

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

Health Connection

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT BERWICK HOSPITAL CENTER

**Seniors: Join
our circle
of friends**

**Celebrating
the past,
envisioning
the future**



Just for women
Free program empowers
and informs

**Finding the right doctors
for your family**



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

Be in the know

Free Healthy Woman program empowers and informs

Did you know that women make up to 90 percent of the healthcare decisions for their families? As a woman, wouldn't it be great to have a program designed especially to help you make these sometimes monumental choices?

Now you have one. The Healthy Woman program at Berwick Hospital Center is a free, nationally known program that gives women the knowledge and confidence to make informed healthcare and well-being decisions for themselves and their loved ones.

Founded in May 2005, the program has grown to more than 300 members and offers a variety of presentations that cover physical and emotional healthcare, as well as financial well-being and spiritual development. Healthy Woman includes free monthly seminars, health fairs, educational programs, e-mail communications and interactive events. Women of all ages are invited to join.



Sign up now!

To join the Healthy Woman community, register for your free membership at www.berwick-hospital.com (click on the "Healthy Woman" icon) or contact Christina Shaw, Healthy Woman coordinator, at (570) 759-5317 or christina_shaw@chs.net to request a membership form.



What program helps you get fit, save money, protect your health—and lets you make new friends while you're at it? Berwick Hospital Center's Senior Circle program. With more than 2,200 members, this national program for men and women ages 50 and older is growing every day. Senior Circle adviser Sharon Hess started Berwick's chapter in November 1999, and it's now the third largest of the 69 chapters in the United States.

The program's mission is to encourage a healthy and active lifestyle for seniors by providing programs that encourage continued learning, wellness, health and volunteering, coupled with a host of social activities.

A circle of friends

Senior program offers discounts, activities and more!

Berwick Hospital Center provides exciting monthly meetings for its Senior Circle members. More than 100 members attend these festive events, which include a variety of speakers, free blood pressure screenings, door prizes, refreshments and entertainment. For an annual membership fee of \$15, you'll have access to a generous menu of national and local discounts, benefits, events and services. You'll also receive a free subscription to the national quarterly magazine, *Inside Circle*, and the local monthly publication, *Circle News*.

Join today!

To become a Senior Circle member, please call Berwick Hospital Center at (570) 759-5000 for more information on how to receive your free brochure, application and information about members-only benefits. You can also visit our Web site at www.berwick-hospital.com.

Celebrating a century of care

Berwick Hospital Center continues a tradition of excellence



At Berwick Hospital Center, we're celebrating a very exciting year—our 100th anniversary. It all began on Oct. 21, 1905, when, in response to a call issued through columns of local newspapers, 100 women joined the movement to establish a community hospital in Berwick. Within months, on Jan. 2, 1906, Berwick Hospital was incorporated. Formed and opened under the Ladies Board of Managers on Maple Street in Berwick, Berwick Hospital Center today remains a thriving, well-known community hospital.

Our anniversary theme for 2006 is "Celebrating the Past, Envisioning the Future." This theme will be incorporated into events and publications throughout the year. We'll focus on some of our strongest achievements from

Learn more!

For more information, stop by Berwick Hospital Center for a list of celebration events or e-mail Christina Shaw at christina_shaw@chs.net.

the past and how these have made us who we are today.

The Berwick Hospital Center governing board, medical staff and all our employees are working hard every day to provide quality care for the community, and we'll continue to do

so for many years to come. This anniversary is more than just a single historic date—it's an opportunity to recognize the long-standing partnership between a dynamic institution and the community it serves.

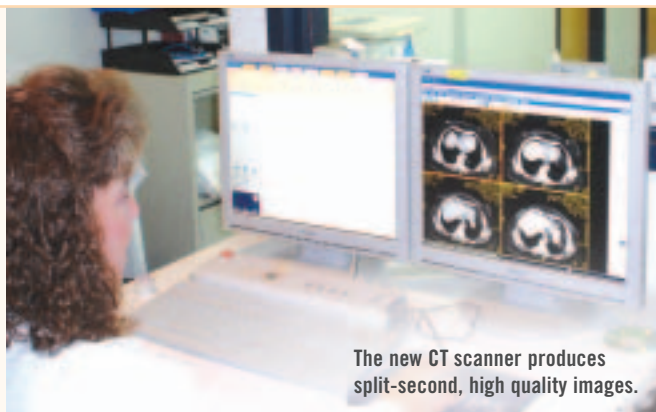
An inside view

New scanner gives doctors a closer look

Berwick Hospital Center's imaging department now offers faster, more comfortable computerized tomography (CT) scans with the new Brilliance CT Scanner. By producing split-second, high-quality images, doctors can see more detail in a fraction of the time needed for other tests. The higher resolution can help doctors diagnose diseases earlier and determine the most appropriate treatment.

The Berwick CT suite is a calming place to visit. Designed with beach-like ambiance, the room has an ocean blue floor with palm trees overhead, and soft music plays in the background to create a pleasant atmosphere.

This peaceful environment features the



The new CT scanner produces split-second, high quality images.

latest technology. "We use the extensive image information from the Brilliance scanner to generate detailed 3-D images which can be quickly shared with referring and ER doctors," explains Julie Ridall, R.T. This detail helps with rapid, quality assessment for treatments and evaluation.

Older patients and those with breathing distress will benefit from the shorter scan times. Larger patients will appreciate the roomier space of this diagnostic technology.

Find out more!

For information about the new CT scanner, contact Nancy Lynn, director of imaging, at (570) 759-5120 or nancy_lynn@chs.net. For more information about Berwick Hospital Center's imaging department or other services, go to www.berwick-hospital.com and click on "Our Health Services."

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-



**Short wait
time when
minutes count.**

Emergency services at



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