

Health Connection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BROWNWOOD
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

**Get serious about
breast cancer**

Early detection
is key

**Break free
from chronic
pelvic pain**

**Take your
health to heart**

**In case of
emergency**
Know when to
go to the ER

**7 ways to
weight-loss
success**



Brownwood Regional
MEDICAL CENTER

www.brmc-cares.com

CHRONIC PELVIC PAIN

Causes and cures

Women who suffer from chronic pelvic pain may feel that the discomfort is something they just have to live with—a “side effect” of being female. But they don’t have to suffer. Chronic pelvic pain, or CPP, is a real medical condition. And that means it can be treated.

WHAT CAUSES PELVIC PAIN?

You may be suffering from CPP if you’ve had recurring pain in your lower abdomen and pelvic area for at least six months. The symptoms can vary. You may feel pain all the time or it may come and go. You may have a mild, dull ache or sharp, stabbing pain. In addition, you may have abnormally painful menstrual periods (*dysmenorrhea*), low backache, pain during intercourse, pain when going to the bathroom or rectal itching and burning.

The most common causes are gynecological:

- **Endometriosis.** In this condition, tissue from the uterine lining grows on other pelvic organs. When you have your period, this tissue swells and bleeds, causing pain and scarring.
- **Pelvic inflammatory disease.** This is an infection in the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries.
- **Fibroids.** These are benign (noncancerous) growths in the uterine wall.

TESTING AND TREATMENT

Your physician will evaluate your pain by taking a detailed health history and performing a physical exam. He or she may also order some diagnostic tests, such as blood tests, urologic tests, X-rays or laparoscopy (a minimally invasive procedure in which the surgeon inserts a thin lighted tube through an incision in the abdomen to view your pelvic organs).

Treatment depends on the cause of your pain and includes the following options:

- stopping ovulation with birth control pills or injections
- using pain relievers such as ibuprofen or naproxen
- performing relaxation exercises, biofeedback and physical therapy
- taking antibiotics
- getting psychological counseling
- having surgery

Stress incontinence: Help is available

It may be embarrassing, but stress urinary incontinence is a common problem among women. It’s also highly treatable. In fact, eight in 10 women who seek treatment see an improvement or are cured.

Stress incontinence occurs when any kind of pressure is put on the bladder, such as when you sneeze, laugh, lift, cough, exercise or even rise from a chair. Childbirth and weight gain are two common causes of incontinence because these conditions stretch the pelvic floor muscles. Hormone changes during menopause, some medications and other factors can also cause incontinence.

Your physician has many treatment options, including medication, strength exercises, biofeedback and, in extreme cases, surgery. So don’t let embarrassment keep you from asking for help.



Put out the fire

Heartburn can raise your risk for cancer

Nearly everyone has had an occasional bout of heartburn, or acid indigestion, after a spicy meal. But if you have chronic heartburn that occurs more than twice a week, you may be suffering from a more serious condition called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). If you think you may be suffering from GERD, don't ignore it—without treatment it may eventually lead to more serious health problems, including cancer.

WHAT IS GERD?

Though it's commonly called heartburn, GERD is a digestive condition that has nothing to do with your heart. Food is carried from your mouth to your stomach through your esophagus tube, which is connected to the stomach by the sphincter muscle. The sphincter usually closes once food passes into the stomach, but if it doesn't close properly, digestive juices rise back up into your chest and throat. They cause the burning feeling near your heart—hence the name heartburn.

GERD can also cause a dry cough and swallowing difficulties, make asthma worse and disrupt sleep. Left untreated, it can damage the esophagus' lining and cause bleeding or ulcers.

A MORE SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT

GERD can also result in a condition called Barrett's esophagus, in which stomach acids actually cause changes to cells in the esophagus. These damaged cells can lead to esophageal cancer.

Barrett's esophagus is diagnosed with an upper gastrointestinal endoscopy. In this outpatient procedure, the physician passes an endoscope—a small, lighted tube with a tiny camera at the end—into the throat. This lets the physician look for tissue abnormalities and take a tissue sample through the endoscope if needed.

