

Health Connection

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Is it a
sore throat
or strep
throat?
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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**.



A message FROM OUR CEO

KYLE SWIFT
Chief Executive
Officer

DEAR FRIENDS,

Providing our community with high quality healthcare services, delivered with compassion remains a priority at Medical Center of South Arkansas (MCSA). As we expand our services to meet the needs of our community, I am pleased to announce our recent addition of four new doctors.

Umanga Sharma, M.D., and Sandesh Pokharel, M.D., are both internal medicine doctors who have joined South Arkansas Center on Aging and are seeing patients ages 55 and up.

Albert Obiozo, M.D., a pediatrician, has come onboard with South Arkansas Pediatric Associates. The pediatric clinic has moved to the second floor of Grove Medical Complex, just across from USA Drug. We're proud to have each of these doctors join the medical staff of MCSA.

Rosaline Fraser, M.D., family practice, has joined our newest clinic, South Arkansas Family Care Center. For your convenience, Dr. Fraser's clinic accepts walk-ins and is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and is located in the Grove Medical Complex.

Please visit www.TheMedCenter.net and choose "Find A Physician" for assistance with contact information for scheduling appointments with these new doctors.

We're very proud to have these exceptional additions to our medical staff and to our community!

Thank you for trusting us with your care.

With gratitude,

Kyle Swift

Chief Executive Officer
Medical Center of South Arkansas

PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT



Albert Obiozo, M.D.
Pediatrician

South Arkansas Pediatric Associates
Grove Medical Complex
620 W. Grove St., Suite 2, El Dorado
(870) 863-9520

Albert Obiozo, M.D., has begun his practice with South Arkansas Pediatric Associates.

After graduating from medical school at University of Nigeria, Dr. Obiozo completed his pediatric residency with University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He has also coordinated clinical trials, including training of residents, data collection, organizing community outreach and participation in numerous studies.

Dr. Obiozo enjoys the family atmosphere of El Dorado, as well as a newly renovated clinic in the Grove Medical Complex—complete with animal-themed exam tables, sick and well baby waiting areas, experienced staff and advanced technologies.

When not in the office, Dr. Obiozo enjoys spending time with his family, including four children, and playing soccer and chess. Join us in welcoming Dr. Obiozo and his family to our community!

Dr. Obiozo is a member of the medical staff at Medical Center of South Arkansas.



Make an appointment!

Dr. Obiozo is accepting new patients. To schedule an appointment, call **(870) 863-9520**. Most insurances and AR Kids First are accepted.



Menopause: Facts you should know

BY UMANGA SHARMA, M.D., INTERNAL MEDICINE

It's important to sort fact from fiction when it comes to coping with the changes that may accompany menopause. Here's what women need to know to minimize symptoms when their ovaries slowly stop producing estrogen and releasing an egg each month.

Bone loss

Bones begin to thin and weaken, putting women at risk for osteoporosis.

What you can do:

- 1 Exercise regularly. Choose weight-bearing exercises such as walking and weight lifting.
- 2 Eat a balanced diet with calcium and vitamin D. If you're postmenopausal and not taking estrogen, you need 1,200 milligrams (mg) of calcium each day, and 1,000 mg a day if you're premenopausal or are taking estrogen. The recommended daily intake of vitamin D is 400 IU; it increases to 600 IU for those older than age 70.
- 3 Quit smoking. Smoking speeds bone loss by hampering calcium absorption.
- 4 Reduce your alcohol intake. More than two drinks a day can decrease calcium absorption.

Heart attack risk

Arteries are more likely to develop atherosclerosis, a narrowing of the vessels that can cause a heart attack.

What you can do:

- 1 Have your blood pressure checked regularly. Get treatment if necessary.
- 2 Have your cholesterol tested and reduce your intake of saturated fats and cholesterol.

- 3 Quit smoking. Smoking causes the platelets (clotting agents) in the blood to cluster, making blood thicker.
- 4 Get moving. Exercise helps cleanse the blood of fats that can block arteries.

Bladder problems

Muscle tone in the bladder and urethra are reduced, leading to mild urinary incontinence.

What you can do:

- 1 Do Kegel exercises. Strengthen the pelvic-floor muscles by alternately contracting and relaxing them (as if you were trying to stop the flow of urine).

