



METROPLEX
HEALTH SYSTEM

Late Summer • 2006

healthSCENE®

Health. Healing. Hope.



Healthy
heart:
Do you
know your
numbers?

Give your health a tune-up. See page 8.

What to Know before surgery

ON TV, SURGERY IS OFTEN a life-or-death emergency. It can be compelling storytelling, but in real life most of the millions of operations performed each year are not emergencies.

That means if you're told you need surgery, you'll probably have time to

For questions to ask after surgery, visit www.mplex.org. Click on "Wellness," then "Health Information Library" and search for "Surgery."

learn about the procedure, think things over and consider a second opinion, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

FINDING A SURGEON

Start with selecting a surgeon. Ask your primary care doctor for a recommendation. You should look for someone who operates several times a week and has experience with your condition.

When checking qualifications, look for a surgeon who is board-certified, meaning he or she has at least seven

years of medical training and has passed a comprehensive exam. To find out if a doctor is board-certified, contact the doctor's office or the American Board of Medical Specialties at **1-866-275-2267** or www.abms.org.

Doctors with the abbreviation FACS after their names are further qualified as fellows of the American College of Surgeons.

10 QUESTIONS

Your surgeon will likely explain why he or she thinks you need an operation and will volunteer important details about the procedure. Be sure all your questions are answered, including:

1. What are the potential benefits, and are they likely to be permanent?
2. What are the risks? All surgeries carry some risk. What specific complications and side effects are likely?
3. Is there a nonsurgical treatment available? Medication, diet or special exercises might help as much as surgery.
4. What happens if I don't have

surgery? Will things get worse? Might they get better?

5. Are pre-op tests needed? If so, what's involved, who'll do them and when?

6. What type of anesthesia will be used? Different anesthesia is used for different operations. Most people have no problem with anesthesia, but you should understand the risks.

7. How much pain can I expect, and what will be done to control it? Pain is surgery's most common side effect, the American Medical Association reports.

8. When can I return to normal activities?

9. How much will it cost? In addition to the surgeon's fee, expect bills from the hospital, the anesthesiologist and other medical professionals. Call your insurance company before surgery and ask how much will be covered. If you can't afford the difference, talk to your surgeon.

10. Where can I get more information? The American College of Surgeons offers free pamphlets on a number of surgical procedures. Check online at www.facs.org.

Additional sources: American College of Surgeons; National Institute on Aging



Searching for answers?
www.mplex.org > Wellness > Health Information Library

HEALTH SCENE is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of METROPLEX HEALTH SYSTEM, 2201 S. Clear Creek Road, Killeen, TX 76549 (254) 526-7523, www.mplex.org.

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PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE

A pain in the leg

A STROLL AROUND THE BLOCK or through a shopping mall may be easy for some people. For others it's a pain in the leg. And that's not a good sign.

Discomfort when you walk for even a short distance could be a symptom of peripheral arterial disease (PAD).

PAD is a serious medical condition. However, it can be treated with lifestyle changes, medications and, if necessary, angioplasty or surgery, according to Alan T. Hirsch, M.D., founding president of the Vascular Disease Foundation.

Many people don't recognize its symptoms as being due to a blood vessel disease that can be successfully treated with medical therapy, Dr. Hirsch says.

BEHIND THE PAIN

PAD is a sign that blood flow to any part of the body beyond the heart may be blocked. However, PAD usually reveals itself when circulation of blood in a leg is partially blocked by the buildup of plaque or calcium on artery walls.

This process, known as atherosclerosis, can take years to develop, so it is more common as people enter their 50s and 60s.

Reduced blood flow in the legs, called claudication, often causes fatigue, numbness, cramping or severe pain in the calf, thigh or hip muscles when you exercise. Stopping for a short rest usually relieves these symptoms. However, once you resume exercise, the discomfort returns.

PAD can also cause numbness, weakness or heaviness in the legs without pain. Feet and toes may burn or ache even while you are lying down. Many people with PAD lose much ability to function before they see a doctor, Dr. Hirsch says.

