

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

Health Connection

A PUBLICATION OF REGIONAL HOSPITAL OF JACKSON



**Better health
is just a click
away!**

**Dr. McKee's
home-spun
remedies**

**Finding the right doctors
for your family**

**Controlling diabetes
with your fork**



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



Home-spun remedies: Can they keep you well?

By **Alice R. McKee, M.D.**, Regional Family Medicine

My earliest memory of powerful home remedies is forever etched in my brain: The screams of my older 4-year-old sister stopped right quick when the freshly cut side of a raw potato was placed on her bumblebee sting.

Now, after years of practicing primary medicine, I've gained some minor knowledge of the "best home remedies" via patient testimonials—testimonials, I might add, that come from wise individuals who've been around the block.

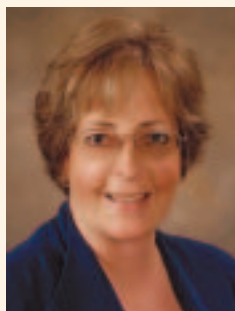
Among these is the use of the lubricant WD-40 for knee arthritis. Though still unproven, some of my patients in Carthage, Miss., swore it worked. "Spray and rub, doc," they'd say.

I'm convinced that Vicks VapoRub cures toenail fungus. Several patients have proudly displayed their results—look, no more thick yellow toenail! Use it twice a day under the offending nail, for a few months. If you can

remember to faithfully add it to your daily routine, you've got it made.

Apple cider vinegar, one of the most popular home remedies, is used by many as a tonic for arthritis, circulation, digestive problems, allergies and vigor. Reportedly, just one teaspoon a day works wonders, and scientific evidence supports its antioxidant properties. Similarly, if taken daily, green tea has strong antioxidant health benefits.

I'm always interested in learning more about home cures, so I've asked locals about their best home remedies. So far, the people of Jackson have told me: salty foods end diarrhea, toothpaste stops acne, wild onions in socks eliminate fever and dog saliva cures athlete's foot. Maybe we're on to something!



Alice R. McKee, M.D.

Come on by!

We're still taking the home remedies survey. To learn more, call (731) 984-8380 or stop by 379 Hospital Boulevard, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Regional Family
Medicine

Better health is just a click away

Regional Hospital of Jackson partners with Discovery Hospital

Everyone's been there. You're concerned about a bad cough, a scratchy throat or a sick friend. Where can you turn to find complete and accurate answers to your healthcare questions?

Regional Hospital of Jackson's Web site, www.regionalhospitaljackson.com. There, you'll find the information and tools you need to manage your personal health and gain a greater understanding of health issues important to you and your family. Discovery Hospital, produced by the company that owns the Discovery Channel, consists of more than 7,500 pages of health-related articles and interactive tools.

GET HEALTH SAVVY

Studies show that more than 45 million Americans with chronic health conditions use the Internet for health information and services. Being well informed can give you peace of mind and lead to better personal care. Nearly 60 percent of consumers who use the Internet for health information say it improves discussions with their doctors.

A WEALTH OF OPTIONS

When you visit our Web site and click on "Discovery Hospital," you'll find options to address your concerns. By selecting "Diseases and Conditions," you can learn about conditions like diabetes, heart disease and many others.

Under the "Tools" section, you'll find more options for managing your health. You can access health risk assessments, weight-loss support information and smoking-cessation tools. The "Symptoms Manager" provides an easy format for you to assess the level of care you need.



The site also provides a multitude of articles for expectant parents. They include exercise during pregnancy, birthing alternatives and "Sleeping—too much or too little?" Our Discovery Channel videos show the development of a baby at each stage.

Our focus at Regional Hospital of Jackson continues to be to provide exceptional healthcare for those we serve. Our Web site's new link with Discovery Hospital further enables us to be the resource you turn to for managing the care of your family.



Visit us online!

Find health information, risk assessments and more at www.regionalhospitaljackson.com.

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

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?

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?

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.

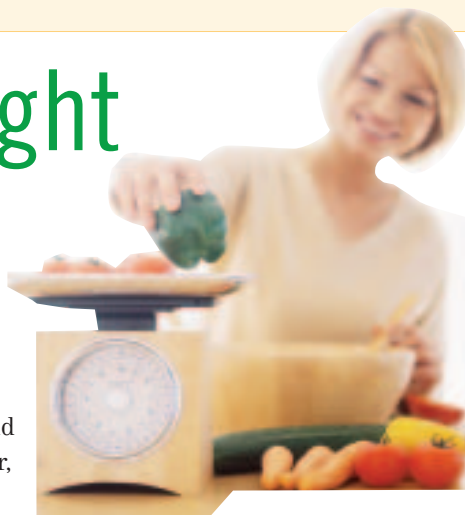
Healthy food choices, along with exercise and medication, are vital to keeping your blood sugar, or glucose, in line and avoiding complications.

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-



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.

HEALTHY WOMAN

"Helping women understand the need for a healthy body, mind and spirit."

"What's for Dinner??!!" Healthy Meals in 30 Minutes or Less!

March 15, 11:30am-1:00pm

Lower Level Conference Center, Regional Hospital of Jackson

Amy Elizer, University of Tennessee Extension agent and Gloria Brien, Registered Dietitian at Regional Hospital, will be teaming up to demonstrate some strategies for combating that dreaded question - "What's for Dinner??!!"



- Quick, Healthy Meals prepared in under 30 minutes
- Crock Pot cooking
- A complimentary lunch will be provided for participants where we will sample some of the recipes provided.


REGIONAL HOSPITAL
OF JACKSON

www.regionalhospitaljackson.com

**To RSVP call
731-661-2161**

The Healthy Woman Program provided by Regional Hospital of Jackson is offered free to meet the needs of the Women of West Tennessee. To register for this or other programs targeting women call 661-2161.

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