



Hill Regional Hospital

Hillsboro, Texas

HealthConnection

THE MAGAZINE OF HILL REGIONAL HOSPITAL



Are
you getting
enough
sleep?
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Healthbriefs

> Butter and margarine go head to head



You see them next to each other in the grocery store, but which one do you choose? And, more importantly, which type of fat is better for your heart? The decision is in: Most margarine choices are a healthier option than butter, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Because margarine is made from vegetable oils, it doesn't contain dietary cholesterol and it's higher in polyunsaturated and monounsaturated, or "good," fats, which, when substituted for saturated fats, help reduce low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol. On the other hand, butter contains high levels of saturated fat and cholesterol because it's made from animal fat.

Buyers beware, though: Choose your margarine carefully. Solid margarine—which comes in stick form—isn't a good choice because it contains trans fat. Instead, choose soft or liquid margarine and check labels for the spread with the lowest calories, the least amount of saturated fat and no trans fat.



Are you at risk?

Have you been checked for high cholesterol? Make an appointment with your doctor to discuss your risk factors and ways you can lower your risk.

> Long commutes take toll on the heart

Do you have a long ride to and from work? Well, here's another drawback to the aggravation you may feel being trapped in your car: According to a study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, which looked at almost 4,300 Texas city workers, the longer you're behind the wheel during your commute, the worse your heart health. Waistlines expanded, exercise routines disappeared, and with these bad habits came higher blood pressure and excess pounds.

Even for those who did exercise, these heart disease risk factors didn't disappear, which means there's probably something to the commute itself that's harming hearts. Researchers hypothesize it could be that long-distance drivers are burning fewer calories overall and stress could be taking a toll. Researchers suggest finding other ways to add activity to your day, so don't hesitate to bring a pair of walking shoes to work and hit the sidewalks during your lunch break.



> Could it be a pinched nerve?

Pinched nerves, which occur when too much pressure is applied to a nerve by surrounding tissues, such as bones, cartilage or muscles, can be painful and irritating. Understanding if you're at an increased risk of one day experiencing a pinched nerve is the best way to help prevent it. Here are five risk factors:

- 1 Posture.** Proper posture decreases the pressure to your spine and nerves.
- 2 Bone spurs.** Conditions like osteoarthritis can cause you to develop bone spurs. They can stiffen the spine and narrow the space where your nerves travel.
- 3 Overuse.** Activities that involve extensive use of your hands, wrists and shoulders can increase your risk of a pinched nerve.
- 4 Obesity.** Having excess weight adds more pressure from muscles and body tissue onto your nerves.
- 5 Pregnancy.** Weight gain from pregnancy can swell your nerve passages and pinch your nerves.



Sleep and your brain

For optimal health, get your shut-eye

➤ Sleep is a time for you to rest and, hopefully, get refreshed and ready to face the new day. For your brain, sleep is a time for work.

During those blissful hours of shut-eye, your brain is playing an integral part in the maintenance of your nervous system, laying pathways to help you learn and create new memories. Some experts also think that sleep affords our brains the opportunity to rest hardworking neurons before they have a chance to malfunction. In addition, connections between neurons that aren't frequently used may finally get a chance to exercise during sleep as a way of preventing their deterioration.

If you cut your sleep sessions short (or get less than the recommended seven to eight hours), you're interrupting these vital processes and, as you probably know, making it more difficult to remember things or concentrate. You may find it more difficult to work, drive or function in general. Hallucinations and mood swings may also develop in more severe cases of sleep deprivation.

Some very preliminary research also seems to suggest that poor sleep habits may age your brain and contribute to cognitive health problems such as dementia, but more research is needed. On other, more definitive health fronts, lack of sleep has been linked to heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

Here's to good sleep

Struggling to get that elusive sleep can be frustrating, but a good night's sleep isn't just a dream. To keep your brain in tip-top shape:

➤ **Schedule bedtime.** Going to sleep at the same time every night can help program your body into a healthy cycle.

➤ **Exercise regularly.** A good workout—if not timed too close to bedtime, or about five to six hours before you go to bed—can help you achieve a deeper sleep.