TESTING IS PAINLESS

The PAD management committee sponsored by the American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association and other professional societies endorses testing for people who:

- Have discomfort in their leg muscles during exertion.
- Have wounds that don't heal on their feet and legs.
- Are 50 or older, with diabetes or a history of smoking.
- Are younger than 50, with diabetes and any additional risk factors.

"The more risk factors you have, the more likelihood that screening for PAD

To learn more about the PAD screening at Metroplex Imaging, call **519-8200**.

will be beneficial," Dr. Hirsch says.

The ankle-brachial index, or ABI, test is used to detect PAD. This test is available at Metroplex Imaging; to learn more, please call **519-8200**.

If PAD is found and a procedure to

open the arteries is needed, ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging or computerized tomography can more precisely locate the blocked area of the artery.

REDUCING YOUR RISK

PAD is a major risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Anything you do to reduce the risk of PAD will also help protect you from heart attack and stroke. For example, quitting smoking, getting regular exercise and eating a healthy diet low in fat and salt are usually recommended if you're at risk for cardiovascular disease or PAD, or if you have diabetes.

Get tested?

To learn your risk for peripheral arterial disease (PAD), circle a yes or no answer.

1. Do you have high blood pressure, or have you had a heart attack or stroke?

YES NO

2. Do you have diabetes?

YES NO

3. Does a parent or sibling have a history of diabetes or cardiovascular problems?

YES NO

4. Do you feel aching, cramping or pain in your legs when you walk or exercise, but the pain goes away when you stop to rest?

YES NO

5. Is your lifestyle inactive?

YES NO

6. Do you smoke?

YES NO

7. Have you ever smoked?

YES NO

8. Are you more than 25 pounds overweight?

YES NO

TOTALS: YES ___ NO ___

The more "yes" answers, the more important it is to see a doctor, who may recommend testing for PAD.

Adapted with permission, Society of Interventional Radiology, Legs for Life.



HEALTHY HEART

What's in the numbers

Numbers, numbers, too many numbers—phones, Social Security, PIN. If you have trouble remembering these, then focus on five that really matter, for the sake of your health.

Numbers to learn—and learn to control—for a healthier, longer life are these: blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, body mass index (BMI) and waist measurement.

“Knowing those levels, knowing what they should be and achieving them is a pivotal first step toward outliving heart disease,” says Richard Stein, M.D., a cardiologist and spokesman for the American Heart Association.

Let's look at each one.

BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure is the force blood places on artery walls when the heart beats (systolic pressure, the first number) and when it rests (diastolic pressure, the second number).

“[High] blood pressure is clearly associated with the risk of heart attack and stroke,” says Roger S. Blumenthal, M.D., a cardiologist and spokesman for the American College of Cardiology.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms, making regular blood pressure checks crucial.

Blood pressure should be checked at each doctor's visit—at least every five years for most people in their 20s and 30s, Dr. Blumenthal says. Since high blood pressure becomes more common as people age, he suggests more frequent checks as people get older.

A normal blood pressure reading is 119 mm Hg systolic or lower and 79 mm Hg diastolic or lower. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is defined as 140/90 mm Hg or higher. Numbers between normal and high are considered prehypertension.

To manage elevated blood pressure, focus on eating fruits, vegetables and nonfat or low-fat dairy products. Moderate your consumption of total fats, and limit saturated fats and cholesterol. Limit sodium intake to no more than the equivalent of about a teaspoon per day. Maintain a healthy weight, and lose weight if you need to. At the same time, work up to at least 30 minutes of brisk exercise each day.

CHOLESTEROL

Cholesterol is a fatlike substance in the blood that's involved in several important functions, such as building cell walls, aiding digestion and producing hormones.

“We have decades' worth of data that [show that] high cholesterol values are associated with increased risk of heart attack and stroke,” Dr. Blumenthal says.

The Metroplex monthly health screening includes blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and BMI checks. Call 519-8200 for more details.

The two main types of cholesterol—low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL)—play different roles.

LDL, or bad, cholesterol can form fatty deposits inside arteries that nourish the heart or brain. Blocked heart or brain arteries can cause a heart attack or stroke.



