

Health Connection

THE MAGAZINE OF EVANSTON REGIONAL HOSPITAL

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

Better health
is just a
click away

Crystal-clear
imaging

When is the ER
your best option?

5 factors that
hurt your health



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



Better health is just a click away

confronting. Created by Discovery Communications, the company that provides award-winning cable health programming to more than 60 million households, Discovery Hospital features more than 7,500 pages of health-related articles and interactive tools.

THE INTERNET ADVANTAGE

Studies show that in the United States, more than 45 million people with chronic health conditions use the Internet to obtain health information and services. We all know that being well-informed about a subject can give you peace of mind, but it also can lead to better personal care. Nearly 60 percent of consumers who use the Internet for health information say it improves discussions with their doctors.

“At Evanston Regional Hospital (ERH), we’re trying to serve our community by providing quality and comprehensive healthcare services, including health information,” says Mark Hiatt, ERH marketing director. “There’s no doubt that the health tools we’re providing through Discovery Hospital enhance our service to patients and help them

manage their health. This fast and easy portal provides people with the information and tools they need to ensure their family’s health. It’s a wonderful benefit to our community.”

Everyone’s been there. You’re concerned about a bad cough or scratchy throat, or perhaps your friend has been diagnosed with an illness you know nothing about. Where can you turn to find answers to all your healthcare questions? Evanston Regional Hospital’s Web site, www.evanstonregionalhospital.com.

There, you’ll find our new Discovery Hospital section, featuring information and tools to help you manage your personal health and gain a greater understanding of health issues you and your family may be



Visit us online!

Find health information, risk assessments and more at

www.evanstonregionalhospital.com.

RIGHT AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The Discovery Hospital link features numerous educational and interactive components, including:

- a medical library on 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

“Using digital assets from across our services on cable as well as the Internet, we’re able to leverage the content to provide an important educational service to patients using this Web site,” says Mark Irwin, vice president of operations at Discovery Interactive Media. “Thanks to partnerships like we have with ERH, we can deliver Discovery’s reliable health information to patients and allow them to gain a greater understanding of health issues they may be confronting.”

When you visit our Web site and click on the Discovery Hospital icon, you’ll find a variety of options to help you manage your health. By selecting “Diseases and Conditions,” you can learn about conditions immediately. For instance, if you’ve been hearing a lot about diabetes lately and want to learn more, click on “diabetes” and you’ll have instant access to a wealth of in-depth information, including: a definition of the disease, explanation of what it does to the body, the three main types of diabetes, signs and symptoms, causes and risks, information about prevention, how it’s diagnosed, the long-term effects, whether there’s any risk to others, how diabetes is controlled, side effects of treatment, tips on how to monitor the disease and suggestions for partnering with your doctor to get the best care possible.

In the “Tools” section, you’ll find a variety of options, including personalized health risk assessments and advice, such as weight-loss support, diet and fitness information and smoking cessation tools. Maybe you’re anxious about symptoms you’re experiencing and want to research them before calling the doctor. By clicking on “Symptoms Manager,” you can quickly assess the level of care you need.

SMART SEARCHING

ERH’s partnership with Discovery Hospital provides a four-tiered, integrated search capacity for each health topic. Answers from ERH and our local providers appear first, followed by articles from Discovery Hospital, then resources from the Discovery Health Channel and, finally, links to other reliable online health resources, like Web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Cancer Society.



Our focus at ERH is to provide exceptional, quality healthcare to those we serve. The new Discovery Hospital link on our Web site is a tool that enables us to be the resource you can always turn to for managing the care of your family. It’s just another example of how ERH provides quality healthcare close to home.

Women, take charge of your health!

Join Evanston Regional Hospital for a weekend of friendship, empowerment and fun.

Women’s Conference Weekend

Held at Davis Middle School in Evanston



HEALTHY WOMAN KICK-OFF

Fri., March 24

Keynote speaker: Suzanne Metzger, Ph.D.

Topic: Gaining Self Acceptance—Liking Who We Are

When: 6–8 p.m.



THE CREATIVE WOMAN— WOMEN’S CONFERENCE

Sat., March 25

Keynote speaker: Jill Grover, interior designer

Featuring keynote address, breakout sessions, lunch and Fashion Show

When: 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

Cost: \$15 per event, or \$25 for both

TO REGISTER, CALL (307) 783-8365.