GETTING RELIEF

If you suffer from heartburn more than twice a week, see your physician. He or she may recommend lifestyle changes (see *"Don't go for the burn,"* below) as well as over-the-counter or prescription drugs such as:

- antacids (brand names include Mylanta, Maalox, Alka-Seltzer, Rolaids)
- H2 blockers (Tagamet, Pepcid, Zantac)
- proton pump inhibitors (Nexium, Prilosec, Prevacid)

Some of these drugs can also help improve Barrett's esophagus. In rare circumstances, your physician may recommend surgery to repair the sphincter.

Don't go for the burn

One key to soothing heartburn is to avoid the triggers that can lead to discomfort.

In general, the following lifestyle changes can help most people put out the fire:

- If you smoke, stop.
- Avoid foods and beverages that worsen symptoms, such as citrus fruits, chocolate, fried foods, tomato-based foods, spicy foods and drinks with caffeine or alcohol.
- Lose excess weight.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- Avoid lying down for three hours after a meal.



Streamlining emergency care

Dear neighbors,

Brownwood Regional Medical Center's (BRMC) emergency room (ER) treats more than 20,000 patients each year, and more than 70 percent of BRMC's inpatient admissions come through the ER. It's clear that the ER is the hospital's busiest area and that we need to keep our focus on your satisfaction.

FOCUSED ON YOUR NEEDS

Last year, we challenged our nurses, medical staff and technicians to review emergency care processes with a focus on improving patient satisfaction. They came up with an idea for an admissions unit in the ER—a way to lessen the amount of time patients spend waiting in the ER to be admitted to the hospital.

The admissions unit is designed to expedite an admitted patient's transfer to an inpatient room or appropriate unit through the ER or a physician's office. Admitted patients are given priority for all laboratory and radiology procedures so physicians can diagnose and treat them quicker.

The new admissions unit has helped us achieve our goals and improve patient satisfaction and admission wait times in the ER. It's just one of the many ways we're advancing care for our patients at BRMC. I look forward to keeping you updated in future issues of *Health Connection*.

To your good health,

MATT MAXFIELD, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer
Brownwood Regional Medical Center



Breast cancer: Early detection is key

More than 180,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. The good news is that breast cancer is often curable, especially when screenings detect it early.

GET SCREENED

General recommendations for when to have breast cancer screenings are:

- between ages 20 and 39: clinical breast exam every three years
- ages 40 and older: clinical breast exam and mammogram every year

Most breast lumps are found by women during breast self exams. Although most lumps aren't cancerous, it's important to see a physician promptly, especially if you notice new lumps or anything unusual, such as liquid coming from either nipple or scaly or dimpling skin.

In the war against breast cancer, early detection means a better chance of recovery.

! Make an appointment!

To learn more about mammograms, call Teresa Morris at (254) 580-8815. If you have a physician's referral, we can schedule your appointment right away.

Take your health to heart

Nearly 81 million Americans have one or more forms of heart disease, says the American Heart Association. While some people are born with certain forms of heart disease, other forms like high blood pressure, heart attack or heart failure develop later in life and can have debilitating effects.

The Heart Center at Brownwood Regional Medical Center (BRMC) offers a patient-centered approach to cardiac care by combining diagnosis and treatment resources with rehabilitation for patients recovering from heart disease. “Fortunately, most heart problems can be corrected with proper treatment,” says Tim Moore, M.D., cardiologist on the medical staff at BRMC.

Regardless of what diagnostic stage you’re in, BRMC can help with treatment. The Heart Center’s team of cardiologists, nurses and technologists provides comprehensive care for a variety of needs.

DIAGNOSTIC CARDIOLOGY

Diagnostic procedures provide information to your primary care physician or cardiologist about your condition. Physicians select a diagnostic procedure based on whether the defect lies in the heart’s electrical rhythm, coronary arteries or heart muscle and valves.

