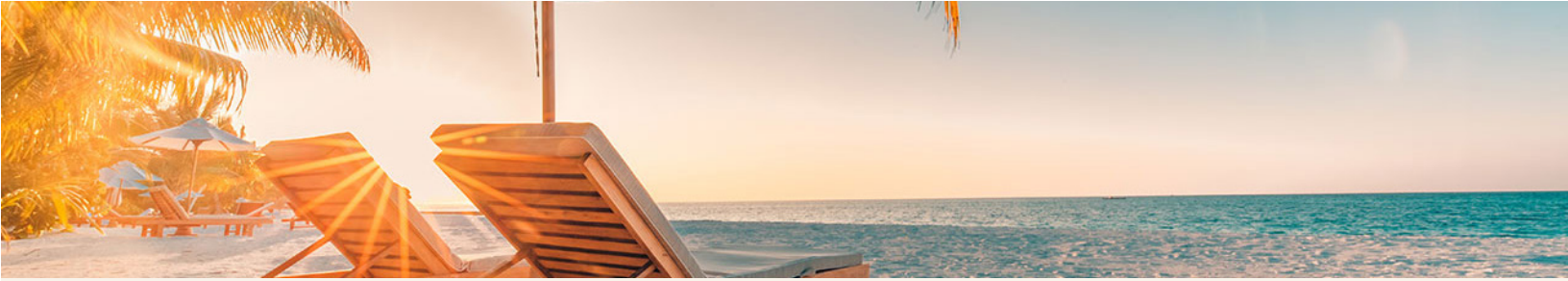


The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti-Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Three Tips to Stay Safe and Have Fun this Summer

Summertime can be a time of enjoyment, with more opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. How do you make the most of it while at the same time, keeping your loved one safe and healthy?

Here are three important things to keep in mind as you and your loved one venture out this summer:

Protect your loved one (and yourself) from harmful rays: The CDC reports that “older age” increases the risk for development of skin cancer. Additional risk factors include people with lighter skin and those who are susceptible to developing moles. So, before venturing out, make sure that you bring a hat, sunglasses with UV protection and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30+). If the sun is strong, try to find shady spots to rest and relax.

Watch for overheating: Overheating, or *hyperthermia* is a blanket-term for conditions that can occur during hot weather such as heat cramps, feeling faint, heat exhaustion and heat edema (swelling). If you observe these symptoms in your loved one or if they begin to develop a fever, begin staggering or slurring their words, seek medical attention right away. Then, provide cool water to drink and offer a cool compress. If available, increase the air conditioning or use a fan to cool them while you wait for help.

Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate: This is important for everyone, but even more so for older people. Dehydration is an all-too common cause for hospitalization in the senior population, especially in the summer. One reason is because as we get older, our sense of thirst decreases, making it less likely we'll reach for something to drink. The best way to combat this is to always have drinks available, especially if you're going out, and encourage sipping throughout the day. You can make water more interesting by adding a few slices of cucumber, or some small pieces of cut up fruit or berries. If your loved one prefers juice, try cutting it by half with water to reduce the sugar content. Sometimes, water with a light splash of fruit juice is enough to give it more flavor. Also remember that the juice associated with fresh fruit like melon or berries counts toward hydration as well.

As always, contact your loved one's physician any time you are concerned about their wellbeing.

By Marilyn Abrahamson - Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health.

REDUCE YOUR RISKS

ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS AND YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Brain inflammation is a key contributor to raising our dementia risk, and some of the products we buy, foods we eat and air we breathe can have an inflammatory effect on our brains.

The cause? *Neurotoxins*; substances that cause inflammation, damaging the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord) and impairing brain function.

Neurotoxins can enter into our bodies in different ways:

- **Skin:** Flame or stain resistant chemicals in clothing
- **Food:** Nonstick coatings on cookware, certain plastics, fish high in heavy metals (mercury), certain brands of microwave popcorn
- **Soil, air and water:** Chemicals used by industrial, agricultural and commercial businesses in their manufacturing

The most common neurotoxins are:

Lead was a common ingredient in home-improvement products like paint. Its use was stopped in the 1970's. It remains in homes built before 1978 and in jewelry and toys from those decades. Lead is toxic at any level, especially for children. It can result in problems with attention, memory and can contribute to neurodegenerative conditions in people of all ages.

Arsenic behaves like a heavy metal and is found naturally in our environment. It can also be man-made, particularly in industrial areas. It can be found in soil, air and water supplies. Exposure to naturally-occurring arsenic is common through food and water supplies and is considered safe at low levels. Higher levels of exposure to man-made sources have been linked to increased risk for Alzheimer's Disease, other brain-related disorders and other health issues.

Mercury exposure has been linked to problems that interfere with our senses - vision, hearing, smell and taste. It can also damage the brain regions responsible for movement and thinking. Mercury can become airborne, allowing it to flow into our water supply, where it becomes absorbed into the fish we eat and the water we drink. Elevated mercury-exposure is associated with increased risk for dementia and other neurodegenerative conditions.

Studies show that we all have a small amount of mercury in our bodies as it is commonly found in the environment (lakes, fish, air) as well as in our homes (outdated thermometers and blood-pressure cuffs, certain types of light bulbs and batteries).

How can we avoid exposure to neurotoxins?

