

To YOUR
GOOD HEALTH

Keith Roach,
M.D.



There Is Help For People Who Have Difficulty Swallowing Tablets

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am 78 and have some difficulty swallowing. I must take calcium and magnesium tablets, and they are very large. I have to chew them to get them down properly. I have actually choked on pills in the past. But chewing some tablets gives a terrible taste. Any suggestions? — P.P.L.

ANSWER: Older people often have difficulty swallowing for several reasons, including loss of elasticity of the tissues, dryness and neurological changes reducing sensation, and nerve and muscle changes in the muscles involved with swallowing.

Some general advice might be helpful. A proven method of swallowing tablets is to place the tablet on your tongue and suck water from a flexible water bottle. Capsules can be swallowed more easily by tilting the chin slightly toward your chest. These techniques are illustrated at <https://tinyurl.com/swallow-advice>.

Many, but not all, large pills can be crushed and mixed with thick liquid like applesauce or yogurt. Pill crushers can be bought at any pharmacy, or you can get a mortar and pestle. Ask your pharmacist if your pill can be crushed. If not, perhaps you can get a prescription for several smaller-sized tablets.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Often-times, when I get a hard smack to a bony area, I develop a hard, tender lump on the bone. This lump will last and stay sore for weeks and sometimes months. Why does this happen? Is it normal? I've not heard anyone else say this happens to them. Is something wrong with my bones? I still have a sore lump on the edge of my tibia from a long time ago. — B.H.M.

ANSWER: We often think of bones as constant and unchanging, but bones are metabolically active, constantly reabsorbing themselves and laying down new bone to stay strong and healthy. Of course, they need a blood supply, and one major way the bone gets blood is from the periosteum, the lining of the bone. This has many blood vessels and nerve fibers, so a blow to the bone can cause damage to the periosteum and break blood vessels. This is especially true for the tibia, or shin bone, which is very superficial and has a propensity to knock into things. This causes a "bone bruise," or subperiosteal hematoma. The plentiful nerve fibers account for the very unpleasant pain that accompanies a really hard knock on the shin. It can take weeks or months for the blood to get reabsorbed and the bone to reshape itself back into normal.

Bones consist of a shell of cancellous bone, the smooth, hard substance we all know from skeletons. But the deeper structures of bones contain trabeculae (Latin for "small beams"), which are orderly units of bone, around which is the bone marrow, the cells that produce your blood cells. A really hard blow can also cause a microfracture of the bone, breaking some of the trabeculae on the inside of bones. This doesn't require the treatment of a complete fracture, but it can delay healing and cause persistent pain.

Bone bruises are common, and they don't mean there is anything wrong with your bones. However, this may be a chance to be sure you are getting enough calcium and vitamin D for optimal bone health.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu or send mail to 628 Virginia Dr., Orlando, FL 32803.



Shown from left are Salvation Army Captains Mark and Jennifer VanMeter accepting a \$500 check from Valley Hospice receptionist Dawn Greaves.

Valley Hospice Employees Donate to Local Charities

The COVID-19 pandemic has left many charities wondering how they will make ends meet. Valley Hospice is proud to announce that they recently presented 10- local charitable organizations with donations as a part of its Together We Can initiative. The donations totaled \$5,000 and were a result of their employee jeans day contributions.

"Valley Hospice employees are committed to giving back to the communities we serve and live in," said CEO Cynthia Bougher. "As a non-profit organization, we know first-hand the impact that COVID-19 has had and want to do our part to help."

Valley Hospice employees are permitted to wear jeans one day per week but must pay \$1 each time they do so. That money is then put in a "Jeans Day Fund" and earmarked for

community support.

"Our employees are incredibly generous and community-minded," said Bougher. "Earlier this year, employees were given the opportunity to nominate charities to receive donations and ten were selected."

Charities that received funding include: United Way of Weirton, Weirton; United Way of Jefferson County, Steubenville; United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley, Wheeling; Community Bread Basket, Weirton; Salvation Army, Wheeling; Youth Services System, Wheeling; Harrison County Cancer Crusaders, Cadiz; Community Resource Center, East Liverpool; Feeding Body and Soul Community Kitchen, Moundsville; and the Special Wish Foundation, St. Clairsville.



Youth Services System representative Terra Crews, at left, accepts a \$500 donation from Valley Hospice Community liaison Chris Orris.

Home for the Holidays-Wheeling SleepOut 2020 Window Display Contest Underway

WHEELING — Local merchants are showing their holiday spirit and supporting a good cause during the inaugural Home for the Holidays Window Display Contest, sponsored by Youth Services System Inc.