IT'S YOUR MOVE

Activity benefits the heart

If exercise were a pill, nearly everyone would want to take it.

Exercise is one of the best things you can do for your heart. It helps reduce total cholesterol, lower blood pressure and cut the risk of diabetes, and it helps you maintain a healthy weight.

Experts offer these ideas for getting started:

- Start slowly, especially if you haven't been active for a while. Don't try to make up for your previous inactivity all at once.
- Schedule exercise at the same time each day so that it becomes a habit.
- Work up to whatever amount of activity your doctor recommends. The American Heart Association says most people should get at least 30 minutes of exercise most or all days of the week.
- Keep things interesting by trying different activities. Walking, biking or swimming can be fun, but so can working in the garden.
- Exercise with a friend or a family member, or take an exercise class.
- Stop exercising if you have severe pain or swelling, but expect a little muscle soreness at first.
- If you have to stop exercising for a while, don't get discouraged. Just start over again and work up to your previous level.

Keeping active is one of the best things you can do for your heart. Exercise can help you maintain a healthy weight, reduce total cholesterol and lower blood pressure, among other benefits.

HDL, or good, cholesterol helps clear arteries of these deposits.

Generally, the lower the LDL number, the better. The American Heart Association says an LDL of less than 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL) of blood is optimal, 130 to 159 mg/dL is borderline high and anything above that is high.

Since HDL helps protect against heart disease, higher numbers are better. Men have an average HDL of 40 to 50 mg/dL, while women average between 50 and 60 mg/dL. Levels below 40 mg/dL are considered low for both men and women and increase the risk of heart disease.

If you need to lower your LDL, eat a diet low in saturated fats and cholesterol, manage your weight and exercise. If these changes alone aren't enough, medications may help.

If you need to raise your HDL, focus on exercising for at least 30 to 60 minutes a day on most or all days of the week. Losing weight if you're overweight and not smoking can also help.

BLOOD SUGAR

After a meal, food is broken down into a sugar called glucose, which is carried by the blood to nourish the body's cells.

Continued on page 6



SIGN UP NOW! Our "Tune-Up" Health Screening gives you vital information about your health status. Space is limited. See the calendar on page 8 for more details.

Continued from page 5

Too much glucose in the blood damages nerves and blood vessels, which can lead to heart disease. A person with high glucose levels has diabetes.

“Higher blood sugar readings are clearly associated with hardening of the arteries and an increased risk for heart attack or stroke,” Dr. Blumenthal says.

Two common tests can determine blood sugar levels: the fasting plasma glucose (FPG) test and the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT).

Both tests measure blood sugar after an eight-hour fast. With OGTT, however, a second measurement is taken two hours after you swallow a special glucose beverage. FPG is more convenient; OGTT is more sensitive.

A normal FPG is 99 mg/dL or below. Anything above 125 mg/dL is considered diabetes. Readings of 100 mg/dL to 125 mg/dL are considered pre-diabetes.

A normal OGTT reading is 139 mg/dL and below. Anything above 199 mg/dL is diabetes. Readings of 140 mg/dL to 199 mg/dL are considered pre-diabetes.

Lifestyle changes that help control blood sugar are similar to those that help manage high blood pressure and cholesterol—namely, weight loss if you’re overweight; a low-fat, low-calorie diet; and regular exercise. If these measures fall short, your doctor may prescribe medications.

BMI AND WAIST MEASUREMENT

BMI is a calculation that evaluates weight relative to height to determine whether you’re of normal weight, overweight or obese. Likewise, a larger waist circumference usually means more body fat.

“We have a lot of data that people with elevated waist circumference are more apt to develop diabetes and heart disease,” Dr. Blumenthal says. “Higher BMIs are also associated with greater risk of heart attack and stroke.”

A BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 is considered healthy. Between 25 and 29.9 is overweight, while 30 and above is obese. Waist circumference becomes a health concern when it exceeds 40 inches for a man or 35 inches for a woman.

