

AGING IN ATLANTA

JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55

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HEALTH

Q&A on Medicare open enrollment

Period to sign up begins soon for the federal program.

By **Nancy Clanton**
nancy.clanton@ajc.com

Medicare open enrollment begins soon, so now is the time for those who are eligible to do their homework. Here are answers to questions you might have as a first time enrollee or if you need to make changes to your plan, plus resources to help you navigate this insurance landscape.

Q: What is Medicare?
A: Medicare is the federal government program that provides health care coverage.

Q: Who is eligible to enroll?
A: Those 65 and older; those under 65 and receiving Social Security Disability Insurance for a certain amount of time; and those under 65 with end-stage renal disease

Medicare continued on **S5**

HEALTH

Exercise: Keep at it in all weather

Fitness is key to staying strong and independent

By **Cathy Wilde**
for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

We can't turn back the clock. But experts agree that regular exercise is among the very best ways to avoid and manage disease and to maintain general health, well-being and independence as we age. But that can be a little tougher to do when the weather turns cold and long walks in the evening are a bit less appealing. Still, there are plenty of ways to stay active during the fall and winter.

Combating the natural effects of aging
According to Harvard Health, muscle loss, or sarcopenia, is a natural part of aging, and it's a major factor in overall weakness and poor balance that can lead to falls. But muscle loss is reversible, and strength, balance and alertness can be improved and even regained at any age, even

Health continued on **S3**



ADOBESTOCK

By **David Caraviello**
for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It seems like a simple concept: moving from a home that feels too big to something smaller that better fits your needs as you age. But now imagine you've been in that home for 30 years, and every wall and shelf is filled with photos of kids and pets and vacations, and every drawer and closet is full of memories. Then imagine you haven't conducted a real estate transaction in decades, and you're not sure where you would go. Suddenly, it's not so simple anymore. In reality, the downsizing process can be anything but simple. "It's gut-wrenching," says Dan Forsman, chairman and president of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia. "You've lived in this neighborhood where you've raised your family. You've gotten involved in the schools; you know the churches. And now you have 3,000 or 4,000 square feet of house for two people. And if you're 65, the demographics of the city are very different than they were when you were 30 and having your kids. So I think it's really hard."

And yet, it's also natural for seniors to look at the Atlanta housing market right now and wonder whether it's time to act. According to the most recent report available from Atlanta Realtors, the average sales price of a home in the region is \$441,500, a 20% increase from just a year ago. With inventory near record lows, sellers are commanding premium prices, and sales of \$1 million or more aren't uncommon even for older homes in the northern suburbs. "There is this compelling feeling that I can get the most for my home at this moment, so I should sell," says Lori Lane, senior vice president and managing broker at BHHS

For seniors, making the decision to sell a home is only small part of the emotion-filled process of downsizing



Lois and John Schmitt pack items in their vehicle as they prepared for the move to Florida from their home in Powder Springs last year. Selling the home where you raised your family can bring feelings of stress, anxiety or grief, according to the Elder Care Alliance. Downsizing can be anything but simple. "It's gut-wrenching," says Dan Forsman of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Georgia. ALYSSA POINTER / ALYSSA.POINTER@AJC.COM

Georgia. "And it is a great time to sell if you can find where you want to move to. The nice part for a senior is, they're probably downsizing, so they're not going into a more expensive home. That helps, even if prices are a little inflated. They should be getting a decent amount of equity, and with mortgages still super low, they should be able to get into that new home with a low-interest rate and save some of that cash."

Downsizing continued on **S2**



Running is great exercise, but if you're 50-plus, don't just lace up an old pair of sneakers and charge out the front door. First, run the idea past your doctor. DREAMSTIME

FITNESS

Tips to help older runners avoid pain, have safe fun

If running seems daunting at first, try to walk instead.

By **Tom Avril**
Philadelphia Inquirer

So you want to start exercising more after a lifetime of cubicle-dwelling and have settled on

the sport of millions: running. Congrats: It is great exercise, and it can be very rewarding. But please – if you're over 50-something, or even younger and truly out of shape – do not simply lace up an old pair of sneakers and charge out the front door. First, run the idea past

your primary care doctor. A physical exam may identify cardiac issues or other limitations that warrant trying a different form of exercise instead. And even after obtaining a clean bill of health, there are practical considerations to keep in mind. We spoke to Joseph Daigneau, owner of Per-

severe Physical Therapy in Philadelphia, and Dave Welsh, owner of South Jersey Running Co., for tips on how to stay safe, avoid frustration and, above all, have fun. **1. Where to run** One of running's **Runners** continued on **S2**

AGING IN ATLANTA

Downsizing

continued from S1

But the finances of downsizing are one thing – emotions are another. Selling the home where you raised your family can bring feelings of stress, anxiety and even grief, according to the Elder Care Alliance. And then there's the apprehension over the process.

“The whole idea is overwhelming for people,” says Jennifer Davis, a senior real estate specialist and owner of J. Davis Properties, a division of BHHS Georgia. “Typically they have 30 or 40 years of memories in that house, and they think, ‘I just don’t know where to start with this.’ And if someone has not had a real estate transaction in decades, the whole idea can be pretty intimidating. They think, ‘I don’t know anybody I can trust to guide me through this and not get ripped off in the process.’ People in the older generation, they are very susceptible to scams, and they know it. And that makes them incredibly cautious.”

