

Health Connection

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

BROUGHT TO YOU BY HELENA REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

A healthy family is
just a click away

A better kind
of heart care

Helena Regional

MEDICAL + CENTER

Quality Care. Right here.



Nimble body, nimble mind

Question:

To fight memory loss and dementia, it's a good idea to:

- A. do a crossword puzzle
- B. take up a new hobby
- C. exercise regularly
- D. all of the above

If you answered D, you're right. Scientists now know it takes more than mental stimulation to keep your brain sharp well into your later years. Physical activity gives your body and your brain a boost. A half-hour of moderate exercise—walking, golfing, gardening, performing household chores—on most days of the week can help you think more clearly and feel better at any age.

HOW EXERCISE HELPS

Exercise increases blood flow to your brain, promoting brain-cell growth, and helps reduce stress—important since chronic stress causes the release of hormones that can damage your brain over time. Some studies suggest exercise increases levels of important chemicals that maintain brain health. Other studies on mice show that exercise appears to delay or prevent plaque development in brain regions used in memory, thinking and decision making.

Regular exercise also helps preserve healthy brain functioning by:

- **Reducing your risk for heart disease.** Exercise lowers homocysteine, an amino acid in your blood that makes

nerve cells in the brain stop working and die.

- **Controlling your blood sugar.** Diabetes is linked with several types of dementia, including Alzheimer's and vascular dementia (common to stroke survivors). Both aerobic and weight-bearing exercises control your blood sugar by increasing your metabolism.
- **Lowering your blood pressure.** Unchecked, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels in your brain and reduce its oxygen supply, leading to a decline in decision making, memory and verbal skills.
- **Controlling your body weight and improving physical fitness.** Studies show a link between dementia and being overweight, possibly because overweight individuals have more cardiovascular risk factors associated with dementia than people at a healthy weight.

DIVERSITY IS KEY

For the most brain benefits, vary your exercise routine often. It's not how hard you exercise but how many activities you participate in that's key to preventing cognitive decline. Johns Hopkins University found that adults ages 65 and older who were involved in a number of activities (such as walking, biking, swimming, dancing and bowling) experienced less dementia than people who participated in fewer activities. One explanation could be that the variety of activities keeps more parts of the brain active.

So don't worry about how much you're sweating or how vigorously you're moving—just enjoy a variety of activities every day and keep trying new ones.

With good health habits and a little luck, you may never face a sudden medical crisis. But sooner or later, many of us find ourselves involved in one. Suppose it's chest pain, stomach cramps or a nasty kitchen accident—what's the right response? Should you get emergency help or just go see your family doctor?

A true medical emergency is a situation that's life threatening or could cause permanent harm if not treated immediately. Every minute counts. That's the difference between cases needing instant, emergency room intervention and those your doctor can handle in the office.

Doctors say there are no wrong reasons to call for medical assistance in a real emergency, especially if it's heart related. At such a critical time, don't drive yourself to the ER or get someone else to drive you—it could be dangerous. Plus, you need the expertise and equipment that's in an ambulance.

Below are examples of symptoms that constitute a medical emergency. Call for emergency assistance right away if you or a friend experiences any of them. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, play it safe and get help. It could save a life.

SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT ...

In cases of trauma:

- uncontrollable bleeding
- wounds with gaping edges



- wounds that involve the face or hands
- wounds caused by a puncture or wounds in which glass, metal or other objects have pierced the body
- severe burns
- head, neck or back injuries
- abdominal injuries or sudden, severe abdominal pain
- problems with movement or feeling after injury
- suspected broken bones
- animal or human bites
- contact with poisonous substances
- sunburn with nausea, vomiting, fever and chills

When the ER is your best option

Medical conditions that require emergency care

Any time these symptoms are present:

- chest discomfort
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- nausea, dizziness, fainting or profuse sweating, especially when combined with chest pain and breathing difficulty—classic signs of heart attack
- sudden numbness on one side of the face or limbs, confusion, slurred speech, vision loss, severe headache or dizziness—all signs of a possible stroke
- severe allergic reactions from insect bites, food or beverages
- sudden or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- coughing up or vomiting blood
- fainting, dizziness or hallucinations
- convulsions or seizures
- stiff neck with fever or headache
- sudden severe fever coupled with sensitivity to light
- stupor or dazed behavior
- drug or alcohol overdose
- attempted suicide or suicidal threats or statements

We're pleased to share with you our first edition of *Health Connection*, a quarterly community education magazine of Helena Regional Medical Center (HRMC). HRMC is a community-based medical center, and this magazine is our latest endeavor to provide regular community education. I hope you'll find this issue and future issues beneficial to your health and the health of your family.

HRMC has experienced outstanding growth during the past year. Our commitment to ongoing excellent medical and surgical care remains with a focus on quality outcomes. HRMC has placed particular emphasis on our emergency services as a major service line. With high-quality care, capabilities to handle all emergencies no matter how big or how small, and significantly reduced wait times to see the ER physician, there's no better emergency department to meet your needs.

