

about your health

GOOD NEIGHBORS. GOOD HEALTH. SPRING 2006



Jump Around: YOUR KEY TO STRONG BONES

In one study published in the British Medical Journal, women who performed about 1½ hours of running or other high-impact exercise each week had thicker bones than women who performed no such activities. This difference in bone size was enough to reduce the risk of hip fracture by 12 percent. In contrast, women who exercised but chose low- to moderate-impact exercises, like cycling and gardening, saw no bone benefit.

Healthy women are encouraged to maintain good bone health with high-impact workouts, including step aerobics, tennis, basketball and volleyball. However, older women with osteoporosis should avoid these activities.

Durham Regional Hospital offers all-inclusive orthopedic services, including musculoskeletal care, total joint arthroplasty and treatment and rehabilitation for sports injuries, trauma or complex spine conditions. If you would like to locate one of our orthopedists in your area, call 919-403-4DRH (4374). ■

inside ▶



Heart Health **2**



Doctor Q&A **3**



OB Services **4**



Event Calendar **5**

Do You Have an Irregular Heartbeat?

From time to time, your heart may “flutter” when you’re excited, nervous or exercising hard. And if your heart’s off-beat—also called an arrhythmia—goes away as quickly as it came about, it might seem like no cause for concern. But the whole picture is a little more complicated. That’s why it’s a good idea to know when that fleeting flutter may be putting your health at risk.

A Circuitry Problem with Many Possible Causes

In order to have a healthy, regular heartbeat—about 60 to 100 beats a minute—the heart’s four chambers must work in harmony with one another. A heartbeat is produced when an electrical signal travels through these

chambers. If something goes wrong with this signal, your heartbeat may speed up, slow down or seem out of sync.

While an arrhythmia can strike anyone at any age, the condition is particularly common among older adults. The cause is often unclear. But experts have found that an arrhythmia can sometimes result from:

- heart disease
- stress
- caffeine
- tobacco
- alcohol
- cough and cold medicines

When Arrhythmias Spell Danger

An irregular heartbeat is often harmless and needs no treatment. But sometimes it signals a larger problem that can be too dangerous to ignore. An arrhythmia that happens on a regular basis, for instance, will need a doctor’s



did you know?

A thick waistline ups your heart disease risk. A healthy measurement for women is 31 inches or less. Men should aim for 34 inches or less

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attention. And don't wait to get help if you find that your irregular heartbeat occurs with any of the following:

- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- fainting
- light-headedness
- fatigue

It is also important to talk to your doctor if you have a history of heart disease and have noticed that you sometimes have an irregular heartbeat.

Ways to Treat the Beat

Treatments aimed at correcting an irregular heartbeat depend on the type of arrhythmia that you have. If you suffer from an irregular heartbeat, these tips may help you manage the condition:

- Try to reduce emotional stress.
- Avoid excessive amounts of salt, caffeine and alcohol.
- Visit your doctor for regular checkups.
- Talk to your doctor about strategies for keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol at healthy levels. ■



Durham Regional Hospital, in partnership with Duke University Medical Center, now offers electrophysiology services, including implantable cardioverter defibrillators, biventricular pacing and electrophysiology studies, which are used to evaluate the electrical system in the heart. Consultations are available at the offices of Triangle Heart Associates by calling 919-220-5510.

Q&A

Does the flu shot really work?

The flu shot is very effective at preventing many of the most severe and common forms of flu in existence in any given year. But there are always new viruses in any community that produce many of the same symptoms that are not covered by the vaccine. Therefore, getting the vaccine is extremely helpful but is not a guarantee that you won't get sick over the winter with a viral illness.

Besides the flu shot, what other ways can I prevent the flu?

A good line of defense is to wash your hands with soap and water—a lot! You also can use an alcohol-based hand cleaner if water and soap are not nearby. Be sure to wash your

hands if you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth and stay away from people who are sick.

What should I do if I get the flu?

Get plenty of rest and fluids. Aspirin or ibuprofen can be taken to relieve symptoms. Talk with your doctor right away if your fever goes above 103 degrees, you have chest pain or begin coughing up thick mucus.



Edward LaMay, MD, is Chief Medical Officer for Durham Regional Hospital.

To find a physician, visit www.durhamregional.org.

Weight Loss Surgery Offers Hope and Help

Americans today face a serious health concern. Research suggests that more than 60 percent of adults in the U.S. are either overweight or obese. The best approach to weight loss combines a healthy diet with regular exercise. Other smart lifestyle choices—such as keeping a food diary—also can help.

Bariatric surgery is a highly effective surgical solution for those who weigh at least 100 pounds more than their ideal weight. This type of surgery can restrict how much food the patient can eat by limiting the size of the stomach or by-passing it. In general, patients can expect to lose 25 to 70 percent of their excess weight three to five years after surgery.

