

# Health Connection

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

BROUGHT TO YOU BY MCKENZIE REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Leading-edge  
surgery, close  
to home

Seniors: Join our  
circle of friends



 **McKENZIE**  
REGIONAL HOSPITAL



# 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.

**W**ith 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

# Less pain, greater gains

Smaller incisions and faster recoveries  
with new surgeries



Left to right are Melanie Iglesias, Betty Burgess, Rose McCardle, Eduardo Smith, M.D., Cindy Clericuzio, Mark Wright and Sheila Orr.

**N**ew technology, procedures, equipment and more are available at McKenzie Regional Hospital (MRH) thanks to the addition of a new general surgeon. Eduardo Smith, M.D., who joined the medical staff in August, specializes in laparoscopic surgery and other leading-edge techniques.

## AN INSIDE VIEW

Laparoscopic surgery describes the techniques a surgeon uses to gain access to an internal surgery site. Most laparoscopic colon procedures start by using a cannula (a narrow, tubelike instrument) to enter the abdomen. A laparoscope (a tiny telescope connected to a video camera) is inserted through the cannula, giving the surgeon a magnified view of the patient's internal organs on a television monitor. The entire procedure

may be completed through the cannula or by lengthening one of the small cannula incisions.

## FASTER HEALING

The advantages of laparoscopic surgery include less post-operative pain, a shorter hospital stay, a faster return of bowel function and a solid-food diet and a more rapid return to normal activity.

## A PRESTIGIOUS BACKGROUND

Dr. Smith practices at McKenzie Clinic Corp. and has active hospital privileges at MRH. He is certified by the American Specialty Board of Surgery,

has recently completed an intensive care fellowship and will sit for his board certification for intensivist in critical care this year.

After receiving his medical degree from the University of Panama School of Medicine, Dr. Smith completed his internship at The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Md., and his residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He's been a research associate at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, N.J.; a fellow in surgery at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in

Baltimore; and a clinical instructor in surgery at the State University of New York in Long Island.

Dr. Smith specializes in critical care medicine and several types of surgeries, including advanced and basic laparoscopic, vascular, endovascular, general thoracic and trauma.

## Make an appointment

**T**o schedule an appointment at McKenzie Clinic Corp., located at 201 Hospital Drive in McKenzie, call (731) 352-6627, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Quality care, close to home

**O**ne challenge of moving to a new location is finding where everything is: the post office, a grocery store, a doctor. My family and I are dealing with this challenge because we've just moved to McKenzie. I've been here since September, and my family since late December. We're adapting to the new surroundings, and the friendly people of the community are making the adjustment go much easier and smoother.

For the past 19 years, my family and I lived in Oklahoma, where I was the administrator of local community hospitals. These hospitals ranged in size from 22 beds to 66 beds.

I have four children, one son and three daughters. My son is married and has two children and is attending medical school in Kansas City. My oldest daughter is serving a mission in France for our church. My two younger daughters will be attending McKenzie High School, where one will be a senior and the other a junior.

I'm very excited to come to McKenzie and work for a great health-care facility. McKenzie Regional Hospital (MRH) brings great resources to the community and to the people we care for. In the last three years, a new emergency department and main lobby have been built. Our imaging, lab and surgery equipment have also been replaced and upgraded.

Hospital management has recruited a general surgeon to augment MRH's existing medical staff of qualified physicians.

I'm very happy to be a part of the great healthcare team that we have at MRH. We look forward to caring for you or a loved one if the need ever arises.

As someone new to the area, I've found the hospital that my family and I will use, and I hope that MRH will be the hospital of choice for your healthcare needs.

DAVID RASMUSSEN  
Chief Executive Officer



David Rasmussen  
Chief Executive Officer

## 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?

- a. Cockroaches are a major trigger of asthma symptoms.
- b. Asthma can develop at any age.
- c. Approximately 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.
- d. People with severe asthma should avoid exercise.

2

Which of the following is a risk factor for asthma?

- a. hay fever
- b. chronic sinusitis
- c. obesity
- d. 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:

- a. 1.5 million
- b. 5 million
- c. 10 million
- d. 20 million

4

All of the following are asthma triggers *except*:

- a. stress
- b. home appliances that use natural gas as fuel
- c. corticosteroid medications
- d. mold

5

If someone is having an asthma attack, one of the first things you should do is:

- a. Take him or her outside for fresh air.
- b. Have him or her breathe into a paper bag.
- c. Help the sufferer get his or her prescribed asthma drugs and inhaling equipment.
- d. 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

**D**ifferent 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

**I**f 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-

# A circle of friends

## Classes, discounts and more—just for seniors!

**S**enior Circle, a nonprofit association for adults ages 50 and older, is committed to enriching the lives of adults, one member at a time, through exercise and wellness programs, friendships, activities, educational seminars, discounts and benefits. McKenzie Regional Hospital's Senior Circle chapter, established on June 1, 2003, is one of the many chapters around the country sponsored by the affiliated hospitals at Community Health Systems (CHS).

"We offer a wide variety of programs that provide education as well as entertainment," says Sandra Pate, Circle Advisor for the McKenzie chapter. "Through education and wellness activities, we encourage members to be an active part of their health maintenance."



### TRAVELING WITH FRIENDS

Senior Circle also assists members in keeping an active lifestyle through regular activities, day and overnight trips and volunteer opportunities. Activities offered at the local chapter include game day, bingo, luncheons and trips to the movies. The McKenzie chapter has traveled to many destinations, including Branson, Mo.; Gatlinburg, Tenn.; Savannah, Ga.; and Nashville, Tenn. Cruises and tours throughout the United States and abroad are also available.

### MUSIC, GAMES AND MORE

Upcoming plans include a monthly matinee, bingo, a game day, special music at Lakeside Retirement Community and McKenzie Health Care, "Lunch and Learn" with local healthcare providers and more.

Circle members also receive complimentary private

room upgrades at CHS hospitals, plus a complimentary meal plan for a spouse or caregiver. Free copying or faxing of important papers and free notary services are available.

**Join now**

**To join or to learn more about Senior Circle, call Sandra Pate at (731) 352-4173,**

**Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**McKENZIE**  
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Connection

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