Calculate your BMI. Find your BMI at www.mplex.org; click on “Wellness,” then “Health Information Library” and select the topic “Weight Management.” Like controlling your other numbers, bringing your BMI and waist measurement down involves proper diet and exercise.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

While medications may also be needed—especially if you have diabetes or have had a heart attack—“lifestyle management is always the first option,” Dr. Blumenthal says.

Dr. Stein agrees. “There is no question that for most of us, modifying our lifestyle to be more active and eat less is a critical thing to do if we want to enjoy the benefits of a long life.”

MORE >> To learn more about heart health, visit our Web site at www.mplex.org and click on “Wellness,” then “Health Information Library.”



Radiologist Frederick Barnett, M.D., is a national leader in 64-slice CT technology.

Local radiologist leads use of CT imaging for heart disease diagnosis

Metroplex Hospital and Frederick Barnett, M.D., have gained national recognition in the latest imaging technology, specifically the use of 64-slice CT (computerized tomography) for cardioangiography. The two were featured in a recent cover story of *Diagnostic Imaging* magazine, and Metroplex is now a featured site for Toshiba to promote the use of CT angiography.

Dr. Barnett, who has worked as a radiologist at Metroplex Hospital for 11 years, shares his expertise with radiologists around the country, teaching them how to accurately use the new CT technology. He also works as a faculty member at Louisiana State University and lectures nationwide for Toshiba America Medical Systems Speakers’ Bureau.

CT angiography provides a noninvasive means of identifying and diagnosing coronary artery disease.

“The 64-slice scanner has the potential to change cardiovascular medicine with its outstanding image quality, acquisition speed and advanced cardiac applications,” says Dr. Barnett. “Coronary CT angiography should precede nearly every diagnostic cardiac catheterization.”

One of these noninvasive studies provides reliable information quickly, improving overall patient care and reducing morbidity and costs.

“We have a long way to go before we have utilized this technology to its full potential,” says Dr. Barnett. “The capabilities are phenomenal, and we have not even scratched the surface.”

HOME

Health care comes

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE the comfort of your own home when you're sick, disabled or recovering from a stay in the hospital.

That's part of what makes home health care appealing.

"Home care can provide a variety of medical services in your own home," says Karen Voegele, R.N., director of Home Care of Metroplex.

We teach you how to function best at home. Every aspect of your care matters to us.

Home health services may include:

- Medical or nursing assistance.
- Physical, speech and occupational therapy.
- Pain management.
- Help with personal needs, such as bathing.
- Financial assistance and long-term planning with a medical social worker.

Home health benefits many people—children or adults with disabilities, people recovering from illness or injury, and people who are chronically or terminally ill.

SERVICE AT YOUR DOOR

Our team of home health care professionals provides specially trained medical experts who work closely with your physician to develop an individual plan of care and patient education tailored to your needs.

We understand the conflicting need for independence and the limitations of illness, and teach you how to function best at home.

Every aspect of your care matters to us. We select only the highest trained staff and treat you with compassion, dignity and respect at all times. We have been a Christian-based, not-for-profit organization since 1993, and we are

committed to meeting your physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

Advantages of using our services include:

- Provides an alternative to nursing home placement.
- Offers more privacy.
- Family members can participate in care.
- Provides individualized education and personal attention.
- It may reduce hospital stay.
- It may reduce cost.

CHOOSING A PROVIDER

The first step to finding a home health care provider is to determine the services you need. Next, ask your doctor, hospital discharge planner, family or friends to recommend a local agency.

To find a reputable organization, Voegele advises that you check to be sure that the agency has the required state licenses and certifications.

You'll also want to ask the following:



An appealing part of home health care is that it can bring a variety of services right to your door.

- How long has the agency been serving the community?
- How are emergencies handled?
- Does the agency provide a substitute when the regular caregiver is ill or on vacation?

How can we help you? To learn more, call Home Care of Metroplex at 518-1380 or 1-800-926-7664, or visit www.mplex.org.



Who pays for home health care?

When researching home health care agencies, be sure to find out how the costs will be covered. Depending on the services provided, the cost may be paid by:

- Medicare, Medicaid and most private third-party payers. These include private health insurance companies, managed care organizations, insurance for military retirees and their dependents, and workers' compensation. If you have Medicare and meet certain conditions, 100 percent of your skilled-care services are covered.
- Self-pay. In this case, you negotiate a fee with your home health care provider and pay privately for services.