Duke University Health System Weight Loss Surgery Center presents a **free** informational seminar about bariatric surgery most Fridays from 3 to 5 pm at Durham Regional Hospital in the First Level Classroom. During the seminar, surgical team members explain the center's comprehensive approach to surgical weight loss. **Call 919-660-2229** to register. Registration is required.

Surprises in Pregnancy

A few surprises along the way are normal for every pregnancy. What's not normal is when surprises put the health of the baby and mother at risk.

When Mom Has a Health Condition

One of the first things doctors want to know is if a mother-to-be has a pre-existing medical condition. Some factors that can complicate a pregnancy are:

- lupus
- asthma
- sickle-cell anemia
- thyroid disease

Age is another factor. Women who will be age 35 or older at the time of delivery are considered high risk. One concern for these expectant mothers is a higher risk of genetic abnormalities than there is with younger moms.

When New Problems Arise

Some health problems can develop during pregnancy and cause complications. Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is a type of diabetes that occurs only in pregnancy. High blood pressure, or preeclampsia, is another concern. Also called "toxemia of pregnancy," it affects up to 4 percent of all pregnancies.

Twins: Why They Can Be Risky

Expecting twins also is considered a high-risk pregnancy. Here are some of the concerns:

- Preeclampsia is three times more common in women expecting twins than in women expecting one child.
- Twins have a higher occurrence of preterm births, which may put babies at a higher risk for complications.



Comprehensive OB Services Available

Durham Regional Hospital offers comprehensive obstetrics, gynecological medical/surgical services and newborn care, including a Level II intensive care nursery. To learn more about The Birth Place at Durham

Regional Hospital or to find a physician who is right for you, visit www.durhamregional.org.

upcoming events

Ladies Night Out

Tuesday, March 7, 7 pm—

Aging Well

Tuesday, April 4, 7 pm—

Healthy Living As a Family

This **free** seminar series helps women stay on top of important health issues. Hosted by area experts on health. To register, call **919-470-6520**.

Shake, Rattle and Roll

Tuesday, February 21, 7 pm—

Pregnancy After 35

Tuesday, March 21, 7 pm—

Making Room for Baby #2

This **free** informational

seminar series covers a variety of parenting issues, including conception, preparation, growth and care. To register, call **919-470-6520**.

The Birth Place Tour

Tuesdays, 7 pm

To help prepare for the safe delivery of your baby, Durham Regional Hospital provides tours of its Labor and Delivery Unit, Postpartum Unit and Nursery. To register, call **919-416-DUKE (3853)**.

Look Good...Feel Better®

Mondays, March 20, April 17,

May 15

6 pm

This free American Cancer Society program teaches women beauty techniques while they undergo chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Participants receive a **free** cosmetics kit and instruction by beauty professionals. Located in the Radiation Oncology Conference Room of Durham Regional Hospital. Space is limited. To register, call **919-470-6520**.

Give Life

Give the gift of life by donating blood to the American Red Cross. Durham Regional Hospital is hosting a blood drive from 10 am to 2:30 pm on Tuesday, April 11. To schedule your appointment, call **919-470-6520**.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Duke Weight Loss Surgery Support Group

Meets once a month. Call **919-660-2229** for dates and to register.

Stroke Survivor Support Group

Meets the second Monday of the month from 1 to 2 pm in Private Dining Room E at Durham Regional Hospital. Contact Myra Williams at **919-660-0096** or **919-470-7205**.



Better health is just a click away! Get a free monthly health briefing via email. Visit www.durhamregional.org to sign up.



MRIs: An Amazing Tour Inside the Body

Doctors can explore the inside of the body like never before thanks to ever-advancing imaging technology. And what they discover helps save countless lives. One of the most commonly used imaging exams is an MRI.

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. MRI uses a strong magnet and radio waves to create pictures of internal tissues and organs. The result: incredibly clear and vivid images.

Like a CT scanner, an MRI machine looks like a huge doughnut. The patient lies on a sliding table that moves into the machine. The entire exam usually takes awhile, up to 90 minutes.

Doctors use MRI to diagnose diseases and injuries in any part of the body. It is the exam of choice for studying the head, spinal cord, heart, kidneys, pancreas and liver, because the images are so detailed.

Because MRI uses a magnet instead of radiation, it's safer than X rays or CT. However, an MRI can cause problems for certain patients. People who have any kind of metal implanted in their bodies—such as a pacemaker—must alert their doctors. People who work with metal may be ineligible because they might carry extremely tiny metal traces in their skin. And because of unknown risks, pregnant women should avoid MRI. ■

did you know?

Durham Regional Hospital offers an array of diagnostic services with state-of-the-art technology in magnetic resonance imaging. To schedule an appointment, call 919-470-6350. A physician referral is required.



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