When a home becomes a burden

As difficult as downsizing can be, there are signs that it's time to consider it. There may be rooms that you pay to heat and cool but are never used. Perhaps yard work and gardening have changed from a once-enjoyable hobby to

something that's just too physically taxing. Maybe there are needed repairs that you've just let go for too long. The bottom line: If the home is becoming a burden, it's time to think about selling it.

“If you have that extra space and you're at a time in your life where you're not enjoying the home that you thought you wanted to be in, it's an incredible opportunity to give it to somebody who needs all that space and is willing to pay for it,” Lane says. “If you're paying house cleaners to clean rooms that nobody goes in, and landscapers to maintain outdoor areas you don't use anymore, maybe it's time to find something where you can have a more desirable lifestyle.”

In many cases, the family home will be paid off by the time occupants think about downsizing. But even if there are payments left, Lane says current market conditions should net sellers enough to pay off the remainder of the mortgage and put equity toward a less expensive new home. And with Atlanta facing such an inventory shortage, current market conditions should continue for a while longer.

But finances typically aren't the biggest factor when it comes to downsizing, Forsman says. “I don't think the economics of it drives people as much as where they are in their life journey, what their health



As difficult as downsizing can be, there are signs it's time to consider it. There may be rooms that you pay to heat and cool but are never used. Perhaps yard work and gardening have changed from a once-enjoyable hobby to something that's just too physically taxing. TNS

is, access to their doctors,” he adds. “The longer you stay in that house, the older you get, and the less you're inclined to move.”

There can also be outside pressures. Davis says some seniors are motivated to downsize because their children and grandchildren live in a different city, and they want to move so they can see them more often. And then there are adult children who are well aware of market conditions and urging parents to take advantage. “They're putting the bug in their ear, telling them it's probably time to put this thing on the market and get a smaller

house,” Davis adds.

But where to move next?

Then there's the question that prompts so much hand wringing in the downsizing process: where to go? Although Atlanta has a wealth of options in condos, townhomes, active adult developments and continuum-of-care communities, they're all subject to the same market conditions. Sellers will surely get a premium for that big house in the suburbs, but they'll also pay a premium for whatever they buy next.

Even inventory in 55-plus communities is

very tight, Davis says. She mentions The Orchards, an active adult community near Gainesville, where – as of late September – every completed home was sold except for two. “We have such a limited number of homes to choose from with the market like it is now,” she adds. “I can sell their home in a heartbeat, but before we do that, we have to know where they're going.”

Where seniors downsize depends on whether they're still working, want to be within walking distance to restaurants and theaters or want to stay close to their doctor. “It

has more to do with their lifestyle preference and health,” Davis says. “The baby boomers are a different group than their parents. They're working longer, and they don't consider themselves old. So they have to figure out what they want.”

Some seniors may rent apartments as a short-term solution, Davis adds, allowing them to take advantage of lower rental rates while they figure out where to buy next. And couples who have gone through the downsizing process tend to be happier in the end. “There's such a feeling of satisfaction,” Davis says. “They feel like they've accomplished a great deal.”

There are ways to make it easier: by starting small, getting rid of duplicate items and being judicious in what you keep, according to MyMove.com. And starting early allows couples to speak frankly about what they really want – not just in a home, but in the rest of their lives.

“Couples are having the conversation of, ‘How do we want to end our journey?’” Forsman says. “A continuing care setup is a good investment, an active adult community is a good investment. There are towns that have gotten a lot of publicity like Blairsville, Ellijay, Clarksville, Hiawassee. There are a lot of properties you can look at, but it comes down to money and how you want to finish your journey.”

Runners

continued from S1

appeals is that no special facilities are required. Still, it is wise to choose a location carefully, especially as you get on in years.

Among the pitfalls: Older folks may not pick up their feet as high as younger people, Daigneau says. If you run on the sidewalk, beware of cracks and uneven pavement that can send you sprawling.

Same goes for running on grass. The forgiving surface may be more appealing than concrete. But for those who are less able to react quickly, hidden dips and depressions can result in a fall or sprained ankle.

A better choice may be a good paved trail in a park. Welsh recommends a high-school track, changing directions periodically or staying in the outside lanes in case the tight turns cause muscle strain.

Yet another option is to run in the street – but in that case, be aware of point No. 2:

2. Seeing and hearing

In many states, traffic laws dictate that if sidewalks are available, runners and other pedestrians must stay out of the road. If you must run in the street, stay on the left-hand side, facing traffic. That way, you can see oncoming motorists and get out the way if necessary.

Above all, don't assume that drivers can see you. It's no secret that some people glance at their phones while behind the wheel or even send a text, despite laws that prohibit it.

If running after dark, wear reflective gear. Many running shoes have shiny logos that reflect vehicle headlights, but that isn't enough. Consider wearing a vest or light jacket with reflective material.

And resist the urge to wear headphones, lest you fail to hear traffic. That goes double for older people, many of whom have hearing loss. Consider running with a partner so you can look out for each other, or even a group affiliated with a running

store. There is safety in numbers, plus it's more fun.

3. Start slow

If you have not exercised in a while, the joints are going to be a bit creaky. Start slow. If running seems daunting at first, feel free to walk instead.