Hot flashes

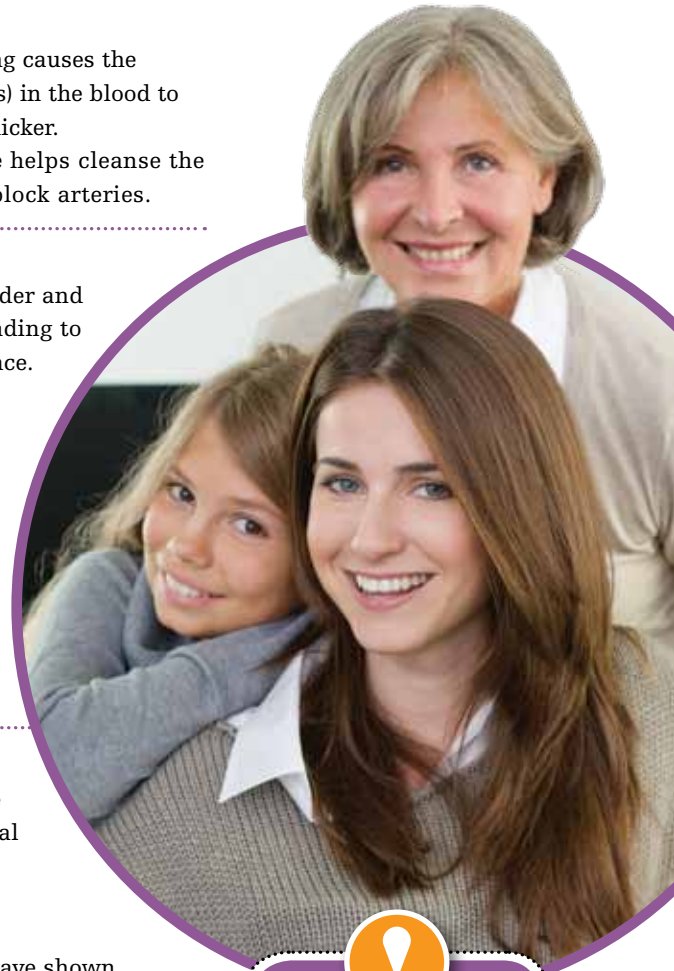
Hot flashes occur as the body adjusts to hormonal changes.

What you can do:

- 1 Stay active. Studies have shown that women who exercise are less likely to experience hot flashes.
- 2 Quit smoking. It can aggravate hot flashes, as can alcohol (especially red wine), caffeine and stress.

Does menopause have to threaten your health or your lifestyle? Absolutely not! You can reduce the side effects of "the change" by eating right, exercising and stopping smoking. ●

Dr. Sharma is a member of the medical staff at Medical Center of South Arkansas.



Take care of your body

To learn more about menopause, your general health, or to make an appointment, call Umanga Sharma, M.D., at South Arkansas Center on Aging, (870) 863-4996.

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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Sore throat vs. strep throat

BY SANDESH POKHAREL, M.D., INTERNAL MEDICINE

When sore throat symptoms persist, you often wonder if it's from a cold, strep throat or tonsillitis. A sore throat can often simply be caused from the common cold—or it can be more serious, requiring antibiotics to make the nagging pain go away.

Sore throat

A sore throat can often be the first sign of a cold. Unfortunately, there's no cure for a sore throat caused by a cold virus, but to speed healing of your sore throat and cold, be sure to get enough rest and drink plenty of fluids.

Pain relievers, such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen, can offer relief from the aches and pains of a cold and sore throat. Sore throat sprays and lozenges can also soothe the throat and numb the pain temporarily. Antibiotics shouldn't be used to treat a cold virus and sore throat as antibiotics are effective only against bacteria.

Strep throat

Strep throat, which is caused by *Streptococcus* bacteria, is a major cause

of sore throat and tonsillitis. With strep throat, the pain is often more persistent and severe. Strep throat usually requires antibiotics and is spread through close contact with an infected person or sharing an infected person's personal items. If not treated properly, strep throat can cause more serious illnesses that can even harm the heart valves.

If you have symptoms of strep throat, visit your doctor for an examination and a strep test, a painless test that looks for *Streptococcus* bacteria. With proper treatment, strep throat can usually be cured within 10 days.

If after 10 days you don't feel any better, let your doctor know right away.

For any sore throat conditions, call your doctor if you experience nausea or vomiting, earache, headache, skin rash, painful joints, shortness of breath, dark urine or chest pain. ●

Dr. Pokharel is a member of the medical staff at Medical Center of South Arkansas.



Have a sore throat?

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Sandesh Pokharel, M.D., call South Arkansas Center on Aging at **(870) 863-4996**.