

Health Connection

A PUBLICATION OF WOODLAND HEIGHTS MEDICAL CENTER

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physician's visit**

Tame the burn
Your options for
chronic heartburn

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new surgeon**



The vein truth

How to keep your blood flowing

Normally, you don't think about them much. Your veins are just there, transporting blood to your heart from other organs and tissues on a daily basis. But when veins become visible, painful or begin affecting your health, you can't ignore them any longer.

WHEN GOOD VEINS GO BAD

Two conditions that you may encounter are:

- **Varicose veins.** When one-way valves in the veins fail to keep blood moving forward, the blood pools, causing swelling. That leaves you with bulging, twisting veins located just under the surface of the skin. While they rarely cause symptoms, varicose veins can lead to pain, blood clots and skin ulcers. You have a greater chance of developing varicose veins if you have a family history of varicose veins or are older, a woman, pregnant, overweight or obese or inactive. Varicose veins can be treated by procedures or surgery, including laser surgery, where laser light energy fades veins.
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT).** DVT is a blood clot that forms in a vein deep within the body, usually in the lower legs or thighs. It can cause a serious problem called pulmonary embolism, which occurs when the clot breaks free and travels to the lungs. Sitting for a long time can increase your risk of getting a blood clot, as can having

surgery and taking hormone therapy or other medications. Symptoms of DVT include pain, swelling, skin redness and warmth and tenderness over the vein. Your physician may prescribe anti-clotting medications to treat DVT.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

You can take steps to help reduce your risk of vein problems, or help you manage if you already have them. To keep veins in their place:

- **Get moving.** Exercise can help blood move through veins.
- **Avoid sitting or standing for too long.** Don't cross your legs, and if you can, raise your legs above the level of your heart when sitting or resting. If you've had surgery, get moving as soon as possible afterward.
- **Lose weight.** This will help blood flow and take some of the pressure off your veins.
- **Toss your tight clothes.** Don't wear anything that's tight around your waist, groin or legs, as it can cut off blood flow.
- **Skip the stilettos, ladies.** Low heels can help tone calf muscles, which can get blood moving through your veins.
- **Ask your physician about compression stockings.** They can help keep blood from pooling and reduce leg swelling.
- **Get up and walk around while traveling.** If traveling by car, try to stop every hour for a walking break.

Medicine cabinet makeover

Taking stock can keep your family healthy

Is your medicine cabinet a disaster area, a catchall for old medications, unlabeled bottles and other hazards? If you answered yes, a good cleaning at least once a year is recommended.

So where do you start? First, move all your medicine out of the medicine cabinet, since it's not recommended that you store medicine in the bathroom. Bathrooms are humid places, and that humidity can make your medicines less effective, or, in extreme cases, toxic. Instead, find a cool, dry place to keep your medicines.

Next, get rid of any medication that's expired. However, don't throw it down the toilet, which poses an environmental risk. Instead, throw old drugs in the trash, taking care to mix them with kitty litter or coffee grounds to make them less attractive to children and pets.

Also, make sure to keep medication in its original container, which contains important information like when the drug expires, how much to take, possible drug interactions and who it was prescribed for. Don't leave that cotton plug in any bottles either, as it can draw moisture into the bottle.

Here are some things you may have in your cabinet that deserve a closer look:



Clean out your medicine cabinet at least once a year to keep your family healthy and safe.

SYRUP OF IPECAC. It used to be recommended to make a child throw up if he or she had swallowed poison. However, there's no evidence it works and it may actually cause other treatments to fail. Throw it out! Instead, call poison control in an emergency.

COUGH AND COLD MEDICINE. It's not recommended for kids younger than age 4. And never give a child an adult-strength medication, as it could cause a serious reaction.

ASPIRIN. It's safe for most adults, but if you have kids, be extra careful. Aspirin's been linked to a rare

condition called Reye's syndrome, which can cause brain damage and liver function problems in children and teens, especially those taking the drug to treat chickenpox or the flu. Instead, keep other pain relievers and fever reducers, like acetaminophen and ibuprofen, on hand.

UNUSED ANTIBIOTICS. Don't save them for later or give them to another person. Get rid of them.

THERMOMETERS. If they break, old mercury thermometers can expose you to toxic mercury. Use an oral thermometer for older kids; choose an axillary (under the armpit) or rectal one for younger children.

FROM US TO YOU



Casey Robertson
Chief Executive
Officer

Dear friends,

We're lucky to live in a community with a nationally recognized quality hospital. A community needs a strong, coordinated health care delivery system. That's why Woodland Heights Medical Center (WHMC) has partnered with Lufkin EMS to provide better heart care.

Recently, WHMC presented Lufkin EMS with a donation of four 12-lead electrocardiography (EKG) machines. This equipment will enable Lufkin

EMS to implement a prehospital EKG program and wirelessly transmit lifesaving data to the emergency room. The goal is faster diagnosis and treatment of severe cardiac problems in the field as well as at the hospital.