Daigneau tells novice runners to start by making sure they can walk for 30 minutes with no pain. Then they can graduate to a combination approach: repeated cycles of six minutes of walking followed by four minutes of running at a moderate pace. If you complete five of those repetitions (50 minutes' worth), that amounts to 20 minutes of running – a respectable goal.

Even after building up strength and endurance needed for sustained running, there always will be aches and pains. That is true at any age.

The key is to distinguish between regular soreness and the type of pain that suggests you are overdoing it. Daigneau says that if soreness persists beyond two or three days, it's time to dial it back.

Sudden, sharp pain also is a red flag. When in doubt, stop. Don't be reluctant to seek medical attention.

4. What to wear

At any age, a runner's most important purchase is a good pair of shoes. The topic merits an entire article, but at a minimum, keep these tips in mind:

Running shoes generally should be at least a half-size larger than other footwear, Welsh says. That's because a runner's feet and toes swell during the course of a run, and they also spread out each time the shoe hits the ground. A bit of extra space is essential.

Older runners may like a shoe with more cushioning, but the most important attribute is a good fit. A trip to a store with trained salespeople is a smart idea.

The shoes can be pricey, sometimes running more than \$100. If that's too steep, ask if the store has older models at clearance prices.

FOOTWEAR

Rethink cushiony shoes, running researcher says

‘Minimal footwear is where we came from,’ expert notes.

By Ian McMahan
The Washington Post

Remember the maximalist vs. minimalist running shoe debate? Irene Davis is trying to bring it back.

Davis gained acclaim for her role on the Harvard research team behind the rise of barefoot running 12 years ago. The swift arrival of barefoot, or minimalist, running was only rivaled by its rapid decline. After injuries increased and lawsuits punished claims of injury reduction, the trend shifted to mega-cushioned shoes like the Hoka.

Minimalism lost that round. But now, based on her team's new research, Davis is again advocating for footwear that lacks support or cushioning – this time with a focus on all people, not just runners, and especially children and seniors.

“We need to get this message out about what we are doing to our feet,” says Davis, founding director of the Spaulding National Running Center in Boston. “I just don't think our feet were designed or adapted to be supported or cushioned all the time.” She believes that 60 years of footwear modernization shouldn't outweigh 2 million years of evolution. “Minimal footwear is where we came from,” she says.

And she believes it's especially important to remember that in the case of children. Her new research suggests that bracing and supporting young feet with orthotics or cushioned shoes doesn't allow the foot to develop normally, with weaker muscles and a lower arch the result.

According to Davis' earlier research, years of running barefoot or in minimalist footwear – as with the African runners cited in the 2009 book that popularized the choice, “Born to Run” – builds up the resiliency of the calf and foot muscles, Achilles tendon and bones of the feet that bear the load of the running style.

“We know tissues adapt



Most experts agree walking barefoot or in minimalist shoes strengthens feet. The issue is no one can yet say what foot strength means for future orthopedic health. AJC FILE

to load and the environment they are in,” says Jay Dicharry, a physical therapist and running injury expert. “If you put them in less, they tend to adapt and become stiffer and stronger.” Dicharry has kept his own children in light, flexible footwear for that reason. “If you give your kids that gift now, when they are our age, we won't be having this conversation,” he says.

However, Stewart Morrison, an expert in pediatric foot development at the University of Brighton in England, isn't so sure. “The interaction between the child and their environment is complex, and studies often reduce development to a single variable,” he says. “That is misleading, and there are more prominent influencing factors.” For instance, says Morrison, “I think genetics do play a considerable factor in determining foot shape, as supported by the evidence linking genetic predisposition to some foot deformities.”

Indeed, the debate is not really about whether walking barefoot or wearing minimalist shoes strengthens the feet; most experts readily agree that it does. The issue is that no one can yet say what improved foot strength means for future orthopedic health. Though Davis and her research team believe that putting children in incorrectly fit-

ted footwear can lead to a whole slew of future problems, notably deformities such as flat feet and bunions, there aren't any longitudinal research studies to reinforce that claim.

Nor are there studies that show that minimalist shoes prevent injuries. Despite that, Davis sees the argument this way: “The logical approach is this: If you take support away, the feet get stronger. Adding support makes the feet weaker. Weaker feet tend to be associated with more pathology like plantar fasciitis,” she says.

Even people who have conditioned their feet to the stresses of barefoot running, such as professional runner Lopez Lomong, who didn't wear shoes until he immigrated to the United States at age 16, believe that you can benefit from wearing a more structured shoe. Though he values the foot strength he gained from walking and running barefoot, “I do not believe that a 14-plus year professional career would have been possible without the support of shoes on paved roads and through the thousands of miles of training in a season,” Lomong says.

Plus, he says, the conditions in Kakuma and South Sudan, where he grew up, were more conducive to

running barefoot, with sandy and soft ground in grasslands. “The conditions that amateur and professional athletes face in developed countries are not conducive to barefoot running.”

Part of the problem with the initial foray into barefoot running was this very issue. The science made sense, but its application was less sure-footed.

“When minimalism came around the first time, its big flaw was the promise that if you went to a minimalist shoe and ran on your forefoot, you wouldn't get injured,” says Jeff Dengate, editor in chief of Runner's World magazine. “That didn't happen, didn't pan out, and the pendulum really swung back to the extreme opposite, to Hokas, to maximalism.”