NUCLEAR IMAGING

The Heart Center uses nuclear imaging technology to help physicians diagnose heart conditions. Nuclear imaging technology is paired with stress testing and allows physicians to measure blood flow to the heart during exercise and rest periods.

CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

During cardiac catheterization, a minimally invasive diagnostic test, a thin catheter is inserted through a patient’s upper arm or thigh and threaded to the heart. A tiny camera allows physicians to view blood vessels on a TV monitor and check for narrowing or blocked blood vessels. The test helps physicians determine which interventional procedure is required to treat coronary artery disease, such as balloon angioplasty (in which a tiny balloon is used to open blocked arteries) or stenting (in which a tiny metal scaffold props an artery open).



CARDIAC REHABILITATION

The Heart Center’s cardiac rehabilitation program offers a healthy experience for anyone recovering from stable angina, heart attack, coronary bypass surgery, valve replacement or repair or heart transplant. In this medically supervised program, you’ll have access to nutrition counseling, patient and family counseling, smoking cessation resources, exercise classes, stress management techniques and other behavior modification classes.

! Your healthy heart starts here!

To learn more about services at The Heart Center at BRMC, call (325) 649-3000. A physician’s referral is required, so call BRMC’s physician referral line at (325) 649-3394.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about stroke?

Take this quiz to find out.

1 A stroke occurs when blood flow is interrupted to your:

- a. heart
- b. lungs
- c. brain
- d. kidneys

2 Someone in the United States has a stroke:

- a. every 45 seconds
- b. every 4 minutes
- c. every 45 minutes
- d. every 4 hours

3 Which of the following are major risk factors for stroke?

- a. smoking
- b. high blood pressure
- c. high cholesterol
- d. all of the above

4 Which of the following is usually not a symptom of stroke?

- a. sudden numbness, weakness or paralysis of your face, arm or leg—usually on one side of your body
- b. sudden difficulty speaking or understanding speech
- c. sudden blurred, double or decreased vision
- d. sudden shortness of breath

5 How quickly must clot-busting drugs be given after the onset of a stroke to be effective?

- a. within 1 hour
- b. within 2 hours
- c. within 3 hours
- d. within 4 hours

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



Holiday health alert PROTECT YOUR HEART

The holidays are supposed to be a happy time of year. But for many people, they can end up being a particularly *unhealthy* time of year. Heavy meals, excessive alcohol, smoking, stress—they all can take a toll. Your heart is especially vulnerable. But knowing which dangers lurk can help you take control of your heart health this season.

STRESS INDUCERS

Three main triggers tend to cause holiday stress, says the Mayo Clinic:

- 1. Relationships.** Family tensions often increase during the holidays. What's more, those facing the holidays away from loved ones may feel lonely or sad.
- 2. Finances.** Spending too much on gifts, travel, food and entertainment can increase stress.
- 3. Physical health.** All that shopping, socializing, cooking, eating and drinking can be exhausting, especially for those already suffering from an illness.

STRESS REDUCERS

To avoid holiday stress and health problems:

- Exercise and get enough sleep. Both fight off stress and fatigue.
- Watch what you eat. Go ahead and have your favorite holiday treats, but do so in moderation.
- Find time for yourself—do things *you* like to do.
- Seek help. If the holidays overwhelm you with sadness, anxiety or physical problems, talk with your physician. You may be suffering from depression, which needs to be treated.

Healthy eating

7 winning ways to weight-loss success

The upcoming holidays present considerable challenges to eating healthfully. But with some careful planning and these helpful tips, you can stick with your weight-loss plan and enjoy a healthier lifestyle all year long.

- 1 **Work with your physician.** He or she can help you plan for and meet your goals.
- 2 **Set reasonable expectations.** Don't try to lose weight during the holidays. Simply maintaining your current weight will be a real accomplishment.
- 3 **Eat a variety of foods.** If you know you'll be having high-fat foods at dinner, focus on lots of fruits and vegetables for breakfast and lunch.
- 4 **Stay active.** Find 30 minutes a day to walk. If you're too busy—and who isn't?—break it up into three 10-minute walks.
- 5 **Eat breakfast every day.** Studies show that people who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat the rest of the day.



