as I'm stable, I'm good," she says.

Best of all, she's never let her visual impairment interfere with her love of life. "I'm busy every day of the week!"



Proud graduates of St. George Village's first "Aging Successfully" class, taught by Wellness Coordinator Cathy Parker, show off their certificates.

*Well Worth It, continued on page 1* helpful "healthy brain" tips, see opposite page.)

Parker encourages all residents to take advantage of the wellness and fitness classes offered at SGV. "Exercise is so important, not only for the body but also for the brain. It's positive for your whole outlook," she states. "You feel good when you're taking care of yourself."

For more information on the wellness and fitness classes at SGV, come see Cathy Parker from 10:15 a.m.-2:15 p.m., weekdays. You can usually find her in the fitness center area, auditorium, activity room or pool area.

# Brain Power: Maintaining mental fitness



**E**xperts agree that total fitness includes mental fitness. According to Alvaro Fernandez, co-founder of SharpBrains, here are 10 good lifestyle options you can follow to maintain — and improve — your brain.

■ Learn what "It" is in "Use It or Lose It." A basic understanding will help you appreciate your brain's beauty as a living and constantly-developing dense forest with billions of neurons and synapses.

■ Take care of your nutrition. Did you know that the brain only weighs 2% of body mass but consumes over 20% of the nutrients the body takes in? As a

general rule, you don't need expensive ultra-sophisticated nutritional supplements; just make sure you don't stuff yourself full of the "bad stuff."

■ Remember that the brain is part of the body — exercising your body can also help sharpen your brain.

■ Think positive, future-oriented thoughts — this may require practice, but it will put you in a more positive, constructive frame of mind. Stress and anxiety, whether induced by external events or by your own thoughts, actually hinder the activity of your brain's neurons (the cells that process and transmit information) and prevent the creation of new ones.

■ Thrive through mental challenges. The point of having a brain is to learn and to adapt to challenging new environments. Once new neurons appear in your brain, how long they survive depends on how you use them. "Use It or Lose It" means "challenge your brain with fundamentally new activities."

■ We are (as far as we know) the only self-directed organisms on this planet. Aim high. Continue learning throughout your whole life. The brain keeps developing, no matter your age, and it reflects what you do with it.

■ Explore, travel. Adapting to new locations causes you to pay more attention to your environment.

■ Don't outsource your brain to others. Make your own decisions and mistakes, and learn from them.

■ Develop and maintain stimulating friendships. We humans are "social animals" and need social interaction.

■ Laugh. Often. Especially at cognitively complex humor, full of twists and surprises.

## How To Reduce Absentmindedness:

- Put an item to be remembered in an unusual place (put clothes that need to go to the dry cleaners by the front door).
- Have a memory place. This is a special place for keys, glasses, pills, etc.
- Organize your environment. "A place for everything and everything in its place."
- Set the alarm clock or timer if you need to do something at a certain time.
- Keep a good calendar.
- Use object cues to remind yourself of something you supposed to remember (tie a string around your finger, turn your watch around).
- Write notes to yourself.
- Don't procrastinate
- Talk to yourself. "I'm turning off the stove. The stove is off."
- If you find yourself in another room and can't recall why, go back to where you started.

## ST. GEORGE VILLAGE

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