Maximalist shoes, with a thick sole of cushioning under the foot and a light upper, feel good. However, when it comes to injury, thick-soled, cushioned shoes don't appear to be any more protective than their thin-soled rivals. In fact, because the body automatically adjusts the springiness of the leg muscles according to the level of cushioning of the shoe and ground underfoot, some research shows that maximalist shoes actually increase the impact to the leg with running.

For seniors, ultra-cushioned shoes might lead to a different danger, the risk of falling. Davis hypothesizes that shoes with an extra thick layer of foam can filter out sensory information, diminishing balance and stability, and increasing the likelihood of falls, a significant risk to health and the largest cause of injury-related deaths in older adults.

Dicharry agrees that a cushioned, high-off-the-ground maximalist shoe mutes “the feedback that you would normally get between transitions in surfaces, especially those that are hard to distinguish visually,” such as the transition from a wood floor to a beige carpet. And that's when falls happen, he says. What's more, he emphasizes such shoes are inherently more unstable.

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT SHANNON PAWLEY

Estate planning tips to get you started

Online legal services can't replicate use of reputable attorney.

In the last decade, we've all gotten used to doing stuff online. And the pandemic has accelerated the trend, with virtual business meetings and doctors' appointments becoming common. But there's an important difference between an online consultation and online-only services – it's one thing to visit your doctor online and something else all together to look up your symptoms on WebMD!

When it comes to legal services like drawing up a will, that distinction can mean the difference between a document that ensures your intentions will be respected and a piece of paper that might not even be recognized by the courts.

To my way of thinking, the attorney-client relationship is among the most sacred. It is a relationship founded on a deep sense of trust. I do everything in my power to ensure my clients feel secure in trusting me when placing their legal concerns in my hands. To gain a client's trust is a privilege. So, when I start getting questions about online sites like Legal Zoom for wills and estate plans, the red flags start flying.

One-size legal documents don't fit all

The digital age has lured so many people into thinking that anything and everything can be accomplished online. Google this and Google that and



you have answers that once would have taken a researcher weeks to discover. However, the legal system is so complex and so specific in its language and meaning that online legal services can in no way replicate, duplicate or even approximate the services of a reputable, experienced and devoted attorney.

When you need legal documents that are meant to protect your business or other assets and to benefit your heirs according to your specifications, you want to know that the documents you have will stand up in court and will actually accomplish what you want them to.

Free can become very expensive if your legal forms don't hold up in court

Legal forms and documents are created to provide peace of mind and protection. Incorrect and inadequately drafted legal documents are just flimsy pieces of paper that could end up being the most expensive pieces of paper you've possessed. I can say this with certainty: Under no circumstances should you use DIY legal forms for any will or estate planning

ABOUT OUR EXPERT

Shannon Pawley is CEO of The Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm.

During her legal career, Shannon has represented the full spectrum of clients from international blue-chip companies to single parents. After 10+ years serving as a Vice President for National Law Firm, Shannon welcomed the opportunity to return to her estate planning roots.

The Estate & Asset Protection Law Firm was established to serve the legal needs of senior citizens when their health care needs increase. The Firm focuses its entire practice on Asset Protection and Estate Planning matters, which encompasses the areas of Medicaid Planning, VA Benefits Planning, Special Needs Planning, and Estate Planning. You can contact Shannon at 404-370-0696.

that includes a list of beneficiaries.

As an estate and asset protection attorney, I deal with some of the most complex legal issues involving family members who are often surprised at the reading of a will. Believe me when I tell you, there are few things that can be more damaging to a well-thought-out estate plan than when a disgruntled heir or relative challenges the validity of a will and succeeds in having a court declare it invalid. I have not had the experience, but I do know people who have.

Every will and estate plan is tailored to your needs and desires

We attorneys use legal forms, but only as a starting point. A single form does not end up as the final document. We merge multiple forms. We revise language when necessary. We ensure the document does what each client needs. No two clients are alike. The key is making sure that you have the

right provisions in a document, and that those provisions will stand up in a court of law if questioned.

In addition to the relief that comes from a well-drafted and individually customized Last Will & Testament, you cannot risk the detrimental effects of poorly drafted and improperly executed Powers of Attorney. As I often tell my clients, when your loved ones need a Power of Attorney they really need a Power of Attorney, and by then it is too late to correct unintentional errors contained within or missing from these documents.

The risk is too high to place your fate on a DIY document where you could unintentionally be shutting out your loved ones from being advocates for your health care decisions or inadvertently excluding many strategic planning opportunities that will preserve your assets and ensure your loved ones do not risk becoming liable for contracts they enter into on your behalf.

Health

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after an injury or illness.

"You hear about walking and the number of steps you're taking, but not nearly enough about the need to challenge muscles to stay strong and independent," says Eric Levitan, the founder of Vivo, a strength-training program for people over 55.

"A lot of people equate strength with activities of daily living ... standing up out of a chair, getting off the floor or carrying something heavy. But strength and muscle mass also help prevent diseases of aging, for example, Type 2 diabetes. Muscle mass regulates blood sugar. As we age and lose muscle mass, we become susceptible to Type 2 diabetes.

"Aging doesn't have to look like that. You can rebuild muscle mass to keep your quality of life and maintain your independence."

