

# Health Connection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY MAT-SU REGIONAL  
MEDICAL CENTER

A handy first-  
response guide  
Clip out this resource

Meet our  
medical staff

Be a Healthy  
Woman!

Smart snacks  
on the go!

5 ways to keep  
your kids healthy



MAT-SU REGIONAL  
MEDICAL CENTER

[www.matsuregional.com](http://www.matsuregional.com)

# Make time for your mammogram

**F**rom salons to restaurants, it seems everything in life requires an appointment or a reservation. But as you set aside time for these little luxuries, don't forget to make one important date: your yearly mammogram.

Mammograms are the most powerful tools in the early detection of breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends every woman 40 or older get a yearly mammogram, although more frequent testing may be required if you've had breast cancer or have a strong history of it in your family.

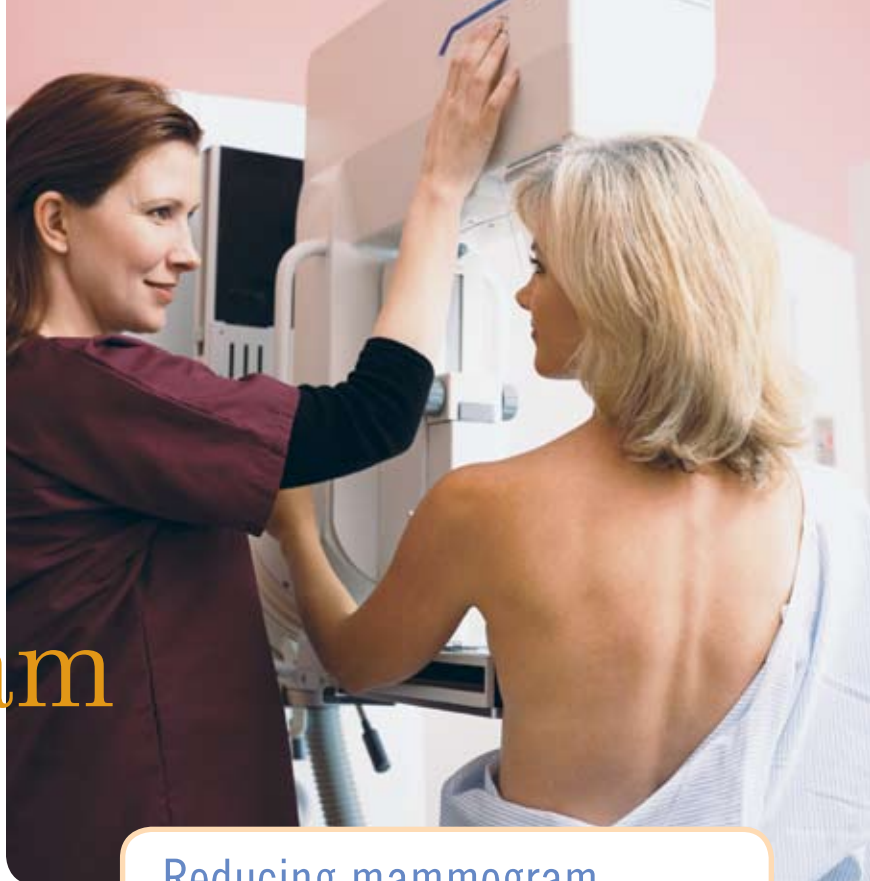
## WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. An image of breast tissue is produced for a radiologist to analyze. He or she looks for tumors or calcium deposits, which can signal cancer's presence.

If you're at high risk for breast cancer, your healthcare provider may recommend magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in addition to a yearly mammogram. This test uses magnets and radio waves to produce detailed images of the body. Suspicious areas found during testing may require an ultrasound, which uses sound waves to tell whether the problem area is cancerous.

## GET SCREENED

Go to the same breast-screening facility every year so your radiologist can compare your current mammogram with past results. It's important for the radiologist to see whether there are any changes in your breast tissue from year to year. If you're going to a new facility, try to have your old mammograms sent there before your appointment.