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.



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-

An inside view

New scanner gives doctors a closer look

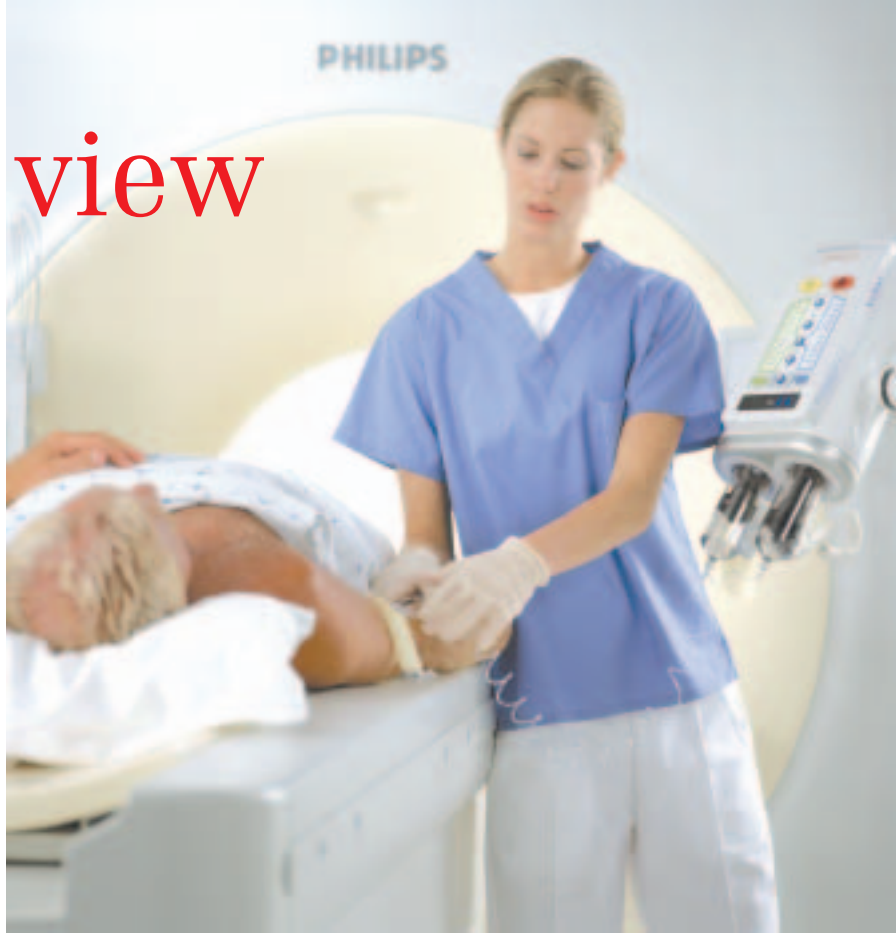
Evanston Regional Hospital (ERH) recently introduced a new state-of-the-art multi-slice computed tomography (CT) scanner to our community. The Brilliance CT scanner from Philips Medical Systems features advanced technology that produces split-second, high-quality images, permitting doctors to see more detail in a fraction of the time needed for other tests.

EARLY DETECTION

A CT scan produces a cross-sectional image of the human anatomy, which helps the doctor rule out or confirm the presence of certain diseases and, in some cases, evaluate the extent of injuries to a trauma patient.

Previously, ERH had a single-slice CT scanner. The Brilliance scanner can take 16 slices, allowing our doctors to more effectively detect and treat a range of life-threatening illnesses, including heart disease, cancer, stroke and lung disease. This increases the possibility of finding disease in an early stage, when a wider array of effective treatment options may be available.

The unmatched speed and sub-millimeter detail of the new CT scanner will also contribute to more rapid assessment and decision making in trauma cases, when physicians may need to make life and death decisions within minutes.



BREATHE EASY

Patients who need a CT scan will find that ERH's new scanner offers a much more pleasant experience. Having your heart and coronary arteries evaluated using a CT scanner reduces the need for drugs to regulate the rhythm of your heart. And, no hospital stay is required. With much faster scan times, patients will typically be asked to hold their breath only once during each scan.

Acquiring a new, faster, more accurate CT scanner is just one example of how ERH provides the care you need and deserve, right here at home.

Learn more!

For more information about imaging services, call (307) 783-8196.



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