Severe cardiac issues are the leading cause of sudden cardiac death in the United States, and this donation will help save the lives of East Texans. No one ever wants to need this equipment, but it's comforting knowing it's there. WHMC is proud to be a leader in cardiac care and to offer this technology for you and your loved ones.

Best wishes,
CASEY ROBERTSON
Chief Executive Officer
Woodland Heights Medical Center

PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

The experienced, dedicated medical staff members at Woodland Heights Medical Center (WHMC) can help keep your family healthy. We'd like to introduce you to one of them.



JASON CARTER, M.D.
Orthopedics

Texas Specialist Center
208 Gaslight Blvd.
Lufkin
(936) 634-8800

WHMC is pleased to have Jason Carter, M.D., orthopedic surgeon, on its orthopedic team. Dr. Carter joined the Texas Specialist Center in summer 2009. Originally from Lufkin, he earned his medical degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and completed his residency specializing in orthopedic surgery at Scott and White Hospital in Temple.

To find a physician, visit
www.woodlandheights.net.

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FOR QUESTIONS, E-MAIL US AT HEALTHY_WOMAN@CHS.NET

Make the most of your physician's visit



By Chantal Culpepper, M.D.
Board Certified in
Family Practice

Visiting the physician can be intimidating. No matter how prepared you think you are, many factors can determine how you feel about the quality and outcome of a visit. A little planning and asking the right questions, however, can make your visit more productive.

Most of us prepare for a physician's visit in much the same way: checking with our health insurance company to determine coverage, co-payments and necessary referrals; making sure we have insurance cards; and, if our visit is problem-focused, researching symptoms. But it's also important to come with questions.

Although communication styles vary, your physician is there to serve your interests and to make sure you're informed. But your physician isn't a mind reader, so be prepared with questions or concerns. Remember that you and your physician are partners in your health care. Your participation is important to determine how successful your visit will be. Here are a few tips for making your next visit productive:

- **Prepare in advance.** Keep a medical journal at home that includes a record of questions, eating habits, exercise routines, over-the-counter and prescription medications (including dosage) and herbal supplements, as well as symptoms with descriptions and dates/times.
- **Ask questions.** During your physician's visit, don't be



afraid to ask for specifics. Ask your physician what your exact diagnosis is, the recommended treatment plan and when he or she would like to see you again (or if a visit to a specialist is needed). Also ask your physician to explain things in easy-to-understand terms.

- **Be candid.** Don't be shy about discussing sensitive topics. Include complete details about your medical history.
- **Educate yourself.** Ask your physician about additional reading materials or resources that pertain to your questions, condition, upcoming tests or procedures.
- **Talk about next steps.** Discuss next steps: symptoms that warrant follow-up; when your symptoms will subside and you can expect to feel better; any recommended lifestyle, activity level or dietary changes; side effects or prescribed medication(s); and what to expect from an ordered test or procedure.

Be an involved and informed health care consumer. Being prepared—and knowing how to talk with your physician—will help you make the most of your time there and gain maximum benefit.

! Schedule an appointment

Chantal Culpepper, M.D., is a board-certified family practice physician and is accepting new patients. Her office is located at 517 N. Brentwood Drive in Lufkin next to Sam's Club. Call (936) 637-5970 to schedule your appointment.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **diabetes**?

Take this quiz to find out.



CURB YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Every year, more than a million Americans have heart attacks, and about 500,000 die from heart disease. One of the major risk factors for such heart trouble is high cholesterol. This fatlike substance builds up in your arteries and slows or blocks blood flow to the heart.

Some experts recommend that you start cholesterol testing by age 20; others say to start at age 35. Using a simple blood test called a lipoprotein profile, your physician can determine if your cholesterol levels are too high. Here's what's considered healthy:

>**Total cholesterol:** less than 200 mg/dL

>**LDL (bad) cholesterol:** less than 100 mg/dL is optimal; 100 to 129 mg/dL is near optimal/above optimal

>**HDL (good) cholesterol:** 60 mg/dL or higher may protect the heart; less than 40 mg/dL for men (less than 50 for women) puts you at a greater risk for heart problems

>**Triglycerides (another type of blood fat):** less than 150 mg/dL

WORK ON IT

Are your levels higher than they should be? You can often make a big impact on your cholesterol by making a few small changes:

- **Cut back on saturated fat and cholesterol.** The American Heart Association recommends that you keep your saturated fat consumption to less than 7 percent of your total daily calories. So if you consume about 2,000 calories a day, no more than 140 of them should come from saturated fat, or about 16 grams a day. Avoid trans fats and stock up on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, walnuts, almonds).

- **Get active.** Engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes daily.

- **Lose weight.** Being active and revamping your diet can help. Dropping even 5 to 10 pounds can lower cholesterol.