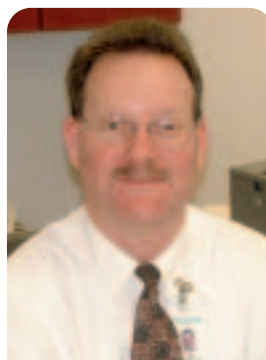
Each of the following service areas are a vital part of our commitment to healing the Arkansas Delta:

- 24-hour emergency department
- Intensive care unit with six rooms outfitted with advanced technology
- Physician services, including: ear, nose and throat, family practice, general surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, ophthalmology and pediatrics

- Full surgical service, including same-day surgery
- Full-service radiology, including mammography, CT, nuclear medicine and sonography, with echocardiography and vascular/arterial studies
- Mobile magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Rehabilitation services, including physical, occupational and speech therapy
- Inpatient rehabilitation unit
- Cardiac rehabilitation program
- Swing bed
- Home health services
- Active volunteer program
- Senior Circle, our program for older adults

It's our intention with this newsletter to provide you with useful and practical health information so you have the tools and knowledge to make good decisions when

choosing a healthcare provider. Quality healthcare services are available right here, close to home. Thank you for choosing HRMC.



TOM KINNEBREW
Chief Executive Officer

When minutes matter

Having health facts handy can save lives

Thinking quickly during medical emergencies is difficult, and critical information isn't always passed on to EMS workers and the emergency department.

With this in mind, Helena Regional Medical Center and Home Health Services implemented the Vial of Life program, which helps emergency personnel (firefighters, paramedics, police and hospital staff) get important medical facts if a crisis should occur in your home. By filling in the Vial of Life health form with the appropriate information and keeping it updated, you won't have to remember it. The idea is simple, but it can save your life.



Learn more!

If you have a group or organization that would like more information about the Vial of Life program or would like for someone speak to your organization, call April Speed at (870) 816-3904.

A better kind of heart care

New guidelines help hearts heal

Helena Regional Medical Center (HRMC) has received recognition from the American Heart Association (AHA) as a Get With The Guidelines—Coronary Artery Disease hospital. The recognition signifies that HRMC is participating in AHA's Get With The Guidelines program, which is designed to reduce the risk of recurrent heart attacks by helping hospital staff follow proven evidence-based guidelines and procedures while coronary patients are in their care.

Under the program, heart patients begin aggressive risk-reduction therapies such as cholesterol-lowering



Pictured from left to right are Tom Kinnebrew, chief executive officer; Shanna Pryor, director of intensive care unit and emergency department; Zachary Morgan, vice president of quality improvement at the American Heart Association; and Patricia Fuller, chief nursing officer.

drugs, aspirin, ACE inhibitors and beta-blockers, and receive smoking-cessation and weight-management counseling and referrals for cardiac rehabilitation—all while still in the hospital. These standards of care are outlined in the AHA/American College of Cardiology secondary prevention guidelines for patients with coronary artery disease.

Research indicates that when patients are discharged from the hospital on appropriate medications such as aspirin, beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors and lipid-lowering medicines, a patient's risk of a second event is reduced and lives are saved.

HEART DISEASE: Are the sexes created equal?

Romantics tell us that two hearts can beat as one, but the truth is that male and female hearts march to the beat of different drummers. The male heart beats more slowly (72 beats a minute) than the female heart (80 beats a minute) and is larger (weighing in at an average 10 ounces versus 8 ounces).

Women also differ from men in their susceptibility to heart disease and in how the disease progresses once it takes hold. Among other differences:

Cigarette smoking impact: The risk of heart attack is up to six times higher in women who smoke a pack of cigarettes or more a day than in women who never smoke. In men, the risk is 2.8 times higher.

Angina: Women are more likely to be forewarned that they're at risk of a heart attack. The warning comes in the form of angina, chest pain that occurs when clogged



blood vessels starve the heart of oxygen. Unfortunately for men, they're less likely to experience this symptom: Their first sign of heart disease frequently is a heart attack.

Heart disease detection: Despite the early warning that angina can give, women are more likely than men to be diagnosed with heart disease at a more advanced stage—when it's more difficult to treat.

Despite the differences, the sexes have one thing in common: Both can protect their hearts by controlling risk factors such as an unfavorable cholesterol profile, high blood pressure, excess weight, smoking and lack of exercise.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **asthma**?

Test your knowledge and learn more about asthma.

- 1** Which of the following statements about asthma is *not* true?
- Cockroaches are a major trigger of asthma symptoms.
 - Asthma can develop at any age.
 - Approximately 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.
 - People with severe asthma should avoid exercise.

- 2** Which of the following is a risk factor for asthma?
- hay fever
 - chronic sinusitis
 - obesity
 - all of the above

- 3** Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, the number of U.S. children estimated to have asthma is:
- 1.5 million
 - 5 million
 - 10 million
 - 20 million

- 4** All of the following are asthma triggers *except*:
- stress
 - home appliances that use natural gas as fuel
 - corticosteroid medications
 - mold

- 5** If someone is having an asthma attack, one of the first things you should do is:
- Take him or her outside for fresh air.
 - Have him or her breathe into a paper bag.
 - Help the sufferer get his or her prescribed asthma drugs and inhaling equipment.
 - Use the sufferer's Epi-Pen to administer an injection of epinephrine.

