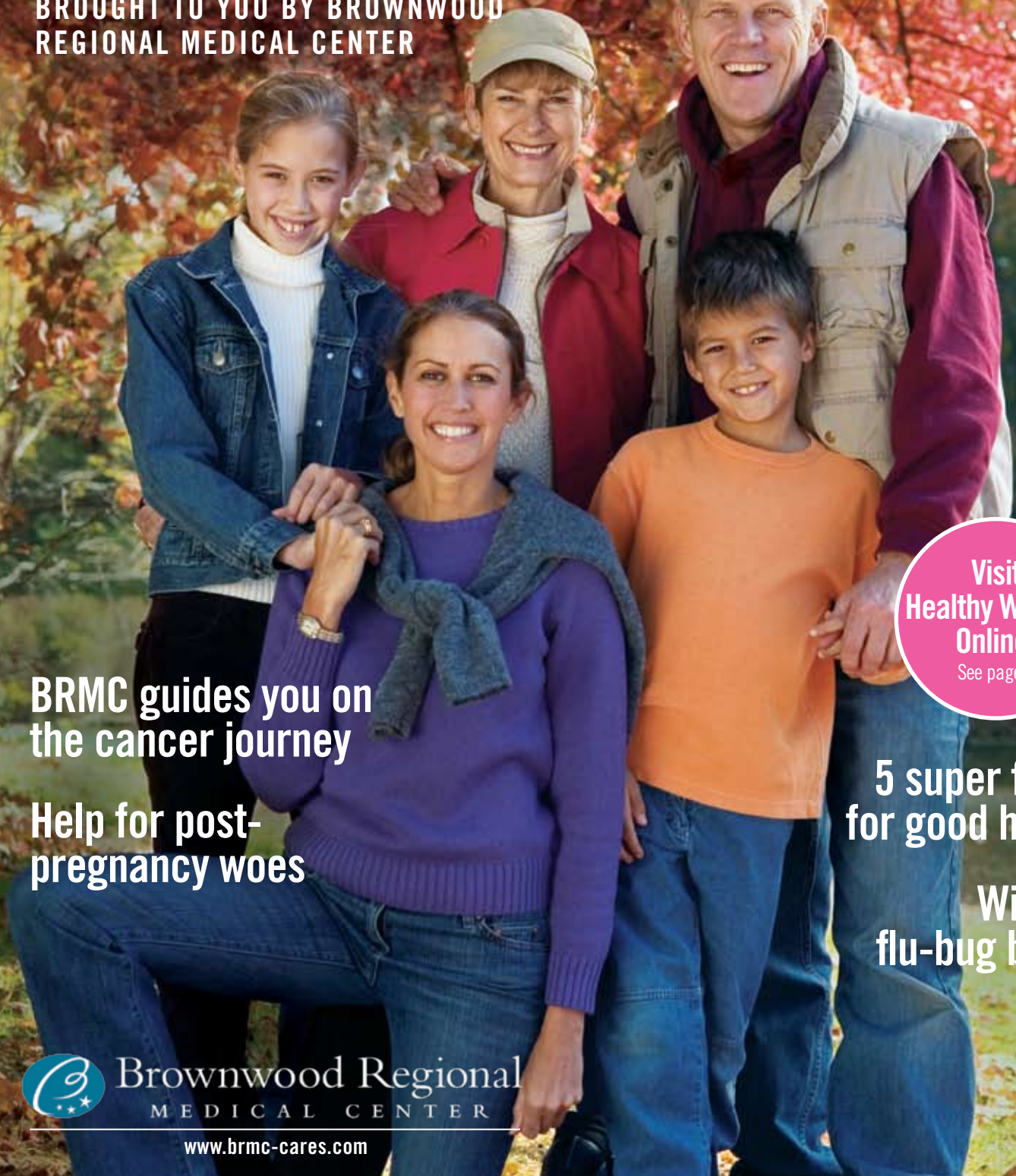


Health Connection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BROWNWOOD REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER



Visit
Healthy Woman
Online!
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**BRMC guides you on
the cancer journey**

**Help for post-
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for good health**

**Win the
flu-bug battle**



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.



Matt Maxfield, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer

Dear friends,

As our state and local economies continue to climb out of the national recession of 2009, Brownwood Regional Medical Center (BRMC) is leading our community in efforts to expand the services of our health care economy. Through the recruitment of new primary care physicians

and specialists and through enhanced technology and improved services, BRMC is growing to meet the needs of Central Texas and the Big Country.

This summer, BRMC welcomed two new internal medicine physicians to the medical staff. Henry Ejere, M.D., and Amber Ervin, D.O., are accepting new patients in their new practices. Dr. Ejere is board certified in internal medicine and most recently served as a hospitalist at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital in Albany, Ga. Dr. Ervin recently completed her internal medicine residency at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth. She joined the offices of Heart of Texas Internal Medicine.