➤ **Skip the cigarettes, nicotine and alcohol,** all of which can negatively affect your quality of sleep.

➤ **Relax.** Read a book or soak in a nice, warm bath before going to sleep.

➤ **Avoid staying in bed if you can't sleep.** Find another low-key activity to do until you feel sleepy.

➤ **Keep your room cool, but not too cool.** Extreme temperatures that make you uncomfortable will keep you from getting sleep.

➤ **Wake with the sun.** It helps reset your body's internal clock. ●



While you sleep, **your brain** is playing an integral part in the **maintenance** of your **nervous system**, laying pathways to help you learn and **create new memories**.



From us TO YOU

DEAR FRIENDS,

JAN McCLURE
Chief Executive
Officer

Everyone at Hill Regional
Hospital wishes you a

Happy New Year! We would
like to thank our patients for making 2012 a
successful year.

I want to mention a couple of accomplish-
ments from 2012 that we're very proud of.
We continue to recruit new medical talent
to our team to better serve you. Richard
Alexander, M.D., general surgeon, joined our
staff at the end of 2011. He's a great asset to
this community, and we're fortunate to have his
skills at Hill Regional. We opened a sleep lab,
which provides advanced diagnostic tools for
assessing and treating sleep disorders. If you
have trouble sleeping, as many people do, you
might consider discussing the need for a sleep
study with your doctor.

We continue to provide new services to
better serve the healthcare needs of you and
your family. We're honored that you trust us with
your family's healthcare, and thank you for your
continued support. As always, if you have
any comments or questions, call me at
(254) 580-8950.

Sincerely,

Jan McClure

*Chief Executive Officer
Hill Regional Hospital*

PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

We are pleased to introduce our new
general surgeon, who has joined the
medical staff of Hill Regional Hospital.
When it comes to finding a doctor,
we've got you covered.



Richard A. Alexander, M.D.
General Surgeon

Hill County Surgical Services
1323 E. Franklin, Suite 101
Hillsboro
(254) 580-9989

Board-certified general surgeon Richard A.
Alexander, M.D., completed his internship
and residency in general surgery at
Howard University College of Medicine in
Washington, D.C. In 2010, he moved to
San Antonio, where he attended the Texas
Endosurgery Institute and earned a fellowship
in minimally invasive surgery. Dr. Alexander is
currently accepting new patients.

To learn more about Dr. Alexander, visit
www.HillRegionalHospital.com



Find the right doctor for you!

Visit www.HillRegionalHospital.com
and click on "Find a Physician" to search
for a doctor by specialty.

Bounce back with **rehabilitation services at HRH**

➤ The physical therapy team at Hill Regional Hospital (HRH) works with patients and their families to reduce and resolve physical impairments from injury or disease, improve functional mobility and return patients to maximum levels of independence. Physical therapists (PTs) work with the referring doctors and the entire interdisciplinary team to establish outcome goals and meet treatment expectations.

Therapists are educated and specialize in body mechanics. Their hands-on approach begins with a thorough evaluation, which includes teaching patients how to care for themselves by prescribing specialized exercises to stretch, strengthen and protect them from further injury.

In addition to providing pain management services, PTs assess and treat:

- pain and aches of the back, neck, knees, hips, shoulders and other joints and muscles
- orthopedic injuries and disorders
- spinal injuries
- neurological disorders
- work-related injuries
- wounds
- mobility dysfunction

Treatment at the center

After a doctor orders therapy for a patient, an initial evaluation is scheduled. The therapist determines the patients' rehabilitation needs and works with the patient to establish goals. It's common for a patient to be treated two to three times a week, but some patients may be seen daily. The total length of therapy depends on many factors such as the patients overall health and treatment goals.

Our skilled and experienced therapists do all they can for our patients, from returning them to the greatest possible independence to relieving their pain. Patients' attendance in therapy and compliance with exercise programs are important to progress toward their goals.

Outpatient rehabilitation

After returning home from your hospital stay, you'll likely need additional outpatient physical therapy. You may receive these services at the hospital's outpatient rehabilitation center, which is easily accessible for outpatient convenience.