Before arranging for home health care, check with your insurance to see what services are covered. If you have Medicare, keep in mind that you will need to meet certain conditions to have home health services covered. To learn more, go to www.medicare.gov and type "home health care" in the search box.

FOR YOUR HEALTH

For information or to sign up, call today!
519-8200



Exercise

Arthritis Exercise Class

A certified instructor will lead chair exercises to help people with arthritis move their way to feeling better!

Tuesdays, 3 to 4 p.m. FREE
Metroplex Medical Arts Building
1003 Medical Drive, Killeen

Senior Exercise Class

Ages 55 and up! Achieve better health with this low-impact, weekly class lead by Metroplex therapists. Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

Thursdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. FREE
Metroplex Medical Arts Building
1003 Medical Drive, Killeen

CPR

Heartsaver CPR

Basic cardiac life support for non-health care personnel. Includes infant, child and adult CPR techniques and airway obstruction management.

Friday, Sept. 29
8 a.m. to noon \$25

Reservations are required. Payment is due in advance.

First Aid

Covers medical, trauma, and environmental emergencies and principles of care. You must be CPR-certified to take this class.

Friday, Sept. 29
1 to 4 p.m. \$25

Reservations are required. Payment is due in advance.

Screenings and Classes

Childbirth Class

This four-session course covers prenatal care, labor, delivery and postnatal care. Support people are encouraged to attend.

Mondays, 7 to 9 p.m. \$10

(\$45 if delivering at a different hospital)
Reservations are required; call **519-8200**.

Parenting—Back to the Basics

Ronald Coleman, D.O., will lead this series of parenting classes on numerous topics.

FREE

Please call **698-6629** for reservations and more information.

Diabetes Education

Gain a better understanding of diabetes and how you

can control your blood sugar through healthy lifestyle habits.

Thursdays, Sept. 28, Oct. 26
Noon to 5 p.m. FREE

To register, call **519-8380**.

Events

American Red Cross Blood Drive

Give the gift of life by donating blood. The Red Cross Bloodmobile will be parked in front of Metroplex Hospital's main entrance area. Open to the public.

Call 519-8200 for dates.
Noon to 5:30 p.m.

Support Groups

Alzheimer's Support Group

Second Wednesday of the month
1:30 p.m.

Indian Oaks Living Center
To learn more, call Marisa Coleman at **699-5051**.

Breast Cancer Support Group

First and Third Thursday of each month

Call **288-8845** to learn more.

Diabetes Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month
7 p.m.

Call **542-5177** to learn more.

Dialogue Cancer Support Group

Second Tuesday of each month
1 p.m.

Metroplex Pavilion Board Room
Call **547-0305** to learn more.

Greater Killeen Free Clinic

Open every Monday and Thursday
Patient Screening, 3:30 to 5 p.m.

Call **519-0763** to learn more.

Hope Pregnancy Centers, Inc.

Parenting Classes—Killeen and Copperas Cove. Designed for both mothers and fathers.

Call **519-3343** or **518-HOPE (518-4673)** to learn more.

Juvenile Diabetes Support Group

Second Thursday of each month
7 p.m.

Call **542-5177** to learn more.

La Leche League Support Group

First Thursday of each month
7 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Copperas Cove
Call **220-1807** to learn more.

Overeaters Anonymous

Every Tuesday
5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Copperas Cove
Call **690-2943** to learn more.

'Tune-Up' Health Screening

Give your body a tune-up by letting us check your cholesterol, glucose, blood pressure and body fat composition. Get your results before you leave! Appointments are recommended—call **519-8200**. Wednesdays, Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1
9 to 11 a.m. \$5

You can sign up for classes online.
Visit www.mplex.org.



REACH US

Metroplex Health System

Metroplex Hospital (254) 526-7523
Human Resources (254) 519-8184
Community Relations (254) 519-8200



Need a doctor?

Physician finder hotline
(254) 519-8200

Check out our Web site

www.mplex.org



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