

# Health Connection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BROWNWOOD  
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Take control  
of incontinence

After an ER visit—  
now what?

Is a stroke  
in your future?

The dangers  
of texting

Brown-bag it  
for better health



Brownwood Regional  
MEDICAL CENTER

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# Ease your arthritis pain

**M**ore than 40 million Americans suffer from arthritis, a condition that can make every move painful. Osteoarthritis is the most common form. It occurs when cartilage, which cushions bones in your joints, breaks down and causes irritation.

Luckily, the following lifestyle changes and remedies can help you manage the pain:

• **LOSE WEIGHT.** It's pretty basic: The more excess weight you carry, the more stress on your joints. But a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, paired with regular exercise—at least 30 minutes a day—can help tip the scales in your favor. Cut back on saturated fats, which may increase your body's inflammatory response, adding to joint and tissue inflammation.



• **GET OFF THE COUCH.** Inactivity is a joint's worst enemy. Exercise can strengthen and protect the muscles around the joints, preventing them from stiffening and causing more pain. Walking, swimming, some yoga poses and tai chi are easy on the joints. Also beneficial are range-of-motion exercises, such as raising your arms above your head; strengthening exercises, such as weight training; and low-impact aerobic exercises, such as bike riding. Before starting an exercise program, check with your physician. If needed, ask him or her for a referral to a physical therapist who has a program for people with arthritis.

• **TAKE A PILL, IF NEEDED.** Sometimes you need medication for the pain. Over-the-counter options include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen and naproxen), and acetaminophen (such as Tylenol). Topical creams may provide hot or cool sensations to ease pain or contain pain medication that's absorbed into the skin. Your physician may prescribe pills or cortisone injections. Any drug you take can have side effects, so discuss them with your physician before starting a regimen.



• **REST UP.** Your body needs time to heal, so aim for eight to 10 hours of sleep every night, and avoid sitting or standing in one position for too long. Skip high-impact activities such as running. You may also want to look into stress-relievers such as meditation or yoga.

• **ASK ABOUT ALTERNATIVES.** Massage, acupuncture, heating pads, ice packs and supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin may help reduce symptoms, though studies on the supplements have been mixed. Speak with your physician before trying any home remedies. Sometimes, there simply isn't a remedy that can effectively treat the pain. In that case, surgery to replace the joint may be an option to discuss with your physician.



# Life after the ER

## Following your physician's orders keeps you healthy

**W**hen you're not feeling well and you're surrounded by the hustle and bustle of an emergency room (ER), it's easy to be confused by what a physician is telling you. All you can think about is going home. That's why many people are unclear about how to handle their care when they leave the hospital.

Case in point: A small University of Michigan study found that more than 75 percent of patients didn't understand their discharge instructions or what ER physicians had just told them—although 80 percent thought they did. Some of the patients weren't even sure of their diagnosis.

Unfortunately, these misunderstandings may increase the likelihood of complications once you leave the ER. In reality, the care you receive at the hospital is just one important part of the puzzle. Knowing what to do next—and following those discharge instructions closely—is critical to getting better. Here's what you need to do for the best health care results:

➔ **SPEAK UP.** Don't be afraid to ask questions if you're unsure of your condition, what treatments you were given, your test results or something in the discharge instructions—for example, whether a medication that's been prescribed may interact with one you're already taking. It's best to ask the ER physician caring for you,

rather than having to contact the ER later, when the physician you saw may no longer be on duty.

