

## Healthful tidbits for the new year

*By Ellen Waldman  
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As the end of the year approaches, I wanted to offer a few items instead of just one topic. Think of them as small gifts for the holidays, starting with your slippers.

If I could, I'd make sure that you all wore the right footwear around the house. The chances of falling in the type of slippers known as scuffs is well documented. These have no backings to hold them on your feet and are a true fall hazard.

Staying vertical is so important, and a fall can begin a torrent of other medical interventions. While you're at it, please remove or replace that throw rug in the bathroom. If it doesn't have a non-slip backing that solidly grips the floor, find one that does. Bathrooms are where 80% of falls happen, and this is a simple fix.

On to drinking enough water. There is an article that describes how increasing your water intake can improve your health in many important ways. It's broken down by improvements in one day, one week, one month and six months. Here are some examples of the benefits you'll receive: better energy, clearer thinking, fewer aches and pains, reducing the risk of diseases and disorders such as urinary tract infections, hypertension and heart disease.

According to the doctor quoted in this article, the general rule of thumb is to drink half your weight in ounces. For example, if you weigh 120 pounds, drink 60 ounces of water a day. I have a glass pitcher that I fill up everyday so I can easily track my progress. If you want to read this short article, contact me and I'll happily send it to you.

Are you postponing your dental checkup and teeth cleaning due to COVID-19? Then consider getting an electric toothbrush. All the pharmacies have them (Ashland Drug, Bi-Mart and Rite Aid, all in Ashland).

From an article in Science Daily, June 2019: "Bacteria in the mouth and gums is not causing Alzheimer's alone, but the presence of these bacteria raises the risk for developing the disease substantially and are also implicated in a more rapid progression of the disease. However, the good news is that this study shows that there are some things you can do yourself to slow down Alzheimer's. Brush your teeth and use floss." In one seminar I attended, they even called dental floss "mental floss."

This next item might not strike you as a gift, but I assure you, if this is your situation, this alone might be your remedy. Options for People to Address Loneliness (OPAL) is a new program provided free by Rogue Valley Council of Governments Senior and Disability Services.

From their brochure: Loneliness and social isolation are taking a significant toll on the physical and behavioral health of our older adults and people with disabilities. Symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as other health issues, often accompany or follow. OPAL offers four weekly sessions and follow-up calls. Its counselors assist participants in finding ways to feel less lonely and isolated while offering encouragement, support and hope.

The group helps participants find ways to feel more connected and supported and be more active in important areas of their life. Since the program began just over a month ago, OPAL participants have started walking, exercising, cooking, sewing and reading more, reconnecting to family, friends and neighbors, and connecting to important resources. The contact person is Susan Jay Rounds, (541-423-1363, or [sjayrounds@rvcog.org](mailto:sjayrounds@rvcog.org)).

No one needs to go this alone. As someone wrote to me recently, she's felt flummoxed by what's happening in her life. Please consider that the myth of "fiercely independent" is causing people to lose their health and die prematurely. When so much rests on our connection to others, this might be the best gift of all.