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News re Multiple Sclerosis, Epilepsy and more

Understanding MS

It's estimated that about 100,000 Canadians have Multiple Sclerosis (MS) – a progressive condition where the protective sheath (myelin) coating nerve and brain cells degenerates, disrupting the ability of the cells to transmit signals. It leads to physical, mental and, even, psychiatric problems. There is no known cure and treatments are not very effective. It is thought to have an immune basis, so a study from Italy suggesting that a tuberculosis vaccine may slow MS progression is exciting news!

Because Multiple Sclerosis can be so devastating and treatments ineffective, anything that can be done to prevent the condition is especially worthwhile. Researchers in Sweden have noticed that the consumption of alcohol seems to lower the risk of developing MS. It is thought to be due to an anti-inflammatory effect and, while the researchers would not suggest starting drinking to prevent MS, they did say it doesn't need to be avoided for this reason!

Living with Epilepsy

Every day, an average of 42 Canadians are diagnosed with some form of epilepsy. Most will respond to the amazingly effective medications for controlling seizures in patients with conditions such as epilepsy, however there is a small set of patients who do not seem to respond to anything. A company in the US, NeuroPace, has developed a device which is discreetly implanted in the skull and delivers appropriate stimulation in response to the neurological changes that can precede seizures. Results show about a 50% reduction in seizures.

Seniors - Be Aware!

Diagnosing an underactive thyroid in seniors can be particularly tricky since so many of the symptoms can be attributed to a wide variety of conditions that affect this age group. Signs can include high cholesterol, heart failure, bowel changes (especially constipation), vague joint or muscle pain, balance problems and mental health/dementia/memory loss issues. If you, or someone you love, is experiencing any of these, ask about a thyroid test.

Some medical conditions don't get the big "airtime" that those like heart disease and cancer do, but that doesn't mean they are any less important to the sufferers. Your pharmacist is there to help you with whatever health issue you have.