## Reducing mammogram discomfort

**W**hile mammograms may sometimes be uncomfortable, you can take the edge off with these steps:

- Schedule your mammogram for a few days after your period has ended when your breasts are less tender. Avoid the week before your period.
- Take a pain reliever like ibuprofen or acetaminophen an hour before your mammogram.
- Avoid caffeine for two days before your mammogram.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have breast implants.
- Ask your X-ray technician about thin, foam pads that she can place between your breast and the machine to lessen discomfort.
- Wear a two-piece outfit since mammograms only require that you strip to your waist. This way you'll feel less exposed.

## ! Low-cost testing

**C**an't afford a mammogram? Call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** for low-cost mammogram options near you. The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program also offers information about free or low-cost testing for women without health insurance. Call **1-888-842-6355** or visit [www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp).

# Watch your back

## Get relief from pain

**H**as back pain got you down for the count? In many cases, back pain goes away on its own. But if you're experiencing numbness or tingling, pain that's resistant to medications and rest or pain following a fall or an injury, see your healthcare provider. You could be facing a more serious back problem.

### PAIN RELIEF

Most back ailments don't require surgery, so an operation is rarely the first line of defense. As a start, your healthcare provider may recommend hot or cold compresses, specific exercises to reduce pain, medication or pain-relief injections. He or she may also suggest complementary treatments such as massage; acupuncture; and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), which sends electrical impulses to nerves.

If your pain can't be quelled with conservative treatments, you may be a candidate for surgery. The pain's cause and the extent of damage will dictate what procedure may work. Some options include:

- a laminectomy/discectomy, which removes a herniated disc through an incision a few inches long
- spinal fusion, which joins two or more vertebrae with bone grafts, screws and rods to stabilize the spine
- vertebroplasty, which involves injecting a cement-like mixture into the damaged vertebrae to relieve pain and stabilize the spine
- disc replacement, which replaces the damaged disc with an artificial one

Only you and your healthcare provider can determine the right treatment for your condition. If you're experiencing persistent back pain, talk with him or her today to help get you on the road to a pain-free tomorrow.

## 5 steps to a healthier back

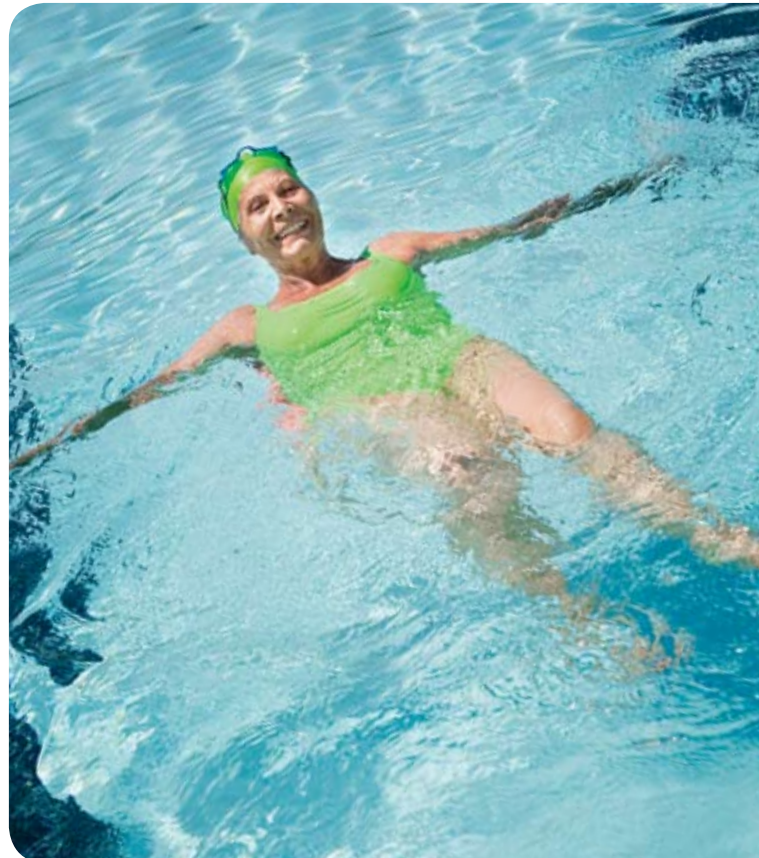
**1. Exercise.** Low-impact aerobic activities such as walking and swimming can increase back strength without strain. Ask your healthcare provider about exercises that can condition back muscles.

