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**Senior Safety News**

**This Issue's Features:**

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3. Health Scams

**A note on the H1N1 Virus**

It is being reported that 40% of the US population could be struck down by the Flu. The vaccine should be available in September or October. *Make sure that you get your flu shot early.*

**SSNAP**

We have built a model for reaching out to retirees in their communities. Our SSNAP program provides tools for helping retirees stay aware of hazards in their homes and how to avoid them.

We have built a model in Broward county Florida and intend to roll it out into other communities.

Visit [http://seniorsafetyonline.com/broward\\_home.html](http://seniorsafetyonline.com/broward_home.html)



**Safe Sleeping**

Try to set up a safe and restful place to sleep. Make sure you have smoke alarms on each floor of your house or apartment. Lock the outside doors before going to bed. Other ideas for a safe night's sleep are:

- Keep a telephone with emergency phone numbers by your bed.
- Have a good lamp within reach that turns on easily.
- Put a glass of water next to the bed in case you wake up thirsty.
- Use nightlights in the bathroom and hall.
- Don't smoke, especially in bed.
- Remove area rugs so you won't trip if you get out of bed in the middle of the night.
- Don't fall asleep with a heating pad on; it may burn.

**Sweet Dreams**

There are some tricks to help you fall asleep. You don't really have to count sheep—but you could try counting slowly to 100. Some people find that playing mental games makes them sleepy. For example, tell yourself it's 5 minutes before

you have to get up, and you're just trying to get a few extra winks.

Other people find that relaxing their body puts them to sleep. You might start by telling yourself that your toes feel light as feathers and then work your way up the rest of the body saying the same words. You may drift off to sleep before getting to the top of your head.



If you feel tired and unable to do your activities for more than 2 or 3 weeks, you may have a sleep problem. Talk to your doctor about changes you can make to get a better night's sleep.

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**The Buzz** - Published by Senior Safety Online  
**Contact Information**  
 Phone: 302-256-0415  
 email: [customerservice](mailto:customerservice)  
 2136 W. 8th Street, Ste. 2, Wilmington, DE 19805



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## Getting a Good Night's Sleep

**Being older doesn't mean you have to feel tired all the time. There are many things you can do to help you get a good night's sleep. Here are some ideas:**

- Follow a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day, even on weekends. Try to avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening, as it may keep you awake at night.
- Develop a bedtime routine. Take time to relax before bedtime each night. Some people watch television, read a book, listen to soothing music, or soak in a warm bath.
- Keep your bedroom dark, not too hot or too cold, and as quiet as possible.
- Have a comfortable mattress, a pillow you like, and enough blankets for the season.
- Exercise at regular times each day but not within 3 hours of your bedtime.
- Make an effort to get outside in the sunlight each day.
- Be careful about when and how much you eat. Large meals close to bedtime may keep you awake, but a light snack in the evening can help you get a good night's sleep.
- Stay away from caffeine late in the day. Caffeine (found in coffee, tea, soda, and hot chocolate) can keep you awake.
- Drink fewer beverages in the evening. Waking up to go to the bathroom and turning on a bright light break up your sleep.
- Remember that alcohol won't help you sleep. Even small amounts make it harder to stay asleep.
- Use your bedroom only for sleeping. After turning off the light, give yourself about 20 minutes to fall asleep. If you're still awake and not drowsy, get out of bed. When you feel sleepy, go back to bed.



..... source: NIH



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## Beware of Health Scams

You see the ads everywhere these days—"Smart Drugs" for long life or "Arthritis Aches and Pains Disappear Like Magic!" or even statements claiming, "This treatment cured my cancer in 1 week." It's easy to understand the appeal of these promises. But there is still plenty of truth to the old saying, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!"

Health scams and the marketing of unproven cures have been around for many years. Today, there are more ways than ever to sell these untested products. In addition to TV, radio, magazines, newspapers, infomercials, mail, telemarketing, and even word-of-mouth, these products are now offered over the Internet—with websites describing miracle cures and emails telling stories of overnight magic. Sadly, older people are often the target of such scams.

