

Health Connection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY BROWNWOOD REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

**How strong are
your bones?**

This scan will
help you find out

**Join our
OB club**

**Are you
exercise savvy?**
Find out inside!

**Be wise—
immunize!**

Here comes baby!
Tips for a healthy
pregnancy



Brownwood Regional
MEDICAL CENTER

www.brmc-cares.com

Mind your medicine

Smart strategies to stay well



Adults over age 65 who have adverse drug reactions account for more than 177,000 emergency room visits each year. One-third of these visits are related to three drugs: warfarin (a blood thinner), insulin (for diabetes) and digoxin (a heart medicine). Many of these reactions can be avoided with better communication between patient and physician. Follow this advice to help you avoid becoming a statistic:

- **Tell your physician about all the medicine you're taking.** That

includes prescription medications and over-the-counter drugs and supplements. Your physician will want to make sure you're not taking anything that can cause a reaction or affect a drug's potency. For example, Ginkgo biloba, garlic, ginger and ginseng can all interact with warfarin, as can medications taken for headaches and joint pain, such as aspirin and ibuprofen. Iron and calcium supplements can interfere with thyroid medication absorption.

- **Ask questions.** Don't be afraid to ask your physician to clarify a medication's purpose and common side effects. Also make sure you know when and how often you should take it and what to do if you miss a dose. Learn both the medicine's brand name and generic name and its shape, size and color.
- **Write it down.** Keep a list of all the medications you take in your wallet in case you do end up in the ER. This will allow physicians and nurses to avoid giving you medicine that could cause a dangerous interaction.
- **Take your medication as prescribed.** Don't stop your treatment because you think it's not working, you have side effects or you think your pill-taking regimen is hard to stick with. Instead, call your physician. He or she may be able to prescribe a different medicine or dosage to minimize side effects or simplify your regimen.

Also let your physician know if you've stopped taking a prescribed medicine. Otherwise, he or she may assume the drug isn't working and give you a higher dosage or different medication.

- **Go to follow-up appointments.** Some medications, such as blood thinners and drugs for diabetes, seizures and heart problems, require regular blood tests and monitoring by your physician. Regular visits are crucial to ensure you're getting a safe and effective dose.



Snap, crackle, pop!

What are your joints telling you?

Your body is a symphony of sounds—that cracking in your ankles, the popping in your knee. What causes these noises? Sometimes, it's just ligaments or tendons tightening and moving with a joint. For the most part, these sounds are normal and don't require any treatment.

But sometimes these noises can signal a more serious problem. A loud pop and locking of a joint can mean that torn cartilage, a piece of bone or something else has gotten caught between joint surfaces. Cracking and grinding may be a sign of arthritis. A loss of smooth cartilage and roughening of the joint surface is to blame for these noises.

JUST MAKING NOISE?

To find out whether your popping and cracking should be of concern, look for the following signs. See your physician if you have any of these symptoms:

- pain accompanying the popping
- swelling of the joint
- locking or sticking of the joint
- loss of motion or function

A JOINT EFFORT

The Arthritis Foundation and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons suggest following these tips to keep your joints healthy:

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Stretch to increase your flexibility. Ask your physician to help you develop a regular stretching program.
- Stand up straight, shoulders back.
- When you lift heavy objects, use your legs instead of using your back. If you can't lift something yourself, ask for help.



- Alternate heavy activity such as housework, brisk walking or strenuous yardwork with rest periods.
- Wear protective gear, such as wrist, elbow or knee pads, if you're engaging in an activity where you could fall.
- Pay attention to your body. Pain may be a sign you're overworking your joints.
- Eat a well-balanced diet that includes plenty of calcium (1,200 mg a day for those over age 50; 1,000 mg for those ages 19 to 50).

Knuckle cracking: Bad to the bone?

Some people just can't resist cracking their knuckles. The cracking sound you hear is the "popping" of air bubbles when the joint is pushed or pulled a certain way. Knuckle cracking can certainly be annoying to others, but does it really make your knuckles larger? That old wives' tale hasn't been proven, but this is still a habit you should try to break, as studies point to possible soft-tissue damage in joints, a weak grip and hand swelling as a result of repeated cracking.



Making smart decisions during pregnancy



By Dan Stewart, M.D.
Obstetrics and Gynecology Specialist

Pregnancy can be an exciting time, but some women may feel overwhelmed by warnings and advice from family and friends. However, following certain widely recognized guidelines can significantly impact the health of mother and baby, minimize complications and birth defects and shorten the recovery process. Babies born to mothers who don't receive prenatal care are five times more likely to die and three times more likely to be of low birth weight.

HEALTHY LIFE, HEALTHY BABY

One of the most important steps a woman can take to ensure a healthy pregnancy is to establish a healthy lifestyle before pregnancy. This includes following a healthy diet, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding tobacco, drugs and alcohol. Women

Have a safe pregnancy

During your pregnancy, your physician may recommend you:

- avoid hot tubs or saunas, high-bacteria environments
- avoid optional unshielded X-rays since radiation can be harmful to the developing fetus
- avoid cleaning out cat litter boxes, as this is linked to a disease known as toxoplasmosis, which can cause miscarriages, stillbirths and birth defects
- get adequate rest, since fatigue is common during pregnancy
- consider getting a flu shot, which will also protect the unborn child
- wear a seat belt correctly, with the lap belt across the hips under the belly

planning to become pregnant should consult a physician for advice about lifestyle changes and healthy practices that will contribute to a healthy pregnancy.