**2. Quit smoking.** Lighting up reduces oxygen levels in your spinal tissue, which can slow down an ailing back's healing process.

**3. Maintain a healthy weight.** Excess weight can strain your back muscles. Eat a healthful diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and make sure to include plenty of calcium and vitamin D, which help to build bone strength.

**4. Practice perfect posture.** If you're standing for long periods, rest one foot on a stool, alternating feet, to take the weight off your lower back. While sitting, make sure your chair supports your lower back. Place your feet flat on the floor.

**5. Lift with care.** Keep your back straight and bend only your knees as you reach down to lift an object. Hold the object close to your body and straighten your knees to stand.



# First-response guide to illness and injury

How serious is it and where should I go?

Clip out this resource and hang it on your refrigerator for easy reference.

By Linda Olson, R.N., Director, Mat-Su Regional Urgent Care

Reviewed by Robert Neubauer, M.D., Medical Director, Mat-Su Regional Urgent Care

| Call 911 for an ambulance  | Go to the emergency room (ER)   | Go to the ER or urgent care center               | Go to the urgent care center or your family physician   |
|--|---|--|---|
| chest pain, including crushing pain or pressure in chest; pain also in jaw, arms, shoulders or back; victim denies chest pain or possible heart problem  | open wound in chest or abdominal area   | abdominal pain or side pain from unknown cause   | coughing, congestion, ear pain or sinus infections  |
| multiple injuries from motor vehicle or construction site accidents; falls greater than four feet  | broken bone with open skin, bone sticking out or obvious change in area's shape   | injuries to extremities; sprains and strains     | illness or injury requiring same-day but not immediate care                                   |
| large amount of uncontrolled bleeding from wound or body opening   | gunshot or stab wound   | wound with controlled bleeding or needing repair | chronic medical conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure                              |
| dizziness or weakness with inability to walk, talk or move normally; possible stroke   | severe headache, especially if described as worst headache ever   | back or neck strain injury                       | physical exam   |
| severe difficulty breathing, especially if related to an allergic reaction   | poisoning or suspected poisoning  | mild to moderate asthma                          | immunizations and TB testing  |
| any person unconscious or losing consciousness   | head trauma, especially if victim is unconscious  | foreign object in ears, nose or other body part  | routine medical, school, camp and sports exams  |
| drug or alcohol overdose   | attempted suicide by any method   | fever of unknown cause                           | mood changes noticed by patient's family; problems coping                                     |
| <p><b>! Need help?</b></p> <p>If you're in doubt but have time to call, contact the Mat-Su Emergency Department at (907) 861-6620, Urgent Care at (907) 352-2880 or your family physician. For a list of local physicians, visit <a href="http://www.matsuregional.com">www.matsuregional.com</a> or call the Physician Referral Line at (907) 861-6788.</p> | severe vomiting or diarrhea, especially in infants or children under age 3, adults over age 55 or people with chronic health problems | vomiting or diarrhea                             | sore throat   |
|  | victims of rape or physical abuse   | bladder infection                                | diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases; menstrual cramps and irregularities |
|  | pregnant patient in possible labor  | emergency birth control                          | routine medication refills  |
|  | burned body area greater than size of victim's hand   | small burns, sunburn or small areas of frostbite | warts, ingrown toenails or small moles needing removal  |

## Advanced services for your health



Norman Stephens  
Chief Executive Officer

**G**reetings! It's finally summer and we're relishing the long days, sunshine and green growth along with the wondrous fruits of our gardening labors. You can see and taste local produce at Palmer's Friday Flings, where "Veggies in Motion" is the theme to help us all get on the path to healthy living. Mat-Su Regional Medical Center, an official sponsor of Veggies in Motion, encourages you to take advantage of all the nutritional benefits of Valley-grown vegetables.