"Our goal is to help patients maximize their level of independence by tailoring treatment to the specific needs of each patient," says Jeff Tabor, director of rehabilitation services for HRH.

Orthopedics therapy

Our orthopedic surgeon and physical therapist work in collaboration to ensure optimal recovery and care for our patients. HRH orthopedic surgery specialties include:

- arthroscopic repair of the shoulder and knee
- carpal tunnel release
- complex hip and knee joint reconstruction
- general orthopedic surgeries, including fracture
- total hip and knee replacement ●



➤ The physical therapy team at Hill Regional Hospital provides pain management services and assesses and treats pain; aches; orthopedic, spinal and work-related injuries; neurological disorders; wounds; and mobility dysfunction.



Don't stay sidelined!

To learn more about rehabilitation services at Hill Regional Hospital, call **(254) 580-8995**. Referrals are accepted from doctors, insurance companies and other rehabilitation providers. Most insurance plans, Medicare and Medicaid are accepted.

HealthWise QUIZ

How much do you know about medication management?

> TAKE THIS QUIZ TO FIND OUT.

1 According to the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration), splitting pills:

- a. is safe for all medications
- b. can affect the way a medication is absorbed
- c. should never be done unless the pills are approved for splitting and you have your doctor's OK
- d. both b and c

2 Which tip is not recommended for storing medication?

- a. Store it in a cool, dry place.
- b. Keep it in the original container.
- c. Keep the cotton plug in the bottle.
- d. none of the above

3 When talking with your doctor, you should let him or her know you take:

- a. vitamins
- b. over-the-counter medicines
- c. herbal supplements
- d. all of the above

4 Which of the following drugs can interact with St. John's wort?

- a. blood thinners
- b. antidepressants
- c. pain medications (narcotics)
- d. all of the above

5 When ordering medication online, you should only purchase from a website that:

- a. has an FDA seal of approval
- b. is accredited by the Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites (VIPPS) program
- c. is based in Canada
- d. has testimonials

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



Coping with stroke

> You didn't see it coming, but few people who have a stroke do. And as you may know by now, surviving a stroke is only half the battle. How do you cope with a life that's forever changed?

First off, know that there are many people facing the same situation as you. Almost 800,000 people have strokes every year. Some may recover with only minor residual effects, while others are left with permanent disabilities. Learning to cope with your individual situation is critical to recovery. Here are some strategies that may help:

> **Recognize the emotions.** You'll likely go through a range of emotions, from sadness about things you may no longer be able to do, to anger about why this happened to you, to frustration with the difficulty of communicating with loved ones. All of these are normal feelings. If you're experiencing extended periods of sadness, have lost interest in

life or have thoughts of suicide, seek help immediately because these are symptoms of depression. If you're a caregiver of someone with stroke, learn to recognize the signs.

> **Work with the new you.**

Recuperating will take time and a lot of hard work, and you may not totally get back to where you were before. Set small goals for yourself and celebrate as you reach them. And don't be afraid to rest. Remain active. You may not be moving the way you used to, but don't feel embarrassed by having to use a cane or wheelchair. You need to get out, even if only for a short time. If your loved one has had a stroke, encourage him or her to meet up with friends or engage in enjoyable activities, if he or she is up to it.

> **Ask for help.** Don't be afraid to reach out to friends and family to assist with errands or just stop by for a visit. ●

Just desserts

Satisfying a sweet tooth—without the guilt

➤ You make it through dinner, keeping your promise to limit the calories and fat. But then comes the course that almost always gets you to cave: dessert.

Though it can be a calorie and fat trap, you don't have to skimp on the meal's finale. Instead, you need to find a way to satisfy that sweet tooth without guilt. And that's where nature's sweetest low-fat, low-calorie offering—fruit!—comes in:

- **Apple of your eye:** Slice up some apples and sprinkle with a little bit of cinnamon, then bake.
- **Layer:** Alternate layers of nonfat yogurt with fresh fruit in a parfait glass.
- **Get your calcium, too:** Keep low-fat

or nonfat fruit yogurt on hand for an afternoon pick-me-up.