Folic acid, a form of vitamin B, plays an integral role in preventing neurological defects, such as spina bifida. Maintaining adequate folic acid levels is especially important in the first few weeks of pregnancy, before most women are even aware they have conceived. This is why most physicians recommend a daily multivitamin with iron that contains at least 400 micrograms of folic acid for all women of child-bearing age.

EXERCISE AND PREGNANCY

Women who are active often enjoy an easier labor and shorter recovery time after birth, so pregnant women should continue to exercise unless otherwise instructed by a physician. Most pregnant women can continue walking, swimming or cycling, but should avoid activities that involve high impact or that could lead to falling.

! Get ready for baby!

For more information about health during pregnancy, visit www.brmc-cares.com and click on "Discovery Hospital." If you need a physician referral, call the BRMC physician referral line at (325) 649-3394.

Concerned about osteoporosis?

It's estimated that more than 44 million Americans are at risk of developing osteoporosis, a silent, progressive disease characterized by decreased bone density and increasingly fragile bones. A bone density test is a relatively simple, quick and painless way to determine your bone health. Thanks to the addition of an advanced bone densitometer at Brownwood Regional Medical Center's (BRMC) Brownwood Diagnostic Center, people can now have their bone density tested before it becomes a health risk.

PREVENT FRACTURES

The clinical bone densitometer is the first unit of its kind in the Brownwood area. The bone densitometer uses a technology called dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry, or DEXA, to measure bone mineral content and the density of specific bone sites (mainly the hip and spine) most susceptible to fracture from osteoporosis and other degenerative bone diseases.

Bone density testing requires no injections or invasive procedures. During the test, a patient lies fully clothed on a padded table while the machine scans one or more areas of bone. The entire test normally takes just minutes to complete.



▲ The new bone densitometer at BRMC tests bone density before it becomes a health risk.

! Keep your bones strong!

For more information about DEXA technology, call **Teresa Morris, Brownwood Diagnostic Center radiologic technologist, at (325) 649-3652. To schedule an exam, contact your healthcare provider. For referrals, call the BRMC physician referral line at (325) 649-3394.**

Neighbor caring for neighbor

Dear friends,

We're kicking off another great year at Brownwood Regional Medical Center (BRMC). We're proud to be not only the hometown hospital for Brown County residents, but the major regional referral center for several surrounding counties, community hospitals and physicians.

RECOGNIZED FOR QUALITY

With a medical staff experienced in most medical and surgical specialties, BRMC is regularly called upon to provide comprehensive care to many patients living in Mills, Comanche, Coleman, Eastland, McCulloch and San Saba Counties. As the only hospital in the region accredited by The Joint Commission, BRMC is committed to continuously improving the quality of our service and care. In November, The Joint Commission awarded BRMC a three-year accreditation, its highest award.



UNIQUE SERVICES

Residents from across Central Texas can find unique healthcare services at BRMC's Walker Cancer Center, Heart Center, Women's Center and Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Center. "Caring for Generations" and "Neighbor Caring for Neighbor" aren't just slogans, they're our core beliefs.

Thank you for entrusting BRMC with your family's care, generation after generation. We look forward to serving you in the future.

To your good health,

MATT MAXFIELD, FACHE
Chief Executive Officer
Brownwood Regional Medical Center



HEALTHWISE QUIZ

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

Take this quiz to find out.

1 To lose one pound, you need to burn how many calories?

- a. 500
- b. 1,500
- c. 2,500
- d. 3,500

2 A good way to measure the intensity of an exercise is to keep track of your:

- a. heart rate
- b. blood pressure
- c. sweat levels
- d. thirst intensity

3 Exercise can:

- a. reduce depression
- b. help manage type 2 diabetes
- c. boost good HDL cholesterol
- d. all of the above

4 The *minimum* amount of time you should be active every day is:

- a. 15 minutes
- b. 20 minutes
- c. 30 minutes
- d. there is no minimum

5 Which of the following exercises will *not* help you build stronger bones?

- a. running
- b. swimming
- c. lifting weights
- d. dancing

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

The kidney-heart connection

If you think kidney disease only affects your kidneys, think again. Though researchers can't fully explain the link, kidney disease is an independent risk factor for heart disease and greatly increases the risk of dying from heart problems. In fact, heart disease is the most common cause of death for the more than 20 million Americans with chronic kidney disease.

WHO GETS KIDNEY DISEASE?

Kidney disease is often called a "silent killer" because many people don't even know they have it until it reaches an advanced stage. Risk factors include being obese; smoking; and having high blood pressure, diabetes or a family history of kidney disease. Ask your physician about testing if you're at risk. If he or she suspects you may have chronic kidney disease, blood and urine samples can diagnose it.