In the heart of Mat-Su's farmland, Mat-Su Regional is committed to growing with our community. Two new specialists recently joined our medical staff. Samuel Abbate, M.D., an endocrinologist, specializes in diabetes and thyroid disorder diagnoses and treatments. Aaron Brillhart, M.D., an emergency medicine physician, is joining Mat-Su Emergency Medicine Physicians to help meet the increased demands of the Emergency Department.

### COMMITMENT TO PERFORMANCE

The Joint Commission, an independent accreditation organization, conducted an unannounced five-day survey in April. Mat-Su Regional received full accreditation and was

praised for best practices that The Joint Commission plans to share with other hospitals across the United States. This national accreditation is recognized as a symbol of quality that reflects our commitment to meeting performance standards.

Two Mat-Su Regional departments received acclaim this spring. Mat-Su Regional Respiratory Therapy Department earned the Quality Respiratory Care Recognition. Only about 700, or 18 percent, of U.S. hospitals have applied for and received this recognition.

The American College of Radiology surveyed and awarded accreditation to Mat-Su Regional's digital mammography services. The Mat-Su community is fortunate to have this advanced equipment available locally, since many hospitals in the United States don't have digital-based mammography. This certification further affirms the level of care and diagnostic and customer services we provide.

Thank you for choosing Mat-Su Regional as your hospital.

Regards,

NORMAN STEPHENS  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

## MEET OUR MEDICAL STAFF



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## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

### How much do you know about headaches?

Take this quiz to find out.

- 1** What is the most common type of headache?
  - a. sinus
  - b. migraine
  - c. cluster
  - d. tension
  
- 2** Which statement about caffeine is true?
  - a. It can only worsen headaches and should always be avoided.
  - b. It is a common ingredient in headache medications and makes them more effective.
  - c. Science has not proven caffeine to be an effective headache treatment.
  - d. none of the above
  
- 3** About how many Americans suffer from chronic headaches?
  - a. 15 million
  - b. 25 million
  - c. 35 million
  - d. 45 million
  
- 4** Which of the following tests can best help your healthcare provider evaluate your headaches?
  - a. MRI
  - b. EKG
  - c. sonogram
  - d. bone scan
  
- 5** What can you do to reduce headache occurrence?
  - a. drink at least 600 mg of caffeine a day
  - b. work harder to take your mind off your headache
  - c. exercise regularly
  - d. skip breakfast

ANSWERS: 1. D; 2. B; 3. D; 4. A; 5. C



## Dodge diabetes with exercise and diet

**T**he diabetes prevention equation seems simple enough: *healthy eating + regular exercise = a reduced diabetes risk*. Incorporating the equation into your everyday life? Not so simple. But here are some ideas to get you on the right path.

### EXERCISE

- Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most or all days. This includes aerobic activity like brisk walks, dancing, swimming or biking, as well as strength-training exercises with free weights and weight machines.
- Vary your exercise routine so you don't get bored. Bring a buddy to keep you company.
- Walk instead of driving when you can, take the stairs instead of the elevator or do some gardening.

### DIET

- Substitute traditional white rice and noodles with brown rice and whole-wheat pasta to get your fiber fill.
- Limit fat to less than 30 percent of your daily calories by opting for lean meat cuts that end in "loin," filling up on fruits and veggies and going for low-fat dairy such as skim milk and nonfat yogurts and cheeses.
- Sip low- or no-calorie drinks such as water and diet drinks.
- Eat fish twice a week.