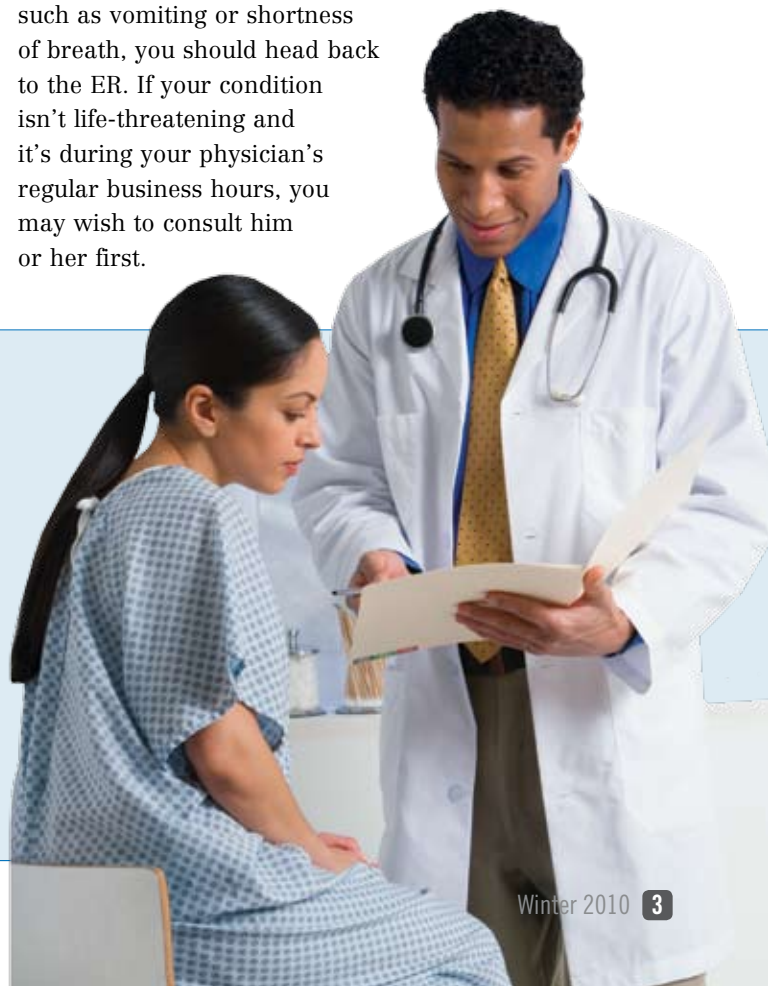
➔ **FOLLOW ALL MEDICATION DOSAGES.** Thoroughly read your discharge instructions. They should spell out what medications have been prescribed, what they treat and how often—and when—to take them.

➔ **FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR FAMILY PHYSICIAN OR A SPECIALIST.** You'll especially need to do this if you've received stitches or a cast. Your discharge instructions will tell you when to go. Double-check with your physician to make sure information about your ER visit, including test results, has been sent to his or her office before your appointment.

➔ **KNOW WHEN YOU SHOULD RETURN TO THE ER.** If your condition worsens or you're noticing new symptoms, such as vomiting or shortness of breath, you should head back to the ER. If your condition isn't life-threatening and it's during your physician's regular business hours, you may wish to consult him or her first.

## How did we do?

**W**hen you check in to the ER, admitting personnel will ask you if it's OK to follow up with you once you're back home. If you agree to it, we'll try to call you within 24 hours of your discharge, asking you six questions about your visit. At that time, if you don't understand your discharge instructions or have any questions about your treatment, a nurse will call you back. This process, called **Discharge Callback Administrator, or DCA**, helps us improve the way we care for our patients and ensure that you're on the road to recovery.





Matthew Maxfield, FACHE  
Chief Executive Officer

### Proudly serving our community

Dear Friends,

**B**rownwood Regional Medical Center's (BRMC) medical staff and employees remain focused on improving our community's health and providing enhanced health services to our patients. I'm confident 2010 will continue to bring exciting additions to our services.

#### PHYSICIAN RECRUITMENT

One of our major goals for this year includes bringing additional primary care physicians to the community. With most of the local physician practices at or near capacity, our community's need for additional family practice and internal medicine physicians is a high priority.

In addition, we'll continue to build on the growth and success of our Healthy Woman and Senior Circle programs to provide community health education throughout the year.

#### EMPLOYER OF CHOICE

Our board of trustees has committed to making BRMC the employer of choice throughout Central Texas. In recognition of BRMC's achievements, the Texas Workforce Commission and Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas selected BRMC for the 2009 Employer Award of Excellence. Making BRMC a great place to work makes our hospital a better place for our patients to receive care.

From all of us at BRMC, best wishes for the new year to you and your family.

Sincerely,

MATTHEW MAXFIELD, FACHE  
Chief Executive Officer  
Brownwood Regional Medical Center

# Get a healthy mind, body and spirit!

Healthy Woman  
empowers and informs



**L**ife can be healthy, balanced and fun. Find out how with Healthy Woman, Brownwood Regional Medical Center's (BRMC) free program that empowers women with the knowledge and confidence to make informed health care and well-being decisions for themselves and their loved ones.

Become a member today and enjoy:

- monthly health and lifestyle presentations
- health resources
- regular e-mail communications

Join us and see what Healthy Woman has to offer!

### ! Visit us online!

**T**o start benefiting from Healthy Woman, visit [www.brmc-cares.com](http://www.brmc-cares.com) and click on the Healthy Woman icon.



# Don't suffer in silence

Get help with bladder control at BRMC

By Daniel Altstatt, M.D., Urologist



**A** diagnosis of overactive bladder often significantly impairs quality of life. Many patients experience symptoms for an extended period of time before they're comfortable discussing them with anyone, including their physician. At

Brownwood Regional Medical Center (BRMC), we're hoping to increase awareness of the prevalence of overactive bladder and encourage those who are suffering from this condition to seek treatment early.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

Patients who suffer from overactive bladder usually struggle seeking additional treatment. Several treatment options are available, including nonsurgical and behavioral techniques like pelvic muscle exercises (e.g., Kegel exercises), biofeedback, bladder training and pads. Medications may effectively inhibit contractions of an overactive bladder in some patients, but these drugs may cause side effects such as dry mouth, constipation, eye problems or incomplete bladder emptying.

