

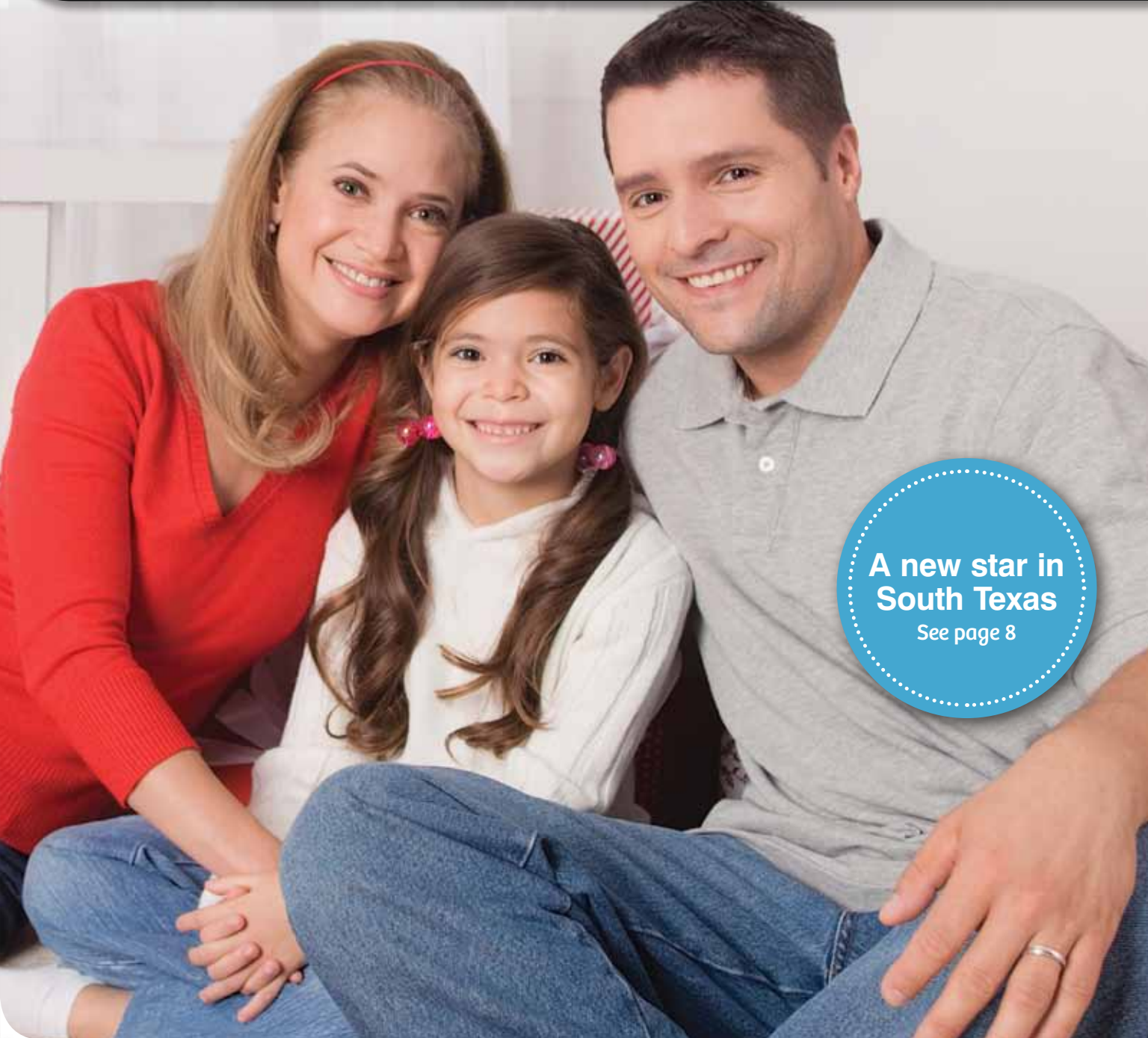


**SOUTH TEXAS REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER**

Quality Care. Right Here.

HealthConnection

BROUGHT TO YOU BY **SOUTH TEXAS REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER**



**A new star in
South Texas**

See page 8

www.STRMC.com • Winter 2013

PAGE 2

**Health news
you can use**

PAGE 3

**7 steps to
better sleep**

PAGE 5

**Growth in size
and service**

PAGE 6

**Life after
stroke**

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

DEAR FRIENDS,

**JIM RESENDEZ,
FACHE**
Chief Executive
Officer

Winter is upon us, and on the campus of your hometown hospital more has changed than just the season.

Construction is well under way for the 50,000-square-foot South Texas Medical Plaza, which is due to open in August. The building will house a number of medical practices and critical hospital departments, such as wound care and physical rehabilitation, that are currently located off campus. Parking concerns and noise from the construction site continue to be issues at the facility, and we humbly ask for your patience during this time while we grow our campus.