- 6 **Ask for a doggy bag.** When eating at a restaurant, eat half of your meal and bring the rest home for later.
- 7 **Reduce stress.** Stressful times can cause many to overeat. Find healthier ways to cut stress. Exercise, get plenty of sleep and spend time with people whose company you enjoy.

When the ER should be your only option

How do you know when to treat a medical problem yourself, go to the emergency room (ER) or wait it out? For the following three situations, knowing how to react can mean the difference between life and death.

Chest pain. Chest pain that often comes with certain activities and then goes away easily is called stable angina. More than likely, if you've had this kind of angina for some time, you know how to treat it yourself.

Angina that comes on unpredictably or changes over time is called unstable angina. It may be the first sign of a heart attack. Get emergency treatment.

Asthma attack. Your asthma action plan tells you how to react to an asthma attack. But sometimes, even when you follow your plan, the attack may become severe. Go to the ER if:

- Your asthma medicine doesn't help.



- You feel a little better after taking your medicine, but serious symptoms come back quickly.
 - Your lips and fingernails are bluish or grayish.
 - You have trouble talking or walking.
- Insect bite.** Bug bites usually cause mild reactions—some swelling, minor pain, itching—that go away in a day or two. You can treat them with an icepack for the pain and an antihistamine to reduce swelling.

A severe reaction, however, can be life threatening. If you notice difficulty breathing, swelling of the lips or throat, dizziness, con-

fusion, a rapid heartbeat or nausea, cramps and vomiting, get to the ER.

In an emergency, don't drive yourself to the ER. Have someone drive you or, better yet, call for emergency medical assistance. The equipment and expertise on an ambulance can give you lifesaving first aid on the spot.

A healthy mind, body and spirit

Our program can help

Women make between 80 percent and 90 percent of all healthcare decisions and often balance careers, primary and secondary families and civic work. Brownwood Regional Medical Center is here to help. Our Healthy Woman program is a free community resource created by women for women to provide up-to-date information needed to make informed health-care and well-being decisions for themselves and their families.

BENEFITS GALORE

Healthy Woman offers a series of free educational programs, seminars and interactive events that focus on women. Presentations are dedicated to improving the emotional, physical and spiritual well-being of women and their families. Seminars offer information on topics like heart disease, diabetes, breast cancer, menopause, nutrition, osteoporosis, stress management and life-balance issues.

Take the time to better care for your health and the health of your loved ones. Membership is free, but the benefits last a lifetime!

! Join today!

To start benefiting from all the program has to offer, call (325) 649-3392 or visit www.brmc-cares.com.

HEALTHY WOMAN

A BROWNWOOD REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER RESOURCE

First name _____ MI _____

Last name _____

E-mail address* _____

@ _____

Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Phone number () _____ - _____

Date of birth ____/____/____

Last four digits of your Social Security number** _____

Yes, you can provide my e-mail address to Healthy Woman sponsors so they may send me information of interest to women like myself.

I prefer attending Healthy Woman events on (day of the week):

during lunch or in the evening

I'm interested in learning more about this/these topic(s):

You can register on our Web site, www.brmc-cares.com, or mail or fax this form to:
Brownwood Regional Medical Center Healthy Woman
1501 Burnet Drive / Brownwood, TX 76801
Fax: (325) 646-5459 • Phone: (325) 649-3392

* You're not required to provide an e-mail address. However, doing so will allow you to receive event information and e-mail newsletters with valuable health information.

** This information is always kept strictly confidential. We use it only to identify Healthy Woman members who use our hospital.

www.brmc-cares.com

70BRM



Brownwood Regional Medical Center
1501 Burnet Drive
Brownwood, TX 76801

PRSR* STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Lebanon Junction, KY
Permit 19

FALL 2008

Health Connection

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 healthcare provider.

Copyright © 2008 Brownwood Regional Medical Center