Health for all seasons

In winter, the temptation to hibernate is strong. But according to the Harvard Medical School, that can be a big mistake. Not only will you be missing out on valuable exercise time, but it can put you at higher risk of seasonal depressive disorder.

Besides, studies suggest that exercise in cooler weather might be more productive. Cooler temperatures activate brown fat cells that turn on to help keep us warm and are known to burn more calories. Plus, just 10 minutes a day in the sunshine can chase away the winter blues.

SAFETY FIRST

While the benefits of exercise far outweigh the risks, there are precautions you should take when exercising outside during colder weather, especially when you're over 55.

- Exercising at temperatures below 59°F can narrow blood vessels, making hearts work harder to pump oxygen. This can lead to excessive strain. Check with your doctor first if you're already at risk for heart conditions.
- Narrowing blood vessels can also increase muscle injury risk. Be wise: warm-up, train up and if it hurts, stop. The goal is to keep moving, not to be sidelined by injury.
- If it's cold and rainy, exercise indoors. Older bodies lose heat faster, so frostnip, frostbite and hypothermia happen more easily. Freezing temperatures also raise the risks of slipping or falling.
- Wear layers and moisture-wicking fabrics. Wear several lighter layers you can remove if you get hot and put back on as you cool down. And since we lose a lot of heat through our heads, hands and feet, remember to wear a hat, gloves and thick socks.
- Drinking water before, during and after workouts maintains fluid levels, which are vital to energy and healthy body function.



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AGING IN ATLANTA

HAIRSTYLES

Women are now embracing their silver tresses

Salons closing allow many to say bye-bye to their hair dye.

By **Nancy Clanton**
nancy.clanton@ajc.com

It started out as a tongue-in-cheek way to mark the passage of time during the pandemic. The first time I posted a “gray hair update” on Facebook, I vowed not to color my hair again until we returned to the office. There was never a doubt I would be a red-head again, however. Eighteen months later, there is little red remaining. My hair is gray – with blonde, white and black mixed in – and some red hanging on as a reminder of maskless days when I enjoyed standing out in a crowd.

I’m embracing my gray now, and I’m not alone. People throughout Georgia are saying bye-bye to hair dye.

“Going gray has been so darn liberating,” Kimberly Bracy said. “I have been coloring my hair for 10 years or more, and I’ve always wondered what I would look like with gray hair. So when the salons closed last year due to the pandemic, it gave me an excellent opportunity to transition to gray.”

Salons closing during the coronavirus pandemic apparently gave many people the nudge they needed to go natural. Heather Smith said she had grown weary of the coloring process. For more than 25 years, she had dyed her hair black, every shade of brown, red and even dark blond.

“It got to the point that it needed to be done every two weeks,” she said. “I was homeschooling at the time, got involved with foster care, and decided this is not how I want to spend my time or money.

“I can’t believe the response. My friends love it. My parents love it. I was most worried about my husband, but he seems to be on board now that people have compared me to Storm.”

Angie Basiouny’s husband supported her decision to go gray. “He loves it,” she said. “He had been encouraging me for years to let the gray flow, but he’s bald, so I think his reasons are suspicious.”

Her mother wasn’t quite as accepting, she said. “I think my mom kind of struggled with it at first because it made her realize her baby girl is 50 years old now – and the clock isn’t going backward.”

Kennesaw State mathematics professor Wendy Sanchez’s mother reacted similarly, she said. “It’s kind of funny – my mother is 82 years old and still colors her hair.



Jennifer Thanepohn, of Ball Ground, played with fun colors on her gray grow-out. “I’m excited to be fully gray by my 50th birthday.” COURTESY OF JENNIFER THANEPOHN

She couldn’t believe I was growing mine out. She just didn’t understand. But when I finished growing it out and it was all natural, she thought it looked beautiful. Her stylist told her she would have beautiful white hair if she would let it go natural. She hasn’t taken the plunge yet, and she may never. But at least she doesn’t hate mine.”

I first started dying my hair in the early ’90s, and it had nothing to do with gray hair. My mother told me she saw red highlights when the sun shone on my head, and I wanted to see how I would look as a redhead.

“Coloring our hair is fun, and can be a great way to express yourself,” Stacy Hewitt agreed, “but owning your hair as it is has been incredibly refreshing!”

With a little gray already showing at the beginning of the pandemic, Hewitt decided to go ahead and embrace it. “I actually get lots of compliments on my gray. It’s freeing to not have the pressure of the coloring and constantly needing to be retouched,” she said.

“Overall, it’s been a fun adventure,” said Jennifer Thanepohn, of Ball Ground, who played with fun colors on her gray grow-out. “I’m excited to be fully gray by my 50th birthday.”

Seeing a little silver shining through was the catalyst some women needed to ditch the dye.

“Coloring my hair has always been a laborious task,” Rhonda Meyer said, “so I started doing it at home due to the expense. At one point in August 2020 I let it go for about two months, I was impressed with the resulting roots. They were a beautiful silver! I never

colored again after that.”

Apryl Smith said she was surprised when she stopped coloring her hair. “I have a head full of gray,” she said. “I am absolutely salt and pepper, and I’m not talking about that camouflaged gray that used to fall victim to a strategic part or ponytail. Nope. This is full on. I am trying my best to embrace this new iteration of myself, but if I’m honest, I’m still a little surprised when I look in the mirror. Nevertheless, it’s growing on me and I think I’m starting to like it.”