➤ **The grill isn't only for meat:** Slice up peaches, bananas and pineapples and give them a little heat, which will bring out their natural sweetness.

➤ **Try an even quicker sweet fix:**

Pop open some canned fruit (canned in its own juice or water—no heavy syrup!) and enjoy.

➤ **Think heavenly:** Not all cakes are created equal. Angel food cake is a healthy option that's made even better with the addition of some fresh fruit or fruit puree on top.

➤ **Make your own icy treat:** Freeze grapes and bananas for an ice cream alternative. Choose wisely: If your dessert options are limited to a restaurant menu, look for a fruit salad or sorbet, sherbet or meringues and skip the chocolate lava cake.

➤ **Get creative:** OK, so you really want to make that brownie recipe. You can still cut down on the sugar intake by substituting equal amounts of unsweetened applesauce, or cutting the amount of sugar in half. ●



'V' is for vitamin

Do your kids need vitamin supplements?

➤ Growing up, health sources touted that getting all your vitamins and minerals was your ticket to a life spent big and strong. Today, parents have a multitude of vitamin choices to help their children get all those necessary

nutrients. But does your child really need them?

It's a question with no easy answer, experts say. Research has only seemed to make things more confusing for parents. A recent study led by the National Institutes of Health found that children who could have benefited the most from vitamins often weren't getting them, and those children who didn't need them were taking them. The study also found that some children—whether their parents supplemented their diet with vitamins or not—were deficient in the nutrients vitamin D and calcium while many took in too much iron and vitamin A, leading researchers

to hypothesize that those pills may not be a good match for today's childhood diets.

What should you do?

The general recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics is that supplements are rarely needed in children ages 5 to 10 because most children can get all the vitamins and minerals they need through diet alone. But for children who may have more erratic or poor eating habits, or follow a certain diet (for example, vegetarian without dairy), a supplement may be necessary.

Start by talking with your pediatrician about your child's habits to see if a supplement might be beneficial. Your pediatrician might have other suggestions about how your child can meet nutritional goals (for example, finding alternative food sources that your child enjoys). ●





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Sleep your troubles away

Chronic, long-term sleep disorders affect more than 40 million Americans, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, and an additional 20 million people have occasional sleep problems.

Sleep disorders encompass a variety of problems and conditions that prevent restful sleep. These problems and conditions stem from diverse sources, which sometimes cause sleep disorders that are hard to diagnose and treat. Sleep labs are instrumental in diagnosing disorders such as sleep apnea, (especially obstructive sleep apnea), insomnia, excessive daytime sleepiness, narcolepsy, restless legs or periodic limb movement disorder, sleepwalking, night terrors, sleep violence, sleep eating and gastroesophageal reflux, all of which have common and broad symptoms.

For those who have trouble sleeping or experience sleep disorders, sleep lab tests help patients and their primary doctors understand how their bodies function during sleep. These tests, in conjunction with patients' symptoms, are extremely effective in determining the cause and type of sleep disorder.

Common sleep lab tests

Some of the common tests run in sleep labs are a polysomnogram, the multiple sleep latency test, and the multiple wake test, all of which can diagnose a wide variety of sleep disorders. A polysomnogram, for example, records several body muscle movements. Seeing how these different systems function helps sleep researchers and doctors analyze and diagnose sleep problems or disorders. The multiple sleep latency test measures the amount of time necessary to fall asleep and the body's movements during sleep. This test can determine the reason a patient takes a significant amount of time to fall asleep on a regular basis. The multiple wake test determines if and how well a person can stay awake during normal waking hours. If a patient's persistent sleep problems have significant impact during waking hours, this test can help determine how they can stay awake better. Sufferers of narcolepsy, for instance, might find the results of a multiple wake test useful. ●



Goodbye sleepless nights

If you're experiencing trouble staying awake, falling asleep or staying asleep, a sleep study might be your best option to determine your individual problem. To learn more about sleep disorders, talk with your doctor about participating in a sleep study. You can also visit www.HillRegionalHospital.com.