# Germ warfare

## Keep kids healthy in five easy steps

**A**lthough it's not possible to keep your children entirely germ free, you can take some preventive measures to minimize exposure to sickness-causing invaders:

**1 Teach your children how to properly wash their hands.** Show them how to use soap and warm water and vigorously rub their hands together for 15 to 20 seconds, or about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice, making sure to get in between fingers and under nails. Stress the importance of hand washing before eating and after such activities as recess, going to the bathroom, sneezing or coughing. If your children are older, give them alcohol-based sanitizer for when water isn't available.



**2 Keep your children's vaccinations up to date.** Review your children's vaccination schedules with your pediatrician at each visit.

**3 Tell kids not to share personal items,** such as a straw or towels.

**4 Remind your children not to touch their noses, eyes or mouths,** so germs can't be spread easily.

**5 Stop your kids from being "germ-spreaders."** Show them how to cover sneezes and coughs with a tissue or the crook of an arm. If a child is vomiting, has diarrhea or has a fever, don't send him or her to school.



## ROAD TRIP

# Healthy snacking on the go

**Y**ou have hours to go before you arrive at your vacation destination, and you've got some hungry kids on your hands. While you may be tempted to fall back on the convenient—but not so healthy—potato chips for them to munch on, try these healthy snacks instead:

• **Go au naturale.** Fruits such as bananas, grapes and apples are easy to eat and, except for a little washing, require no preparation. Unsweetened applesauce and fruit cups (packed in natural juice, not syrup) are also good fill-in snacks.

- **Dress up veggies.** For example, make celery sticks more appetizing by spreading peanut butter down the middle and sprinkling on some raisins.
- **Break out the breakfast cereals.** Fill a small resealable bag with whole-grain cereal.
- **Pack in the pop.** Before you leave, air-pop some popcorn, then top it off with a little Parmesan cheese or garlic powder.
- **Take to the trail.** Mix a little low-fat granola with nuts like almonds or peanuts, then toss in some raisins or cranberries for the perfect trail mix.

# Kick off a new you!

Healthy Woman is coming to Mat-Su Regional

**HEALTHY WOMAN**  
A MAT-SU REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER RESOURCE

**M**at-Su Regional Medical Center is excited to offer a new free resource just for women. Healthy Woman features a series of seminars, health fairs, educational programs and interactive events designed to improve the emotional, physical and fiscal well-being of women and their families.

## FREE SCREENINGS AND MORE!

Mat-Su Regional's Healthy Woman program will kick off on Saturday, October 11, at Mat-Su Regional's annual Women's Fair. This event will offer numerous health screenings, including diabetes and cardiac risk assessments, pulmonary function tests and a skin-cancer check. Check out health products and educational displays; color, makeup and skin care demonstrations; and vendors with lots of health and beauty tips.

Radiologists and imaging technicians will showcase advanced diagnostic technology available at Mat-Su Regional and answer questions about mammography, bone density and other imaging tests. Attendees can also take the Technology Tour, where every participant wins a door prize. For extra fun, enjoy free facials, manicures and massages—on a first-come, first-served basis.



Mat-Su Regional will provide women with free blood work, including lipid panel, blood glucose, C-reactive protein and thyroid stimulating hormone. This blood work requires a 12-hour fast, except for prescription medications. Women who have diabetes shouldn't fast. Screenings are also offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Fuel up on healthy snacks with a continental breakfast after your blood draw.

## ! Take control of your health!

**It's time for a new you! Join Healthy Woman or sign up for Mat-Su Regional's Women's Fair on Saturday, October 11, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call Elizabeth Ripley at (907) 861-6849 or e-mail [e.ripley@msrhc.com](mailto:e.ripley@msrhc.com).**

[www.matsuregional.com](http://www.matsuregional.com)

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# Health Connection

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