Starting today, members of the public are invited to check out window displays of 10 participating businesses and then vote online for their favorite. The businesses agreed to participate to help bring awareness to the Home for the Holidays-Wheeling SleepOut 2020 fundraiser, which benefits the YSS Transitional Living Program that serves youth facing homelessness.

"We want to thank these merchants for spreading the word about the SleepOut, and we want to spotlight their efforts to spread holiday cheer during this difficult time for so many," YSS Special Events Coordinator Terra Crews said.

Merchants participating in the Window Display Contest are (alphabetically):

■ Ash & Tin Boutique, 2242 Market St., Wheeling



- Attic Pickers, 201 Main St., Bridgeport
- Bridge Tavern, 950 Main St., Wheeling
- Felton CPA, 1144 Market St., Wheeling
- Hughes Design and Gift Gallery, 600 National Road, Wheeling
- Payton's Pretties, 355 Wharton Circle Suite 121, Triadelphia
- Rachel's on 16th, 86 16th St., Wheeling
- Re'Decorate Consignment, 2207 Market St., Wheeling
- ReStyle Consignment, 2215 Market St., Wheeling
- Uniglobe Ohio Valley Travel, 1165 Market St., Wheeling

Each business also has information about the SleepOut

and youth homelessness on display, along with a QR code visitors can scan with their mobile phones to place their votes.

"We hope people will take a drive to see the pretty windows and then vote for their favorites," Crews said. "It could be a fun family activity during the upcoming holiday weekend."

The 10th annual Wheeling SleepOut will take place virtually Friday, Dec. 4. Teams and individuals are invited to hold their own fundraisers and then build a cardboard structure in which to sleep out at home. Videos of local entertainers and a screening of the documentary "American Street Kid" will be shown on YSS social media platforms that night. Winners of the fundraising contest, Boxed-in Design Contest (for the sleepout structures) and the Window Display Contest also will be announced that night.

To cast a vote, learn more about YSS Transitional Living Program, or to donate to the Wheeling SleepOut, please visit www.youthservicesystem.org/events.



DEAR
ABBY

Abigail
Van Buren

Letters From Elderly Dad Are Only Thinly Veiled Criticisms

DEAR ABBY: I could use some advice on the best response to my 89-year-old father's letters. He cleverly inserts insults into them without writing anything for which he could be criticized.

For example, he has always talked about how he hates fat people. I am very overweight. My father sends me letters talking about how fit and trim another relative is who had just visited. That's all he says about them, and it's all he writes to me about. I can certainly read between the lines.

This isn't a one-time thing, just one example. I know my father will never change. He was abusive to me, my siblings and my mother. I see these letters as another way for him to continue his abuse, so I ignore them. Not engaging is my way of taking the high road. Extended family and friends bug me to talk with him about it, but I have never had a good experience with talking to my father.

I would have hoped that being closer to death would cause him to reconsider his interactions with his children, but he just isn't able to do so. Could you recommend a response other than silence? — *READING INTO IT IN ILLINOIS*

DEAR READING INTO IT: As a matter of fact, I can. Write him back and say something like this:

"Dear Dad, you may have been wondering why I don't respond to your letters. They contain nothing more than comparisons to other relatives who are skinnier and more fit than I am, and frankly, I find them painful to read. I am not writing this as a criticism of you, but only so you will understand my silence.

"Sincerely,
"Your Daughter 'Judy'"
You do not have to talk to him. This should get your message across.

DEAR ABBY: I have a friend who is divorced and struggling financially, but doesn't work other than sporadic pet-sitting jobs. I enjoy her company and we have a lot in common, but when we go on outings together, she expects me to drive and pay for her drinks and food if she doesn't have enough money. She doesn't own a credit card.

I'm starting to feel resentful and like I'm being taken advantage of. She thanks me sometimes, but I think she feels that because I am financially comfortable and she isn't, I should be a good friend and help her out. I really want to discuss the situation with her, but I am afraid of coming across as stingy and uncaring. What are your thoughts? — *USED IN ALABAMA*

DEAR USED: I have to take issue with your signature. You are not being used; you have been ALLOWING yourself to be used. It would be neither stingy nor uncaring to ask before making a date to go out together whether she has the money to pay her way. If the answer is no, suggest doing something that doesn't involve money or that's within her budget — unless you want to treat her. But treating her should not be expected, any more than any other gift would be.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.