For the most part, however, embracing their gray hair has been empowering, women said.

“I love how my wisdom highlights shine. They represent me being my own, authentic self,” Pam Smith, of southwest Atlanta, said. “I’ve come by them honestly, having earned each strand as a former 25-year corporate America exec, now 20-year entrepreneur; wife of 41 years; mom of two, now-grown children; and grandmother to two grands and two granddogs.”

Rose Moro said going natural at age 57 was the best thing she ever did. “My silver hair is strength and power, but it’s also softness and beautiful feminine energy – just glistening steaks of wisdom.”

Basiouny said she’s “been surprised at how this feels like such a big deal. It sounds absolutely crazy to focus on something as insignificant as hair color when the world is crashing and burning.

“I think it speaks to how much we value our hair as part of our identity,” she added. “They don’t call it a crown for nothing.”



“I actually get many compliments on the gray hair,” Heather Martin, of Powder Springs, said. “I think I will just let nature have its way. It’s alot cheaper anyway.” COURTESY OF HEATHER MARTIN



“I am so pleased with the results and I feel so free,” Julie Byron said. COURTESY OF JULIE BYRON



Wendy Sanchez, of Marietta, is a mathematics professor at Kennesaw State University. “I decided professors are supposed to be gray anyway,” she said. COURTESY OF WENDY SANCHEZ



“I honestly didn’t feel like myself for about four months,” Sherry Julani, of Holly Springs, said, “but I noticed if I walked confidently in it when others came along.” COURTESY OF SHERRY JULIANI



Angie Basiouny, of Sandy Springs COURTESY OF ANGIE BASIOUNY



“Coloring our hair is fun, and can be a great way to express yourself, but owning your hair as it is has been incredibly refreshing!” Stacy Hewitt said. COURTESY OF STACY HEWITT



“I love how my wisdom highlights shine,” Pam Smith, of southwest Atlanta, said. “They represent me being my own, authentic self.” COURTESY OF PAM SMITH

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AGING IN ATLANTA

FOOD

Fresh fish tiritas are faster way to ceviche

Marinating seafood in acid is a technique used around globe.

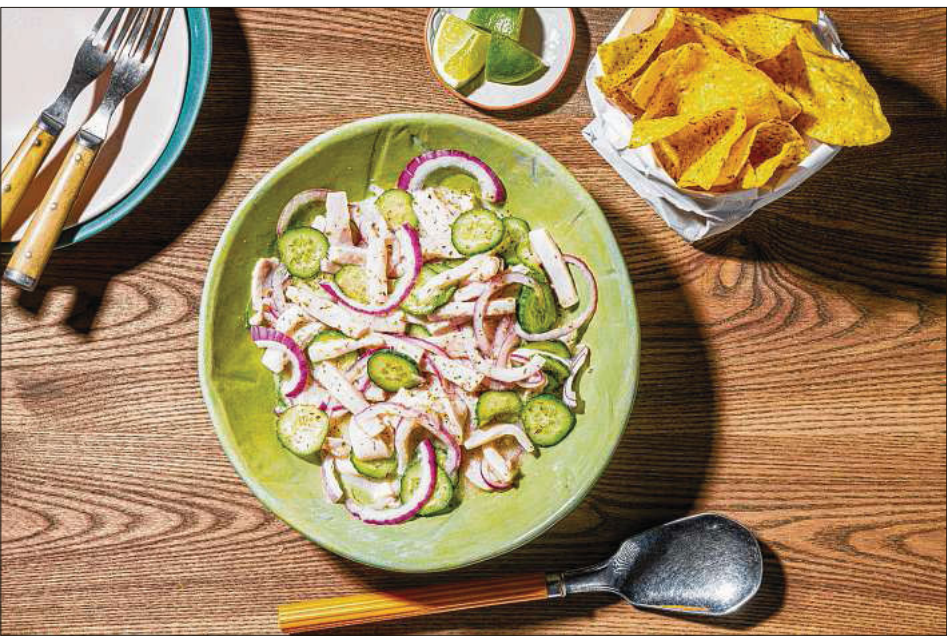
By G. Daniela Galarza
The Washington Post

All along Mexico’s Pacific coast you’ll find seafood stalls serving fresh catch: grilled whole, steamed until plump, pan-seared, raw or in one of many cevichelike preparations. Marinating seafood in acid is a cooking technique used around the globe – and for good reason. It’s fast, easy and almost unexpectedly toothsome. And, I think we should all be doing it more at home.

This recipe is the same idea as a ceviche – fish marinated in lots of lime juice, plus a few other seasonings – but it’s easier and faster.

Tiritas de pescado hail from the area around Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo in the state of Guerrero, and like lots of famous fish dishes, they originated as a fishermen’s snack. I first read about them on Mely Martinez’s incredible blog, Mexico in My Kitchen.

To make them, white fish fillets are sliced into ¼-inch strips across the grain of the flesh, and then cut into 2-inch-long pieces. These get marinated in lime juice, dried oregano, slices of red onion and salt for about 10 minutes. Unlike a lot of



Some tititas de pescado recipes include slices of cucumber for extra crunch and a bit of olive oil, which brings out the silkiness of the fish. REY LOPEZ/THE WASHINGTON POST

more complex ceviches, tiritas don’t require an hours-long marinade because the strips are cut so thin, and because of the firm-but-tender types of fish that are used. According to Martinez, sailfish or marlin are commonly made into tiritas in Guerrero.