In addition to the two new internists, Stephen Roberts, M.D., orthopaedic surgeon, has opened his practice and is accepting new patients. Dr. Roberts recently completed his orthopaedic surgery residency at Texas Tech University Health Science Center in Lubbock. Dr. Roberts provides general orthopaedic services, including total joint care and sports medicine.

I'm also pleased to announce that BRMC will soon offer digital mammography screening and stereotactic breast biopsy. In the Walker Cancer Center, these diagnostic tests will greatly enhance the ability of our physicians and surgeons to more quickly diagnose breast abnormalities and potential malignant tumors.

At BRMC, our goals are to serve our community with quality health services and to treat every patient like family. Thanks for making BRMC your choice for the care of your family.

Sincerely,

MATT MAXFIELD, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer
Brownwood Regional Medical Center



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.brmc-cares.com

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

Living life after cancer

3 steps to stay healthy

You've heard the words every cancer patient wants to hear: You're in remission. Now it's up to you to take care of yourself. Here are three tips to help:

→ **Put the right food into your body.** While a healthy diet doesn't guarantee your cancer won't return, it can help you regain strength so you feel better. Ask your physician what kind of diet you should follow and if you have any dietary restrictions. He or she may connect you with a dietitian experienced in creating balanced meal plans for people with cancer. In general, aim for five to seven servings of fruits and vegetables a day and plenty of whole grains. Cut the amount of fat you eat by baking and broiling foods and opting for skim milk and other non- or low-fat dairy products. Lower your sodium intake by limiting salt-cured, smoked or pickled foods. If you're still experiencing the side effects of cancer treatment, such as poor appetite, dry mouth, change in taste or smell, trouble swallowing or weight loss, ask your physician how you can combat them.

→ **Learn to manage fatigue.** To get a handle on fatigue, a common complaint of cancer survivors, take short naps, but remember that sleeping too much can actually sap energy. Exercise regularly, and pace your daily activities so you don't get too tired too quickly. Ask for help from friends and family and consult your physician if your fatigue seems to get worse. And take heart: Your energy will return!

→ **Go to each and every follow-up appointment with your physician.** This is your chance to tell him or her about any symptoms you've been having. He or she will address your concerns and may order lab tests or imaging tests to check for cancer recurrence or treatment side effects. How often you see your physician depends on your individual case, but if you had breast cancer, for example, you'll probably go every four to six months, with appointments becoming more infrequent the longer you go cancer free. After five years, you may only have one appointment a year.

Help for your cancer journey

For more information about a cancer diagnosis, call the Walker Cancer Center at (325) 649-5000.



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 Brownwood Regional Medical Center. There is no fee to subscribe.

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New baby, new health woes?

How to handle common post-pregnancy symptoms



By Michael Neel, M.D.
Board Certified in Obstetrics/Gynecology

After what felt like an eternity of pregnancy, you've finally welcomed your little one into the world and are ready to kiss the swollen feet, the constant bathroom breaks and the heartburn goodbye.

Trouble is, while these symptoms disappear, a whole new set of post-pregnancy ones may occur:

PROBLEM: Hair loss

Thick hair is one of the benefits produced by pregnancy hormones. However, now that your baby's here, extra hair may be falling out.

SOLUTION: Use it as an excuse to try a new hairstyle that covers thinned-out areas, and limit the use of hair tools like a flat iron or hair dryer. Expect your hair to return to normal in about six months.

PROBLEM: Sweating

Sweating is one way your body gets rid of excess fluid from pregnancy. Hormones can also cause it. You may soak the sheets for weeks or for the whole time you breastfeed.

SOLUTION: Stay hydrated with water and wear light cotton clothing.

PROBLEM: Incontinence

Thanks to pregnancy and birthing, your bladder muscles are probably stretched out. A trickle of urine when you laugh or cough isn't uncommon.

SOLUTION: While urinary incontinence typically gets better within three months, Kegel exercises, which strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, can help. Ask your physician how to do them and what other options are available.

PROBLEM: "New mom's syndrome" (de Quervain's tenosynovitis)

Awkward hand and wrist positioning when holding your child can lead to pain and swelling of tendons in the wrist, making it uncomfortable to grasp objects or make a fist.

SOLUTION: Use a splint or brace to keep your thumb and wrist straight and ease discomfort with heat or ice. Medications such as ibuprofen, naproxen and corticosteroids can also help. If you have a bad case, you may need physical therapy or surgery.

! Your helping hand

BRMC's physicians can help manage these post-pregnancy symptoms. Call BRMC's physician referral line at (325) 649-3394. If you're having thoughts about harming yourself or your baby, go to your closest emergency room.