- **Quit smoking.**

- **Follow your physician's advice.** That includes taking medication, if needed.

1 Which of the following is not a symptom of type 2 diabetes?

- a. fatigue
- b. increased hunger
- c. difficulty urinating
- d. slow wound healing

2 Having diabetes can increase your chances of developing:

- a. glaucoma
- b. digestive problems
- c. gingivitis
- d. all of the above

3 Your physician may diagnose you with diabetes by performing a:

- a. thyroid test
- b. glucose test
- c. complete blood count
- d. none of the above

4 According to the National Institutes of Health, what percentage of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight?

- a. 60
- b. 70
- c. 80
- d. 90

5 Which of these statements about diabetes is true?

- a. You don't have to avoid sweets and chocolate.
- b. You'll eventually develop it if you're overweight.
- c. It makes you more likely to get colds or other illnesses.
- d. Eating too much sugar can cause it.

ANSWERS: 1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (b) 4. (c) 5. (a)

Flu, flu, go away!

It's fall again, and with the changing of the seasons often comes the dreaded flu. Recently, the seasonal flu has been upstaged somewhat by H1N1. Both strains are serious, may lead to complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis and can result in hospitalization and even death.

You can't always keep flu out of your home, but you can certainly reduce the risk of getting infected. Try these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- **Get vaccinated.** This year, the seasonal flu vaccine comprises three strains of flu including H1N1. It's especially important for pregnant women; young children; people older than 65; people who have chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease; and others at high risk for complications.
- **Play defense.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue out; wash

your hands often (use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available); keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth; avoid close contact with sick people; and stay away from crowds during a flu outbreak. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

- **Take your medicine.** If you get sick, your physician may recommend an antiviral drug to make the symptoms milder, shorten the time you're sick and prevent complications.



5 must-eat foods

Despite what you might read on the Internet, there's no magic food to prevent disease or cure you of all your ills. However, certain foods are high in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and, when combined with an overall healthy diet, may help you maintain good health. Consider adding these good, and good-for-you, foods to your diet:

1 Blueberries. Blueberries have plenty of fiber and vitamins A and C, and they may improve short-term memory. Add them to cereal or yogurt for a tart kick.



2 Sardines. Those little fish canned in oil pack a powerful nutrient punch, supplying plenty of protein, calcium and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins B12 and D. Try them in sandwiches, salads or sauces.

3 Almonds. Thanks to good fats, vitamin E and fiber, almonds are exceptionally good for your heart. Grab a small handful daily or sprinkle them on a salad.



4 Red beans. They're high in potassium, iron and magnesium (not to mention low in fat and an excellent source of protein), and may play a role in preventing heart disease and some forms of cancer. Try adding them to stews instead of meat.

5 Sweet potatoes. That orange color is due to loads of beta carotene, which may help slow the aging process. Sweet potatoes also provide vitamins B6, C and E; folate; and potassium. Try them baked or sliced into wedges for another take on french fries.

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FALL 2010



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Eat, drink and be wary

Chronic heartburn may indicate a more serious disorder

We've all been guilty of overindulging and then suffering the discomfort afterward. Sometimes, the pain after eating too much is more severe than the typical gas, bloating or indigestion (heartburn)—or it happens frequently and is hard to control with over-the-counter remedies. Other times, heartburn has nothing to do with what we've eaten.

Twenty percent of Americans experience heartburn (the pain in the chest that we feel after overeating) at least once a week. While it's common, frequent indigestion may indicate a serious health problem known as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), severe or chronic acid reflux that can lead to sleep disorders, esophageal bleeding or ulcers and cancer.

Heartburn is caused by stomach acid backing up into the esophagus, the muscular tube that carries food from the throat to the stomach. Acid reflux can also be triggered by medications, exercise, obesity, pregnancy, stress, certain sleeping positions or chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or a hernia.

The signs of heartburn and GERD are similar, with the difference lying in the frequency and severity of symptoms:

- difficulty swallowing
- coughing and wheezing
- sore throat or hoarseness
- a sensation of having a lump in your throat
- a burning sensation in the chest
- chest pain, particularly while lying down at night



! Forget the burn

For tips about heartburn management, signs of GERD and treatment options, visit www.woodlandheights.net and click on "Health Resources."

When medications fail to relieve GERD, surgery is an option. Recently, general surgeons Darryl Meyer, D.O., and Greg DeArmond, M.D., were trained on the new transoral incisionless fundoplication (TIF) procedure. This process reduces hiatal hernia and creates a valve between the stomach and esophagus, restoring your natural anatomy to prevent reflux. TIF offers an excellent alternative to people suffering with daily reflux: There's less pain, shorter recovery and no visible scar.

Attend a free seminar!

To sign up for our next free GERD seminar with Drs. Meyer and DeArmond, call (936) 699-CARE.