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# Family Matters

A MAGAZINE FOR SENIORS, CAREGIVERS & PROVIDERS





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Change is a natural part of life. In our work with families and caregivers, we see change every day. Sometimes it comes in the form of a new diagnosis, a new caregiver, a new medication, or a shift in living arrangements. These changes can feel overwhelming at first, but they also offer opportunities for growth, support, and connection.

We're excited to announce a new change for Family Matters. We have expanded our in-home care services to include the San Francisco community. We look forward to supporting Bay Area seniors with the same warm, reliable, and affordable care we offer through our other locations.

With the change in season, we encourage you to reflect on the ways change has shaped your own journey. Whether you are a caregiver adapting to new routines or a senior adjusting to new challenges, your resilience continues to inspire us.

Inside this issue, we explore topics that support healthy transitions—from improving joint health to creating safe and comforting home spaces. We hope these articles serve as tools and encouragement for the days ahead.

Thank you for being a part of Family Matters. We are committed to supporting you through every season.

Sincerely,

Jacob Laffen

*Co-Founder & CEO*

*Family Matters In-Home Care*

# New Therapies for Joint Health

*Arthritis affects nearly one in four adults and is one of the leading causes of pain and physical limitation among seniors. Fortunately, researchers have made great strides in recent years. Today, there are more treatment options available than ever before, including non-invasive and lifestyle-based therapies.*

## **A New Approach to Relief**

One of the more exciting developments is targeted biologic therapy. These medications work with the immune system to reduce inflammation more effectively than traditional treatments. While not everyone qualifies for these drugs, they have brought relief to thousands who once struggled with pain during simple tasks like walking or gripping utensils.

## **Regenerative Medicine**

Another promising area is regenerative medicine. In some studies, stem cell injections have helped rebuild cartilage and improve joint function. Although this approach is still under review, early results are encouraging, and give hope to those looking for alternatives to joint replacement surgery.



## **Movement and Nutrition Matter**

In addition to medical treatments, research supports the role of regular movement and proper nutrition. Daily habits matter. Low-impact exercises such as tai chi, water aerobics, or gentle stretching help maintain flexibility and reduce stiffness. Omega-3 fatty acids found in foods like salmon and walnuts can help reduce joint inflammation. Staying hydrated, maintaining a healthy weight, and avoiding long periods of inactivity can go a long way toward managing discomfort.

## **Talk With Your Doctor**

If you or a loved one lives with arthritis, talk with your healthcare provider about these new options. Together, you can build a care plan that keeps you moving with more ease and comfort.

If you would like to explore more about arthritis and joint health, a reliable and public resource is the Arthritis Foundation ([arthritis.org](http://arthritis.org)). The site offers up-to-date information on arthritis types, treatment options, movement tips, medication guides, and patient stories. It also includes helpful tools like doctor discussion guides and fitness videos tailored to joint protection and pain relief.

# Hearty Lentil and Barley Stew

Enjoy a simple one-pot stew packed with flavor, fiber, and warmth. It's perfect for a chilly autumn day! Lentils and barley provide plant-based protein and are great for digestion.

## What You Need:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, sliced
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup dry lentils, rinsed
- ½ cup pearl barley
- 6 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Optional: chopped parsley for garnish



## Instructions:

Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrots, and celery. Cook until softened, about five minutes. Add garlic and stir for one minute. Stir in lentils, barley, broth, thyme, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 45 minutes or until lentils and barley are tender. Add water if needed. Serve warm, topped with nutritious and flavorful parsley.

This stew freezes well and makes excellent leftovers. Add diced tomatoes or spinach for extra color and nutrients.

# *A Reflection Project*

Create a gratitude tree to celebrate the blessings  
in our lives while enjoying the colors of fall.



## **What you Need:**

- A large branch with multiple twigs
- A vase or jar with stones for stability
- Colored paper (fall colors like red, yellow, orange)
- Scissors and string or ribbon
- A hole punch
- Pens or markers

Cut the colored paper into leaf shapes. Punch a hole in each leaf. Invite everyone to write one thing they are grateful for on a leaf. This can be a memory, a person, or something simple like “hot tea” or “sunlight through the window.”

Tie each leaf to the branch using ribbon. Place the branch in the jar and fill with stones to keep it upright. Display your gratitude tree in a common area to spark conversation and smiles. Revisit it often and keep adding leaves as new blessings come to mind.

# Understanding Bone Density

Our bones lose strength as we age, but there are many ways to protect them. Osteoporosis causes bones to become weaker and more likely to break, especially after a fall. Fortunately, small changes in daily habits can make a big difference.

Begin by learning your risk. Women over 65 and men over 70 should receive regular bone density scans. These quick and painless tests help detect changes early so you and your doctor can take action.

Calcium and Vitamin D are key nutrients for strong bones. Add yogurt, leafy greens, and canned salmon to your meals for calcium. Spend some time in the sun or choose fortified foods for vitamin D, or talk to your doctor about supplements.

Exercise is just as important. Weight-bearing activities tell your bones to stay strong. One great example is pole walking—also known as Nordic walking. This activity uses specially designed poles that look like ski poles and provides many benefits.

- **Strengthens Bones:** The gentle impact of walking combined with upper body movement stimulates bone growth.
- **Improves Balance:** Poles provide extra support, helping you stay steady on your feet.



- **Protects Joints:** By distributing your weight evenly, pole walking reduces pressure on hips and knees.
- **Builds Confidence:** The poles offer a sense of security so walking feels safer and more enjoyable.

Even a short walk with poles a few times a week can make a difference. Many local senior centers and walking groups now offer introductions to pole walking. It is a social, low-cost, and effective way to stay active.

If you already have osteoporosis, your doctor may suggest medications that slow bone loss or help rebuild it. Always feel free to ask questions and explore options that fit your lifestyle.

Protecting your bones is about more than avoiding fractures. It supports independence, mobility, and the freedom to enjoy life fully.



## Carol's Corner

Family Matters' founder Carol Pardue-Spears stays in close touch with our caregivers and clients to make sure everyone is well cared for. Here, she answers some of the most frequent questions our clients ask.



Q:

*I really want to visit relatives this fall, but I feel unsure about traveling with my health concerns. Is it possible to enjoy travel safely as a senior?*

*A.* **Absolutely!** With a little planning, many seniors travel often and with great joy. The key is preparation and pacing.

**Start by visiting your primary care doctor.** Ask about any special precautions related to your medications or mobility. Bring a complete list of your prescriptions, allergies, and emergency contacts. If you use medical equipment, double-check travel guidelines and airline policies.

**Pack with care.** Include snacks, a water bottle, a cozy blanket, and compression socks to help with circulation during long trips.



Keep your medications in a carry-on bag and set reminders for when to take them.

**If you're flying, ask for assistance early.** Most airlines offer priority boarding or wheelchair services if requested in advance. Trains and buses also have accommodations for seniors.

**Choose a destination that matches your comfort level.**

A slower-paced itinerary allows time to rest and enjoy each moment. Consider travel insurance that covers health needs, just in case.

**Most of all, stay curious and open.** Travel can offer renewed purpose and treasured memories. Just take it one step at a time.



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## Fall Home Safety Checklist for Peace of Mind

- Place non-skid pads under smaller area rugs
- Replace burned-out lightbulbs and add nightlights
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors
- Use an electric kettle with an automatic shut-off feature
- Keep space heaters at least three feet from anything flammable
- Store flashlights where you can reach them