

Health Connection

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MAT-SU REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

**We have the
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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.



John Lee
Chief Executive Officer

Dear neighbors,

On behalf of our employees, medical staff and volunteers, I want to welcome you to the fall 2010 edition of *Health Connection*. I'm excited about the opportunity to work with our health care professionals and our community to continue to be the choice for health care in the Mat-Su Valley. We're committed to provid-

ing quality care to our patients, and I'm amazed every day by the exceptional care our team provides.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

We strive to build strong physician partnerships and serve as a responsible corporate citizen. Not only do we provide vital community health services, but we also make a significant contribution to the area's economic base by paying state and local taxes and employing or affiliating with hundreds of health care professionals throughout the Mat-Su Valley.

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center is pleased to be such an integral part of the Borough and surrounding communities and a continuing contributor to its

good health. We look forward to serving your health care needs. Thank you for choosing Mat-Su Regional Medical Center.

Sincerely,

JOHN LEE
Chief Executive Officer
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

Link to learn!

A quick stop at www.matsuregional.com can offer you valuable information. Click "Health Resources," and you will find an award-winning online health library that includes 12,000 adult and pediatric topics in English and Spanish. Also available are daily health news headlines, audio podcasts, interactive health assessments, a drug interaction checker and much more.



Visit Healthy Woman Online!

Healthy Woman Online is a free resource to empower women ages 25-65 to make informed health and well-being decisions. Join today to:

- be the first to learn about and sign up for events
- connect with other Healthy Woman members
- receive information about your health, relationships and life issues

To confirm that you want to remain or to become a member of the Healthy Woman program, you must sign up at www.matsuregional.com

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

Sophisticated surgery!

Right in your own backyard



Greg Lund, M.D.
Urologist

Surgeons on Mat-Su Regional Medical Center's medical staff are trained and experienced in many advanced surgical techniques available in Alaska. With recent investments by Mat-Su Regional, they're supported by sophisticated technology, including the da Vinci® robotic system to support minimally invasive prostatectomies; general and gynecologic procedures; and the special operating *hana*® table, which helps surgeons perform muscle-sparing hip-replacement surgery.

In most cases, these advanced procedures offer advantages over traditional surgery:

- significantly less pain
- minimal blood loss and need for transfusion
- fewer complications
- a shorter hospital stay



Mark Lee
Mat-Su patient

- quicker recovery and return to normal activities
- smaller incisions with minimal scarring
- better outcomes and patient satisfaction

DELIVERING RESULTS

Patients are raving about the new procedures. "My robotic-assisted surgery experience was great!" says local real estate agent Mark Lee. "In May of this year, my board-certified urologist, Greg Lund, M.D., recommended a prostatectomy. My father had prostate cancer so I had been watching for signs of the condition. I checked into



We've got you covered!

Surgical specialties covered by physicians on Mat-Su Regional's medical staff include:

- general
- hand
- obstetrics/gynecology
- ophthalmology
- oral and maxillofacial
- orthopedic
- otolaryngology (ear, nose and throat)
- plastic
- podiatry
- urology

the hospital for surgery on a Thursday, was walking in the halls by midnight, went home Friday morning and was back to work on Monday."

Mat-Su Regional is committed to providing advanced technology and a skilled, caring team to support our surgical specialists in providing quality care—whether it's minor or complex surgery.

"Delivering quality patient care is our No. 1 priority," says Chief Executive Officer John Lee. "According to data publicly reported at the end of the first quarter of 2010, patients who were surveyed about their experience during a recent hospital stay ranked Mat-Su Regional highest in composite scores against Providence, Alaska Regional and Alaska Native Medical Center. Tracking quality and satisfaction data, daily attention to improvement and collaboration with physicians have all been keys to our success. It adds up to better health care choices for Valley citizens."

! Find the right physician for you!

Visit www.matsuregional.com or call (907) 861-6855 to learn more about our advanced surgical capabilities, our surgical specialists and other physicians on our medical staff. To receive a Medical Provider Directory, call (907) 861-6849 or e-mail k.aguirre@msrmc.com.

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. (d) 2. (d) 3. (b) 4. (b) 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.

Health Connection is published as a community service of Mat-Su Regional Medical Center. There is no fee to subscribe.

The information contained in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have medical concerns, please consult your health care provider.

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Emergency care, close to home

At Mat-Su Regional Medical Center, we know medical emergencies are stressful. That's why we're helping to change the emergency room (ER) experience. By treating your pain, easing your fears and keeping you informed, we treat you like a person, rather than a condition.

In an effort to provide service you can count on, we've begun a new one-hour rounding schedule. During these rounds, our staff will visit each room about every hour, asking about your condition and needs, checking pain levels, ensuring that your possessions are nearby and keeping you informed.

A FULL STAFF FOR YOU

Mat-Su Regional's Emergency Service Department consists of 19 treatment rooms, each with advanced medical equipment including cardiac monitors and a computer system to track patient vital signs. The ER is staffed with board-certified emergency medicine physicians rigorously trained to handle acute and life-threatening conditions, supported by nurses and hospitalists accredited and experienced in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS), pediatrics and trauma. Full-service laboratory and radiology services also are available 24 hours a day.

Open 24/7, our ER is conveniently located between Palmer and Wasilla at the Trunk Road exit of the Parks Highway for fast and easy access. Our advanced facilities include treatment areas equipped for trauma, cardiac distress and general medical emergencies. With more than 90 physicians on staff, specialists including orthopedic surgeons, neurologists, gynecologists and urologists are on call and available for emergency situations within 30 minutes.



If your medical need isn't quite an emergency, visit the Mat-Su Regional Urgent Care Center at 950 E. Bogard Road in Wasilla. Open every day at 9 a.m., our board-certified family medicine physicians and staff are ready to get you back to your family, work or play.



Is it an emergency?

For help in deciding whether you should choose urgent or emergency care, visit www.matsuregional.com and click on "Emergency Services."