In this recipe, which is adapted from “The Food of Oaxaca,” chef and author Alejandro Ruiz recommends sierra or mahi-mahi, which are caught off the coast of Puerto Escondido in Oaxaca. Ruiz includes slices of cucumber in his tiritas, for extra crunch, and a bit of olive oil, which

brings out the silkiness of the fish. Served with tortilla chips, saltines or even yuca or plantain chips, I like to think of it as a fresh take on fish and chips.

If this is your first go at a ceviche-style dish, I recommend making the recipe as written. It’s helpful to watch how the fish transforms in acid, how it looks, feels and tastes once it’s fully cooked. It’s hard to explain this transformation in words! It’s essential to use the freshest fish you can find. It should have virtually no scent – or should smell only of the clear blue sea – when you take it out of

its paper or plastic wrapper.

Suggested substitutions or additions:

If you can’t find mahi-mahi or sierra, sea bass or scallops would work fine.

Lime juice is ideal here, but lemon juice would work just as well.

Mexican dried oregano adds a wispy earthiness, though I imagine dried mint or a pinch of crushed cumin seeds might be interesting, too.

I love the crunch and refreshing flavor the cucumber and red onion add. You could also use bell pepper, shallots, scalions, jicama or zucchini.

TIRITAS DE PESCADO

2 to 4 servings; about 2 cups tiritas and 30 chips
Active time: 15 mins; Total time: 30 mins

The Pacific coast of Mexico is rich with fish such as red snapper, mahi-mahi, bonito tuna and mullet. One of the easiest ways to prepare fresh catches is in tiritas, a cevichelike dish which originated in Guerrero. Acidity and salt cure the fish, infusing it with flavor. It’s essential to use only the freshest fish for this. When buying fish from a fishmonger, ask when it was caught; if it’s whole, check the eyes to see that they’re clean and clear. If the fish smells strongly, it is past its prime and shouldn’t be used for this recipe. Serve tiritas simply with tortilla chips, saltines or on tostadas.

- 7 or 8 ounces fresh, skinless white fish, preferably sierra or mahi-mahi, cut into 2-inch-long and ¼-inch thick strips
- ½ cup fresh lime juice (from about 4 limes), plus more to taste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt or table salt, plus more to taste
- ½ cup (about 2 ounces) thinly sliced cucumber, peeled and deseeded if peels and seeds are prominent
- ½ cup (about 2 ounces) thinly sliced red onion

In a medium glass, stainless steel or ceramic (nonreactive) bowl, toss the fish with lime juice, olive oil, oregano and salt. Marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes, then add the cucumber and onion, and refrigerate for an additional 5 minutes. Taste, and season with additional salt and/or lime juice, if desired, and serve.

Adapted from “The Food of Oaxaca: Recipes and Stories from Mexico’s Culinary Capital” by Alejandro Ruiz and Carla Altesor (Knopf, 2021).

NUTRITION: Per serving (about ½ cup tiritas), based on 4. Calories: 89; Total Fat: 4 g; Saturated Fat: 0 g; Cholesterol: 35 mg; Sodium: 185 mg; Carbohydrates: 5 g; Dietary Fiber: 0 g; Sugars: 2 g; Protein: 10 g. This analysis is an estimate based on available ingredients and this preparation. It should not substitute for a dietitian’s or nutritionist’s advice.

HEALTH

City, suburban life may protect against Alzheimer’s disease

By Kiersten Willis
kiersten.willis@coxinc.com

Whether you’ve put down roots or are moving to a new area, a trio of studies show why you may want to consider living in the city or suburbs as you age.

Researchers at the University of Michigan have found that urban and suburban neighborhoods could help preserve cognitive health in older adults. The reason is that these areas offer chances to socialize, get physical activity and receive intellectual stimulation.

The findings are published in the Journal of Aging and Health; Preventive Medicine; and Wellbeing, Space & Society.

“Neighborhoods matter. They are important spaces for older adults, and they really impact opportunities or barriers to age well in place,” said the studies’ lead author Jessica Finlay, a research fellow at the U-M Institute for Social Research Survey Research Center, in a press release. “These papers think through how neighborhoods might encourage healthy behaviors that could in turn benefit the brain, and for Alzheimer’s and dementia risks, which are among the greatest fears and greatest burdens that our aging population faces.”

Results showed that older adults who lived in neighborhoods conducive to physical activity and socialization were cognitively about three years younger than those who had very little exercise and socialization access. People with access to museums, higher education campuses and libraries – places that are intellectually stimulating – have a five-year cognitive age difference from those with little to no access to those places.

The research also showed that white adults had a larger protective benefit than Black ones. Researchers believe this likely shows the impact of broad, structural systems of racism that limit and distort Black populations’ access to such spaces.

“This isn’t a one-size-fits-all finding. We do see that access to these neighborhood sites diverges along different axes of power and privilege, including race, gender and socioeconomic status,” said Michael Esposito, an assistant professor of sociology at Washington University. He led the studies’ quantitative analysis.