KEEP YOUR KIDNEYS HEALTHY

If you already have kidney disease, early treatment can help keep it from getting worse. But the best method of attack is to prevent the problem in the first place. Take these steps to minimize your risk:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Eat healthful foods and be active every day.
- **Quit smoking.** Besides the damage it can do to your heart, smoking can interfere with medicine for high blood pressure.
- **Get your blood pressure level to 120/80 mm Hg or lower.**

Start by slashing salt from your diet and getting more potassium (found in bananas, apricots and broccoli). If changing your diet doesn't help, discuss medications with your physician.

- **Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.** Dietary changes and medication may be needed.



'Brake' for breakfast



You wouldn't take off for a road trip with no fuel in your car, so it doesn't make much sense to send your body out for the day with nothing to run on. Your tank needs breakfast.

Studies have shown that those who eat this most important meal of the day are less tired and irritable, have better concentration and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Not a bacon-and-eggs person? No problem. Try these

out-of-the-cereal-box suggestions from the American Dietetic Association:

- one cup of vanilla low-fat yogurt topped with whole-grain cereal and berries
- leftover veggie pizza with a piece of fruit and a glass of milk
- whole-grain toast topped with a little peanut butter and apple slices
- whole-grain waffles or pancakes topped with fresh banana
- a super-fast smoothie, made from frozen fruit and yogurt, whipped up in a blender
- a breakfast wrap (try low-sodium deli turkey, low-fat cheese and spinach in a tortilla)
- oatmeal sprinkled with cinnamon and walnuts

Ready, aim, vaccinate!

Vaccines aren't just for babies. If your child hasn't been to the pediatrician in a while, he or she may have missed some important shots. And don't forget that adults need vaccines, too! Talk

with your pediatrician about your child's specific needs and whether he or she is at high risk. And ask your own physician about *your* needs. Use this handy chart as your guide.

IMMUNIZATION	BIRTH TO AGE 6	AGES 7-18	AGES 19+
Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (DTap, Td/Tdap)	4 doses by 18 months; final dose at age 6	Kids need a booster at ages 11-12. For teens, ask your pediatrician if your child is up to date.	Get a Td booster every 10 years. If you're under age 65 and haven't been vaccinated with Tdap before, you need a single dose.
Haemophilus influenzae type b	4 doses by age 15 months		
Hepatitis A	2 doses between 12 and 23 months	High-risk kids and adults need a vaccination.	
Hepatitis B	3 doses within first 18 months of life	Ask your pediatrician if your child is up to date.	High-risk adults should be immunized.
Human papillomavirus (HPV)		3 doses are recommended for girls ages 11-12, or later if a young woman isn't up to date. Ask your physician about the pros and cons of vaccination.	
Inactivated polio virus	3 doses by 18 months	Ask your pediatrician if your child is up to date.	
Influenza	Yearly, for kids ages 6 months to 19 years		Anyone <i>can</i> get vaccinated; high-risk adults and those over age 50 <i>should</i> be.
Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)	1 dose at 12-15 months; another at ages 4-6	Ask your pediatrician if your child is up to date.	If you haven't had this vaccine, you need it. High-risk adults need a second dose. If you were born before 1957, you're considered immune to measles and mumps.
Meningococcal (meningitis)	Ask your pediatrician if your child is high risk.	It's recommended for kids ages 11-12; otherwise, ask your pediatrician if your child is at high risk.	It's a must for high-risk groups.
Pneumococcal (pneumonia)	4 doses of pneumococcal conjugate by 15 months	High-risk kids and adults need the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine. Adults should get vaccinated at age 65; some older adults may need a booster.	
Rotavirus	3 doses by 6 months		
Varicella (chicken pox)	1 dose at 12-15 months; another at ages 4-6	Ask your pediatrician if your child is up to date.	If you aren't up to date and never had the chicken pox, speak with your physician.
Zoster (shingles)			Get it once, at age 60 or older.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Give your baby a healthy start!

A club for you and your little one

Your baby will be here before you know it. Make your childbirth experience an even more cherished event by enrolling in Brownwood Regional Medical Center's (BRMC) Tiny Toes OB club. When you join Tiny Toes, you'll enjoy these benefits:

- **An obstetrics unit tour.** Schedule a tour, meet our staff and ask questions. To schedule your tour, call (325) 649-3313.
- **Online resources.** When you visit www.brmc-cares.com and click on "Health Resources," you'll have access to a wealth of current information about pregnancy and childbirth.
- **Your free copy of "What to Expect When You're Expecting."** This book is filled with helpful tips and information about your changing body and

developing baby, and how to fully enjoy pregnancy and your child's birth.

- **Birthing classes.** Available for new or repeat moms; call (325) 649-3313 for topics, times and dates.
- **Keepsakes celebrating your child's birth.** When your baby arrives, you'll get a certificate with your baby's length, weight and time of birth and a Tiny Toes keepsake folder with discounts and more from area merchants.
- **Local merchant discounts.** When you leave the hospital, you'll receive even more special offers and perks from local merchants.

! Join Tiny Toes today!



Enhance your childbirth experience with all the benefits of BRMC's Tiny Toes OB club. To join, ask your physician or visit www.brmc-cares.com today.

www.brmc-cares.com

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