- Replace cookware that contains the non-stick coating *phthalate*.
- Throw away plastic containers that contain *phthalate*, *BPA* or *cadmium*.
- Buy a good water filter for your faucet and for the dispenser on your refrigerator.
- If your home was built during the 1970's or before, wear respiratory protective equipment whenever doing renovations.
- Choose fish with lower levels of mercury. The types of fish with the highest mercury levels are swordfish, shark, mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, bigeye tuna and tilefish. The fish with the lowest mercury levels are salmon, sardines, pollack, flounder, cod and tilapia.

If you discover neurotoxins in or around your home, check with your local health department, city waste department or fire department to learn how to properly clean it up and dispose of it.

For more information about brain health or caregiver support please visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com and enter code **BRAIN2022**.

Meet Marilyn!



Hello! My name is Marilyn Abrahamson and I'm the Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health - *and also your Brain Health Coach!*

I began my career in 1987 as a speech-language pathologist, focusing my practice on working with adults with communication, swallowing and cognitive difficulties. Problems like this are caused by stroke, brain injuries and neurodegenerative conditions like Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and others.

In 2009, I was offered the opportunity to teach a brand-new graduate-level course on swallowing disorders at Kean University in New Jersey. This was an incredible experience where I discovered my love of writing original courses and teaching in group-settings.

Between 2011 and 2016, I was asked to create both a concussion program and a community-wide brain-health education program at the hospital where I worked. To do these correctly, I wanted to have a deeper level of knowledge about the brain. So, I took courses in neuroscience and performed my own research. As arduous as this sounds, it did not feel like work to me at all. In fact, every minute of it was pure joy! This is where I discovered my newest love - *the brain!*

In 2019, I left my full-time job as a speech-language pathologist to gain more knowledge about the brain. I also became an Amen Clinics Certified Brain-Health Coach so I could spread the word of brain-health to anyone who would listen!

In June of 2021, I found Ceresti and joined their team. My first task was to create the Ceresti Brain Health Education Portal and the content for the Ceresti newsletters. Six months later, I began working with our coaching team to develop the Ceresti Caregiver Brain Health program and now I get to work directly with the caregivers as I coach them on *all things brain health!* (And it all still feels like more fun than work to me.)

On a personal note, I live with my wonderful partner of 14 years in New Jersey. We enjoy cycling with friends and hiking through the hills at the local park. I also have two grown sons who I love very much. Both are recently married, so I now also have two new, beautiful daughters-in-law and I'm so excited to see what's next!

I am overjoyed to be part of the Ceresti family. Most of all, I feel honored and privileged to be brain-health coaching with the Ceresti Caregivers on their journey to a healthier brain.

Fear

The level of responsibility taken on by a caregiver can be overwhelming. You may be asking yourself:

- *Could I effectively handle an emergency?*
- *I'm not a nurse – what if my loved one feels ill?*
- *What if I get sick and can't be there?*
- *How will I manage all of this on my own?*

Questions like this and others can paralyze you in the "what ifs" so much so, that you might miss out on the enjoyment of the "now".

How can you cope with fear as a caregiver?

By identifying each individual fear, and then creating a plan to address them, you can better cope with adversity, **if** something happens.

If you are worried about how you would perform in an emergency or if your loved one isn't feeling well, create a list of decisive steps you'll take if that should happen, such as having the doctor's number readily available or calling 911 for an emergency.

If you're worried that you won't be able to be with your loved one if you get sick or if you have a personal appointment, or if you feel overwhelmed and need a day to recharge, have the name of a family member or close friend who would be willing and able to stand in for you.

Address each fear one-by-one with a solution to help you get through it. And if you continue to experience fear that adversely affects your quality of life, it's always helpful to talk to a trusted friend, family member or a professional counselor to give you perspective, and **calm your caregiver mind.**

And, as a Ceresti Caregiver, you can always reach out to your caregiver coach on your tablet for the support you need.



Norwell Executive Center
167 Washington Street
Norwell, MA 02061

As a supplemental benefit of your health plan, you have access to a caregiver support program available through Ceresti Health at no cost to you.

To determine if you are eligible for this program, contact: (877) 222-5055.

MONTHLY MEMORY BOOST

Organization, the Habit that Improves Memory

Occasionally forgetting where you've placed your keys or your glasses may be annoying, but it can also be disconcerting, especially if you have an immediate family member living with a memory disorder.

It's important to acknowledge that this type of forgetfulness is not only a part of getting older, it's also a part of being human. Losing your wallet or your cell phone occasionally is not necessarily an indication of the beginning of cognitive decline.

There are a handful of memory strategies that will help you to recall things like names, lists and events – but there's only one that can be considered a *habit* – and that's **organization**. Being organized clears away the distractions, paving the way for a higher level of focus and attention, *and that's essential for memory*. The freedom that comes from being organized also leads to better sleep, less stress and even healthier meal-planning habits.

How does organization help memory?

Clutter and disorganization are distracting, so you're more likely to lose or forget things when you're surrounded by it. Organizing different aspects of your life, like files, reminders and tasks will help you feel less overwhelmed and more in-control of your life.

- Begin by organizing workspaces. Create files for papers so you know where to find them when you need to.
- Have a specific notebook for task-lists, or use the notes-app or reminders list (with an audible alarm) in your smartphone.
- Keep a journal of conversations you want to remember. If you say them aloud as you write down, you'll be even more likely to remember the information.
- Dedicate specific spots for frequently-used items like your keys, wallet and cellphone and be disciplined about placing them only in those spots when you're not using them.

Memory is key to so many aspects of your life from working and maintaining your relationships to managing your home and life. Getting organized and engaging in habits that keep your mind engaged in what you need to remember will give you the best chance for success.