Senior centers and organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars or racial or ethnic organizations were some places of socialization more positively linked to protecting cognitive health. Neighborhoods with high densities of parks, fitness and sports recreation centers and walkable destinations had better cognitive health associations.

The best cognitive benefit came from museums and other cultural sites, but researchers found a greater effect for white populations.

“Moving forward, we’re looking at differences by person and by place – so for example, differences in protective cognitive benefits by men or women or nonbinary adults, by education levels and by race,” Finlay said.

“Understanding these differences might help inform community-level interventions that are more targeted to those who are most at risk, which include marginalized and underserved communities, who have higher rates of dementia and Alzheimer’s risk.”

BREAST CANCER

It’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month – are you at risk?

By Andrea Clement
For The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Approximately 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women other than skin cancers, according to the American Cancer Society, and the second leading cause of women’s cancer deaths. Male breast cancer is relatively rare – about 1 in 100 breast cancers is diagnosed in men, according to the Centers Disease Control and Prevention.

Know risk factors, family history

“Genetic factors and environmental factors” determine one’s risk, stated Damien Hansra, M.D., Medical Oncologist at Piedmont Fayette Hospital. “Among genetic risk factors, BRCA [gene] mutations are most common, but others exist also.”

Hansra noted several risk factors:

- Female sex
- Increased age
- Increased body weight
- Hormonal factors

(higher estrogen levels, early menarche, late menopause, nulliparity, etc.)

While some factors are beyond control, a healthy diet and exercise regimen may help reduce risk. “Vegetable intake is associated with a lower risk of breast cancer, while an increase in red meat and/or processed meat consumption [promotes] higher risk,” Hansra added.

Know the symptoms of breast cancer

According to Hansra, symptoms may include a mass in the breast. Less commonly, breast cancer may present with a localized lump in the armpit or collarbone region (lymph nodes). These may not be detectable by the patient, which is why screenings are important.

Other symptoms include “redness of skin or a rash (inflammatory breast cancer), sometimes with nipple discharge or a rash around the nipple,” said Hansra.

“Signs of metastatic (stage 4) breast cancer can include pain in

the bones, abdominal pain (liver), shortness of breath or a cough (lungs). The symptoms of stage 4 breast cancer often depend on where the cancer has spread.”

Prevention, screening guidelines

Women in their 40s with average risk should talk to their doctor about the right time to start annual screenings, said Hansra. Women between the ages of 50 and 74 should get an annual mammogram.

Treatments, prognosis

Treatment and prognosis vary by type and stage of cancer, as well as the patient’s estrogen status, HER2 status (positive or negative) and progesterone status, Hansra explained. “With localized cancer (stages 1-3), the lower the stage, the better the prognosis. For stage 4 patients, the prognosis can depend on the subtype, but overall, today’s stage 4 patients are doing much better due to great advances in treatment over the years.”

Each type of breast cancer is treated differ-

ently, Hansra explained. For stage 1-3 the primary treatment is surgery. Other treatments may include:

- Radiation
- Chemotherapy
- Hormonal therapy
- Monoclonal antibody therapy
- Molecular therapy

Emerging treatments

Dr. Hansra anticipates “new and exciting clinical trials involving immunotherapy, which rev up a person’s immune system to fight breast cancer ... in conjunction with traditional therapies,” he said. Patients may ask their physician about these and other advancements including drug conjugate molecules and genomics treatment, which may potentially offer more tailored and targeted approaches.

Power in prevention

“Breast cancer awareness is very important. It is vital to know your family’s history and get screened accordingly. There is power in prevention” and healthy habits, Hansra concluded.

Medicare

continued from S1

or Lou Gehrig’s disease.

Q: When is open enrollment?

A: October 15 through December 7

Q: What are Medicare’s parts?

A: Medicare has four basic parts: Part A (hospital insurance), Part B (medical insurance), Part D (drug coverage) and Medicare Supplemental Insurance (Medigap).

Q: What are my choices?

A: Original Medicare,

which includes Parts A and B, and lets you join a separate drug plan to get Part D. You can visit any doctor or hospital in the U.S. that takes Medicare. If you need help with your out-of-pocket costs, you can buy Medigap. Choice two is Medicare Advantage, a Medicare-approved plan from a private company. These plans include Parts A, B and usually D. They might have lower out-of-pocket costs and more benefits than Original Medicare, but you you’ll have to use doctors who are in the plan’s network.

Q: What if I’m enrolled but want to change my

plan?

A: According to www.medicareresources.org, during open enrollment, you can:

- Switch from Medicare Advantage to Original Medicare or vice versa.
- Switch from one Medicare Advantage plan to another.
- Switch from one Part D prescription plan to another. It’s highly recommended that all beneficiaries use Medicare’s plan finder tool each year to compare the available Part D plans, as opposed to simply letting an existing drug plan auto-renew.
- Join a Medicare Part D plan. (Late-enrollment

penalty may apply.)

■ Drop your Part D coverage altogether. (Re-enrolling in a later year will include a late-enrollment penalty if you’re not maintaining other creditable drug coverage.)

Q: Where can I get help if I need it?

A: There are numerous resources available to help you find your way. Here are some keys websites: ■ The U.S. government’s official website: www.medicare.gov ■ GeorgiaCares, for local help with Medicare and to register for a free Medicare webinar: https://mygeorgiacares.org



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