Conspiracy theory

How 5 risk factors join forces against your health

When it comes to heart disease, you know that risk factors like family history and being overweight don't work in your favor. Now, experts say a combination of five factors—a condition called metabolic syndrome—also conspire against you, adding up to a far greater chance of suffering a heart attack, stroke or diabetes.

You have metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the following problems:

- **abdominal obesity**—a waist circumference of 40 inches or more for men; 35 inches or more for women
- **high blood pressure**—135/85 mm/Hg or higher
- **high triglyceride levels**—150 mg/dL or more
- **abnormal cholesterol**—HDL cholesterol levels of less than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women
- **high blood glucose or insulin resistance**—a fasting glucose, or blood sugar, level of 100 mg/dL or higher

Studies show people with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than people without these factors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can head off future trouble if you take these steps now:

- **Lose weight.** Losing as little as 5 percent to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce insulin levels and bring blood pressure down.
- **Eat healthier.** Include more fiber-rich foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables to aid weight loss and lower insulin levels. Reduce the salt, calories and fat you consume.
- **Exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes of moderately strenuous activity most days of the week.
- **Kick the habit.** Smoking increases insulin resistance and worsens many health problems.
- **Schedule regular checkups.** Get timely checks on your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Consider drug therapy.** Your doctor may prescribe aspirin therapy or medication to control risk factors.



MATCH GAME

Finding the right doctor for you and your family

4. If I'm sick, will the doctor see me the day I call?
5. Who covers for the doctor when he or she isn't available?
6. How long is the average waiting room time?
7. What is the office policy on appointment cancellations?
8. What do I do if I have an emergency after office hours?
9. Does the doctor give advice over the phone for common problems?
10. How long will I have to wait for a call back from the doctor or a staff member?

Different stages of life bring different medical scenarios. Still, one factor remains a constant: the need for a primary care provider who knows you well and can treat you and your family best. So, how should you go about choosing a primary care doctor?

The first step is to put together a list of candidates. Ask friends, family members, co-workers or people you know who work in the medical community. You'll need to find out which doctors are on your health plan.

Once you've chosen a few candidates, call their offices and find out more by asking:

1. Which hospital does the doctor use?
2. What are the practice's office hours?
3. How far in advance do I have to book a routine visit?

Consider your interaction with staff during your phone calls. Were they friendly, efficient and knowledgeable?

Narrow your list to one or two physicians and make an appointment to talk to them. Most likely, you'll have to pay for these visits. As you talk to the doctor, notice whether he or she pays attention to your questions or seems distracted, giving "stock" answers.

Now you should be ready to choose the doctor who can treat you and your family best—and give you peace of mind.

Food for thought

Eating right can help you control diabetes

If you're one of the 16 million Americans who have diabetes, you understand that nutrition should always take center stage. Healthy food choices, along with exercise and medication, are vital to keeping your blood sugar, or glucose, in line and avoiding complications.



hydrate intake, sugary sweets and desserts helps control blood sugar levels. However, you must consume a moderate amount of carbohydrates to supply your body with the valuable energy they provide. But choose quality fuel. Variety among all food groups is key: fresh fruits and vegetables in abundance; beans,

brown rice and whole-grain breads and cereals; lean meat, poultry and fish; and low-fat dairy products.

Drink plenty of water, too, and avoid sweetened drinks. If you drink citrus juice, limit the serving to no more than 6 ounces. If you drink soda, switch to a diet variety.

It's important to stick to proper portion sizes. Learn how to measure and weigh portions. Read food labels, paying particular attention to serving sizes and total carbohydrates. A diabetes educator or dietitian can help you develop an eating plan. By learning to eat properly and controlling your weight and blood sugar levels, you can avoid most diabetes complications.

WHEN YOU EAT

If you have diabetes, you should eat three balanced meals and two snacks a day. Spacing food and trying to eat meals at the same time each day will help control blood sugar and weight. Eating reasonable portions of carbohydrates throughout the day—instead of consuming all your servings at one meal—will keep blood sugar levels stable.

WHAT YOU EAT

Planning what you'll eat at each meal will help you keep blood sugar within a healthy range all day. Limiting carbo-




Better health just a click away

Helena Regional Medical Center has launched Discovery Hospital on its Web site. Discovery Hospital, an offering of Discovery Communications, which owns the Discovery Channel, provides hospitals with online health information specifically designed to assist individuals in managing their personal health. It consists of more than

7,500 pages of health-related articles and interactive tools. The Discovery Hospital information can be found at www.helenaregionalmedicalcenter.com. It features numerous educational and interactive components, including a medical library of various diseases and conditions, an anatomy explorer, a body mass calculator, explanations of various procedures and tests, nutrition information, a symptom explanation module, health centers and more.



Visit www.helenaregionalmedicalcenter.com today!



Age is strictly a case of mind over matter.
If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.
-Jack Benny

Senior Circle is a nonprofit organization for those age 50 and over. We offer fellowship and activities, health education, parties, travel, local and national discounts, hospital benefits and discounts—plus much more for only \$15 a year.

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