## SACRAL NERVE STIMULATION

We now have an option available when other treatments haven't been successful. Sacral nerve stimulation is a possible long-term option available locally at BRMC.

Approved by the Food and Drug Administration, sacral nerve stimulation may be an option for patients who've not had success with or couldn't tolerate more conservative treatments. Sacral nerve stimulation, which is similar to a pacemaker for the bladder, uses mild electrical pulses to target the communication problem that exists between the sacral nerves (near the tailbone that control the bladder)



and the brain. Sacral nerve stimulation provides another treatment option for addressing overactive bladder symptoms, such as leaking, urgency and frequency, providing relief for some individuals.



**Regain your quality of life!**

**S**acral nerve stimulator implantation is available at BRMC. Ask your primary care physician whether this treatment is right for you. For more information or to find a urologist, call BRMC's physician referral line at (325) 649-3394.

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

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

Take this quiz to find out.

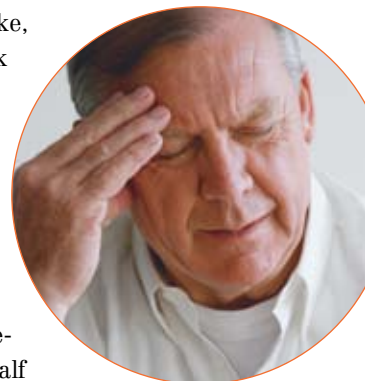
- 1** What percentage of American adults are overweight or obese?
  - a. 25
  - b. 33
  - c. 50
  - d. 66
- 2** Which of the following has not been linked to obesity?
  - a. hyperthyroidism
  - b. cancer
  - c. gallbladder disease
  - d. infertility
- 3** Obese children have a higher risk of:
  - a. asthma
  - b. early puberty
  - c. skin infections
  - d. all of the above
- 4** One problem with body mass index (BMI)—a calculation that assesses obesity—is that:
  - a. It doesn't take height into account.
  - b. It doesn't measure muscle, so a muscular person can have a high BMI.
  - c. It doesn't factor in age.
  - d. none of the above
- 5** How much excess weight do you usually have to be carrying to be considered for weight-loss surgery?
  - a. 30 pounds for women, 50 for men
  - b. 50 pounds for women, 70 for men
  - c. 80 pounds for women, 100 for men
  - d. There's no minimum weight requirement for weight-loss surgery.

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

## { MINI-STROKES }

# Heed the warning

It may not be a full-blown stroke, but a transient ischemic attack (TIA)—also called a mini-stroke—is your warning that one could be just around the corner. TIAs produce symptoms similar to strokes, but they usually only last a few minutes and don't cause damage. About a third of people who have TIAs will subsequently have a stroke, and about half of them will have it within a year.



### INSIDE A TIA

A TIA occurs when a blood clot briefly blocks an artery, cutting off part of the brain's blood supply. Like a stroke, symptoms arise without warning. They include:

- sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg—usually on one side of the body
- sudden confusion, speech problems or trouble comprehending
- sudden problems walking, dizziness and loss of balance or coordination
- sudden severe headaches
- sudden vision problems such as loss of sight in one eye

If you suffer any of these symptoms, call an ambulance or have a friend take you to the ER right away. Physicians usually have to make a diagnosis based on your medical history.

### IS A TIA IN YOUR FUTURE?

You're at higher risk for a TIA if you:

- have a family history of TIA or stroke
- are 55 years or older
- are a man
- are African-American

Those are things you can't control, but you can help change other risk factors:

- blood pressure 140/85 mm Hg or higher
- high cholesterol
- heart disease, carotid artery disease and peripheral artery disease
- obesity
- cigarette smoking
- heavy drinking
- physical inactivity
- diabetes
- a high-fat, high-sodium diet

## Sending out an SOS:

# Texting can be bad for your health

It's not uncommon to see people crossing busy streets or even driving with their cell phone or BlackBerry® in hand, dashing off a quick message. Texting shifts your focus away from the task at hand and can be downright dangerous.

While no hard numbers exist, the American College of Emergency Physicians has reported an anecdotal rise in serious and fatal injuries involving texting—especially among teens and young adults. That includes face, chin, mouth and eye injuries for those who trip and fall while texting, and fatal trauma stemming from car accidents. Texting has also been linked to medical phenomena like “BlackBerry thumb” and “teen texting tendonitis”—catchphrases for conditions that result from the repetitive thumb motions of texting. These conditions can cause pain and numbness in the thumbs and joints of the hand.

