

# HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

## Keep on walking, just watch your step

By ELAINE HESSER

‘STAY ACTIVE,’ they said. “It’ll be fun,” they said. Until someone falls and breaks a hip. Fortunately, there’s plenty you can do to stay safe while enjoying the beach, the mountains of Big Sur, or just an afternoon at home with the family. Although the suggestions in this story are aimed at more mature readers, many of them are useful to people of all ages.

Lorraine Artinger, a registered nurse and a trauma injury prevention coordinator at Natividad Medical Center in Salinas, said that after victims of motor vehicle crashes, the largest group of patients they see in the hospital’s trauma center are people who’ve been injured in falls, and 70 percent of them are 65 years or older. Most, if not all, of those falls are preventable.



Dr. Pablo Veliz

Pablo Veliz is a primary care physician with Montage Medical Group as well as the medical director for Carmel Valley Manor. He said his first recommendation for people to avoid injuries is to stay physically active — something you can start at any age.

Veliz said that yoga, Pilates and tai chi are all good ways to build balance, strength and flexibility. Building muscle also slows bone loss, which

is often problematic for women. The Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization estimate that about a third of postmenopausal women have osteoporosis, with bones that can break easily.

He added that yoga classes at Carmel Valley Manor have attendees in their late 90s and early 100s. Veliz recommends group classes because they create accountability and decrease isolation, which studies have shown correlates strongly with dementia.

“Any movement is good movement,” said Veliz, but with movement, comes risk. To stay safe, he recommended regular checkups. These are good opportunities to go over your medications, too.

Said Artinger, “Have your healthcare provider or



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Exercise classes like this one in Carmel Valley encourage community and accountability while making sure participants are safe.

pharmacist review your medications, including over-the-counter medications,” since many drugs — alone or in combination — can make people dizzy or sleepy, which increases the risk of falling. “Have your vision and feet checked yearly,” she said. Veliz noted that regular hearing exams can help make sure people stay alert to what’s going on around them, too.

### Eat, drink, sleep, repeat

Adequate sleep is necessary to staying aware of your surroundings, whether you’re walking or behind the wheel. Veliz said for most people, six to eight hours is the

sweet spot, but some people can get by on as few as five or need as much as 10 hours nightly. Others might require a midday nap. “The important thing is that you wake up feeling restored,” he said.

Good nutrition and hydration can prevent a host of problems. Veliz spoke to Healthy Lifestyles during our annual heat wave and mentioned that he was concerned for his elderly patients and hoped that they were drinking plenty of water. People’s thirst becomes a less reliable indicator of the need for water as they age, so staying hydrat-

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