Changes and growth

The Joint Commission visited our facility in November to review processes and procedures required for accreditation. We're pleased to announce that we received a solid score of 92 on our survey. We're working diligently to improve the very few areas that were cited during the survey.

We're also pleased to announce that our facility received chest pain certification from the Society of Cardiovascular Care (formerly the Society of Chest Pain Centers). This group reviews standards and protocols to ensure that accredited facilities are committed to excellence in caring for heart disease. We will be expanding this service in the future, and this accreditation is an important step to becoming

the best place to receive cardiovascular care in South Texas.

We've also had some changes on the primary care front. Please join me in welcoming Michael W. Kurz, M.D., to Lone Star Medicine and as a member of the medical staff at South Texas Regional Medical Center. Dr. Kurz is from the area and has returned home after practicing the past several years outside of the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Lone Star Medicine is in great hands with Dr. Kurz and is accepting new patients.

We look forward to a great and prosperous remainder of 2013. As always, thank you for your support of your hometown hospital as we expand our services and grow our physical footprint to better meet your needs.

Best wishes,

Jim Resendez, FACHE

*Chief Executive Officer
South Texas Regional Medical Center*



So many services

South Texas Regional Medical Center is committed to providing new services in the South Texas region. We were named one of the Top 100 Hospitals in the nation because we strive to bring quality, affordable healthcare to our community. Visit www.STRMC.com and choose "Services" to learn more.

The next phase of healthcare

Construction is under way!

➤ Fencing, black tarps, heavy equipment and the dreaded construction trailer mean only one thing—GROWTH. Your hometown hospital is in the midst of unprecedented expansion to better serve the healthcare needs of individuals and families in the community now and well into the future.

The projected completion date for South Texas Medical Plaza is August. To date, we've moved the hospital helipad to its permanent home in front of the emergency department and added more than 200 new parking spaces. We've also completed a staff parking lot behind the hospital to free up spaces for patients and visitors in front of the hospital. The focus is now on the construction of the building itself and the parking area that will surround it.

What's inside

Once open, South Texas Medical Plaza will be home to a number of medical specialties, including:

- Lone Star Medicine
- South Texas Pediatrics
- South Texas Orthopaedics
- South Texas Heart Clinic
- Atascosa Pulmonary and Sleep Associates
- Atascosa Surgery Associates
- Advanced Ob/Gyn Care of South Texas (This practice will move from the existing Steinle Medical Office Building when construction is complete.)

In addition, two hospital departments will be relocated to the new medical office building:

- South Texas Regional Rehabilitation
- South Texas Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center

Moving these two departments means more space, a more ideal configuration and closer proximity to referring doctors and hospital departments that use these services.

Another addition to the medical office building will be community oriented. South Texas Medical Plaza will have a dedicated community room that will provide much-needed hospital meeting space during the day and community group space during evening hours. With a shortage of this type of space in the area, the community room is a highly anticipated venue for local groups.

Obviously with growth comes minor inconveniences. Our staff is working diligently with the general contractor and subcontractors to minimize the impact of construction on patients and visitors to the hospital campus. While we are under construction we ask for your patience. ●



Stay updated!

If you have any questions about South Texas Medical Plaza, the tenants or the community room, call hospital administration at **(830) 769-3515**.

And please clear your calendars for August, when we'll throw a grand opening celebration worthy of this grand addition to South Texas Regional Medical Center.



Rendering of the new South Texas Medical Plaza, scheduled to open in August.



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). ●



Health Connection is published as a community service of South Texas 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 © 2013 South Texas Regional Medical Center

WINTER 2013



www.STRMC.com

70STR



Caring for **your** family

Welcome Dr. Kurz

> Lone Star Medicine has transformed a bit over the past several months, but in the midst of the changes, a commitment to excellent patient care has remained.

A fixture in the primary care community, Lone Star Medicine moved from its offices on Preston to 1240 W. Oaklawn over the summer months. This new location is temporary as the practice will move again in August to the new South Texas Medical Plaza.

Lone Star Medicine also welcomed Michael W. Kurz, M.D., who assumed the role of family doctor for the practice in September. Dr. Kurz grew up in the Somerset community and has strong ties to the local area. Dr. Kurz received his

undergraduate degree from Texas A&M University and his medical degree from Texas Tech University.

"It's an honor to come back home to serve the medical needs of the community," says Dr. Kurz of his decision to move closer to his hometown. Lone Star Medicine is accepting new patients in addition to serving the needs of existing patients.

Please join all of us at South Texas Regional Medical Center in welcoming Dr. Kurz to Lone Star Medicine. ●

Dr. Kurz is a member of the medical staff at STRMC.



Make an appointment

For questions or appointments, call Lone Star Medicine at **(830) 569-5552.**



Did you know?

There's more health information on our website. Visit www.STRMC.com and choose "Health Resources."