### BE TEXT SAVVY

Steer clear of texting troubles by following a few guidelines:

- Avoid texting while doing things like walking and driving. Turn your phone off to avoid temptation.
- On the road, pull over if you need to text immediately.
- Set a good example behind the wheel: Don't engage in distracting behavior in front of your kids.

- Contact your cell-phone provider if you're worried about your child's texting habits. Some companies now offer services that ban texting at certain times of the day.



## A healthy lunch is in the bag!

Every day at noon, workers around the country run to the corner deli for a sandwich, hit a local eatery with co-workers or order in. But if you're watching your waistline—or your wallet—packing your own lunch is a smarter solution. A homemade lunch is more nutritious and economical, as long as you pack it correctly. The recipe for a healthy lunch includes:

- **PROTEIN** Try lean turkey, ham, roast beef, tuna or a bean-based entree, such as hummus or a black bean burrito.
- **GOOD GRAINS** Pack whole-wheat pasta salad and sandwiches made on multigrain bread.
- **FRUITS AND VEGGIES** The deeper the color of the vegetable or fruit, the more vitamins and minerals it contains. Slice up baby carrots, peppers, broccoli, apples, blueberries and oranges.



- **CALCIUM** Slip fat-free yogurt, cottage cheese or string cheese into your bag.
- **H<sub>2</sub>O** Water has no calories, so it's a perfect choice, but if you need a little more flavor, try adding a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange. Watch out for fruit juices, energy drinks and sodas, which are loaded with sugar.
- **FLAVOR APPEAL** Switch it up a bit by adding interesting items, like walnuts in a salad or horseradish spread on a roast beef sandwich.
- **MINIMAL SODIUM** Thinking of one of those “healthy” frozen meals? Watch out for sodium. Total daily intake for a healthy individual shouldn't exceed 2,300 milligrams (mg), and some frozen meals can contain a big portion of your day's allotment. Follow the FDA's recommendation for a healthy frozen meal by choosing one that has 480 mg of sodium or less per serving.

*Health Connection* is published as a community service of Brownwood 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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70BRM

# Enjoy the prime of your life

**T**he Senior Circle program at Brownwood Regional Medical Center is part of our commitment to meeting the needs of adults ages 50 and better. The program encourages an active lifestyle for seniors through a generous selection of activities and benefits.



## LOCAL BENEFITS

Members receive these local benefits:

- complimentary private room upgrade during your hospital stay when staffing and availability permit
- discounts at area shops
- free monthly activities
- holiday parties
- free notary public service
- free copying and faxing of important papers
- a subscription to our quarterly chapter newsletter

## NATIONAL BENEFITS

Members also receive these national benefits:

- prescription mail pharmacy program
- biannual issues of Senior Circle's national publication
- toll-free member services line
- a pharmacy discount card
- national car rental discounts
- emergency-response discount with ADT
- Choice Hotel discounts
- national travel program

**!** Join the inner circle!

To start benefiting from all Senior Circle has to offer, visit [www.brnc-cares.com](http://www.brnc-cares.com) and click on the Senior Circle icon.

# Senior & Circle

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>BRMC Senior Circle</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
Last Name	Middle I.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Dr.
First Name	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
Phone Number ( )	Birthday Mo. ____ Day ____ Yr. ____	
Address		Apt. #
City	State	Zip
E-mail		
<input type="checkbox"/> I authorize <input type="checkbox"/> do not authorize <input type="checkbox"/> that a Senior Circle representative may be notified of my admittance to participating hospitals and may contact me while in the hospital to ensure my needs are being met.		
Signature: _____		
<b>COMPLETE SECTION BELOW FOR SECOND MEMBER, SAME HOUSEHOLD ONLY</b>		
Last Name	Middle I.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mrs. <input type="checkbox"/> Ms. <input type="checkbox"/> Mr. <input type="checkbox"/> Dr.
First Name	Sex <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
Phone Number ( )	Birthday Mo. ____ Day ____ Yr. ____	
Address		Apt. #
City	State	Zip
E-mail		
<input type="checkbox"/> I authorize <input type="checkbox"/> do not authorize <input type="checkbox"/> that a Senior Circle representative may be notified of my admittance to participating hospitals and may contact me while in the hospital to ensure my needs are being met.		
Signature: _____		
<b>PAY BY CHECK ONLY</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> One Year Membership \$15.00 (SC1) <input type="checkbox"/> Two - One Year Memberships \$27.00 (TW1) (you save 10% - same household only) <input type="checkbox"/> Two Year Membership \$27.00 (SC2) (you save 10% compared to a one year membership)		
Return your completed application and check or money order to:		
BRMC Senior Circle 1501 Burnet Drive Brownwood, TX 76801		

A membership to Senior Circle is a great gift idea!