The problem is serious. Untested remedies may be harmful. They may get in the way of medicines prescribed by your doctor. They may also waste money. And, sometimes, using these products keeps people from getting the medical treatment they need.

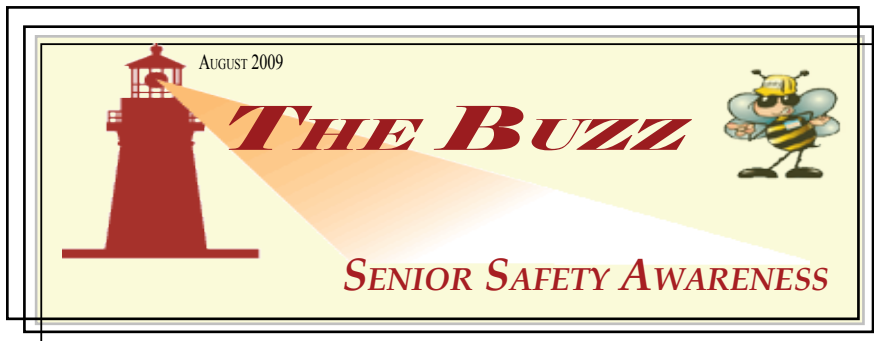
### False Hopes

Why do people fall for these sales pitches? Unproven remedies promise false hope. They offer cures that appear to be painless or quick. At best, these treatments are worthless. At worst, they are dangerous. Health scams prey on people who are frightened or in pain. Living with a chronic health problem is hard. It's easy to see why people might fall for a false promise of a quick and painless cure. The best way for scientists to find out if a treatment works is through a clinical trial.



**These scams usually target diseases that have no cures, like diabetes, arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease. You may see ads for:**

- Anti-aging medications. Our culture places great value on staying young, but aging is normal. Despite claims about pills or treatments that lead to endless youth, no treatments have been proven to slow or reverse the aging process. Eating a healthy diet, getting regular exercise, and not smoking are proven ways to help prevent some of the diseases that occur with age. In other words, making healthy lifestyle choices offers you the best chance of aging well.
- Arthritis remedies. Unproven arthritis remedies can be easy to fall for because symptoms of arthritis tend to



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come and go. You may believe the remedy you are using is making you feel better when, in fact, it is just the normal ebb and flow of your symptoms. You may see claims that so-called treatments with magnets, copper bracelets, chemicals, special diets, radiation, and other products cure arthritis. This is highly unlikely. Ads where people say they have been cured do not prove that a product works. Some of these products could hurt you, aren't likely to help, and are often costly. There is no cure for most forms of arthritis. Rest, exercise, heat, and some drugs help many people control their symptoms. Don't trust ads where people say they have been cured. This kind of statement probably doesn't tell the whole story. If you are thinking about any new treatment, such as diet, a device, or another arthritis product, talk with your doctor first.



- Cancer cures. Scam artists prey on a fear of cancer. They promote treatments with no proven value—for example, a diet dangerously low in protein or drugs such as laetrile. Remember: There is no one treatment that cures all types of cancer. By using unproven methods, people with cancer may lose valuable time and the chance to benefit from a proven, effective treatment. This delay may lessen the chance of controlling or curing the disease.

- Memory aids. Many people worry about losing their memory as they age. They may wrongly believe false promises that unproven treatments can help them keep or improve their memory. So-called smart pills, removal of amalgam dental fillings, and certain brain retraining exercises are some examples of untested approaches.

- Dietary supplements. Americans spend billions of dollars each year on dietary supplements. These supplements are sold over-the-counter and include vitamins and minerals, amino acids, herbs, and enzymes. Most dietary supplements do not undergo government testing or review before they are put on the market. While some vitamins may be helpful, supplements may be bad for people taking certain medicines or with some medical conditions. Be wary of claims that a supplement can shrink tumors, solve impotence, or cure Alzheimer's disease. Talk to your doctor before starting any supplement.

- Health insurance. Some companies target people who are unable to get health insurance. They offer coverage that promises more than it intends to deliver. When you think about buying health insurance, remember to find out if the company and agent are licensed in your State