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MEDICAL CENTER

HealthConnection

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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,

CASEY ROBERTSON
Chief Executive Officer

Woodland Heights Medical Center is proud of the excellent reputation we continue to maintain for all of the services we offer. It's rewarding to have our hard work and dedication recognized, as we received several prestigious awards last year for our quality of care:

- Top Performer on Key Quality Measures Award from The Joint Commission
- Texas Health Care Quality Improvement Silver Award from Texas Medical Foundation Health Quality Institute
- Press Ganey Summit Award

To learn more about these awards, visit

www.WoodlandHeights.net and choose "News."

As always, we strive to provide quality healthcare for you and your loved ones, and we thank you for allowing us to be your partner in healthcare.

Best wishes,

Casey Robertson

Chief Executive Officer
Woodland Heights Medical Center

PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT



Joseph Koch, M.D.
Family Medicine

Tall Pines Family Clinic
1105 W. Frank Ave., Suite 280
Lufkin, TX 75904

Woodland Heights Medical Center is pleased to have Joseph Koch, M.D., as a member of the medical staff. He earned his medical degree from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio and completed his family medicine residency at the Family Health Center in Waco. In addition to general family medicine, Dr. Koch offers hospital care and various outpatient procedures. Originally from Lufkin, Dr. Koch is back in his hometown, having opened Tall Pines Family Clinic in 2012.

Dr. Koch is accepting new patients. To make an appointment, call **(936) 639-4393**.

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Pelvic organ prolapse

Don't suffer in silence

BY W. COOPER BUSCHEMEYER III, M.D.

As women age, certain muscle groups aren't as strong as they used to be. A woman's pelvic floor—the muscle group responsible for supporting the bladder, urethra, uterus, vagina, small intestine and rectum—can weaken due to aging, injury, physical exertion or certain illnesses, leading to a condition known as pelvic organ prolapse (POP).

With POP, one or more of these organs drops from its usual position and pushes against the walls of the vagina or, in severe cases, protrudes from the pelvic area. The result is chronic pain and discomfort, anxiety, incontinence and possible infection.

Nearly half of all women over age 50 have some type of POP, but only a small percentage of these women seek medical help, either due to embarrassment or assuming their problem is a natural consequence of aging.

What causes POP?

The most common causes of POP are childbirth, hysterectomy or intense physical activity involving running or jumping. Women who have weak ligaments are more prone to POP. The condition also tends to run in families, and women

who have had a vaginal childbirth have a slightly higher risk. Other causes include:

- obesity
- conditions that cause chronic coughing
- occupations that require heavy lifting
- frequent constipation
- age (risk goes up after menopause)
- illnesses or diseases such as multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy or a spinal cord injury

Symptoms include pressure, fullness or pain in the lower belly or vaginal area; pain in the groin or low-back area; irritation and/or bleeding from exposed skin; urination during coughing, sneezing or laughing; pain during intercourse; or difficulty with urination or bowel movements.

Getting help

Treatment for POP varies, depending on a woman's symptoms and age and whether she has already had or plans to have children. Lifestyle changes—including weight loss, medications, pelvic exercises (i.e., Kegel exercises) and dietary changes—can relieve mild symptoms. A removable device called a pessary offers a nonsurgical solution and can be inserted into the vagina to hold the pelvic organs in place. For more severe symptoms, surgery can repair the supportive tissue around the prolapsed organ. ●

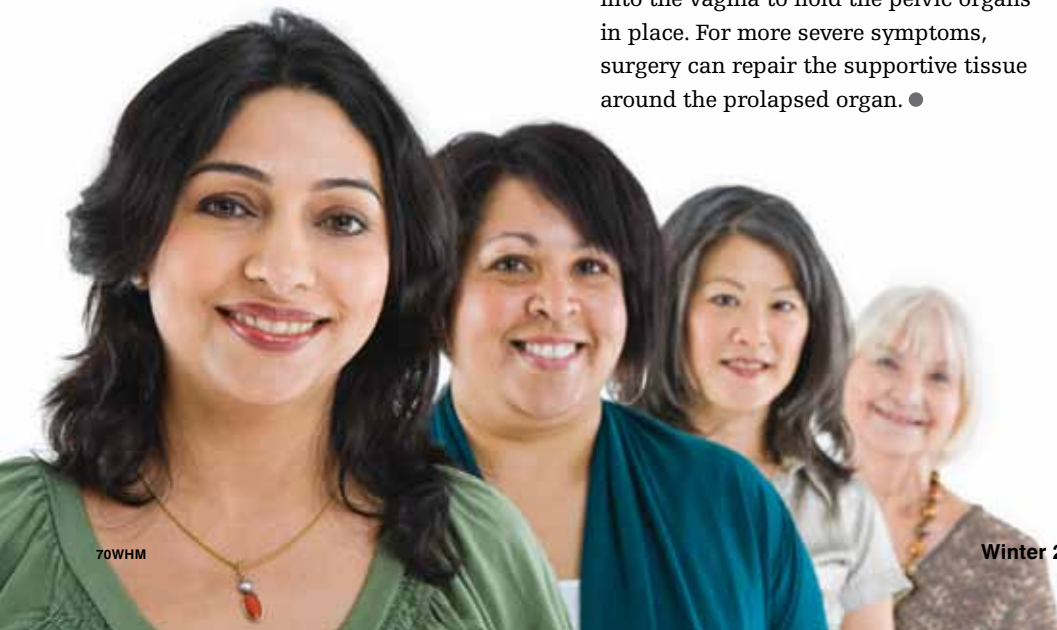
About the author

Dr. Buschemeyer is a board-certified urologic surgeon at East Texas Urology Specialists in Lufkin and an independent member of the medical staff at Woodland Heights Medical Center. To make an appointment, call (936) 632-0074.



Take charge of your health

Dr. Buschemeyer will discuss incontinence in women at the March Healthy Woman Luncheon. For more information or to register, call (936) 637-8688. For more information about urinary incontinence, visit www.WoodlandHeights.net, choose "Health Resources" and "Interactive Tools," and take the Urinary Incontinence Quiz.



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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Be still, my heart

Irregular heartbeat may increase stroke risk

BY ROHIT KEDIA, M.D.

> A fluttering heart isn't always romantic—it can also be a sign of an irregular heartbeat, or atrial fibrillation. Atrial fibrillation affects about 2.2 million people in the United States. While the condition generally isn't life-threatening, it can be a significant risk factor for stroke. Approximately 75,000 to 100,000 strokes each year are caused by untreated atrial fibrillation.

Atrial fibrillation occurs when the upper chambers of the heart don't contract in proper synchronization with the lower chambers. The resulting rapid,

irregular heart rate means the heart isn't properly pumping blood. This can lead to poor blood flow, blood pooling in the heart's chambers and the potential for blood clots to form—a stroke risk.

Some people with atrial fibrillation have no symptoms at all; others may have a rapid, irregular heartbeat; lightheadedness or dizziness; fatigue (especially while exercising); shortness of breath; fainting; or chest pain or pressure.

The good news is that atrial fibrillation—and its associated stroke risk—can be reduced by taking good care of your heart. This may range from cutting back on caffeine to addressing an existing health condition such as an overactive thyroid. You can also focus on eating a healthy diet, being more active, losing excess weight and taking steps to lower high blood pressure and high cholesterol. ●

About the author

Dr. Kedia is a board-certified cardiac electrophysiologist at The Heart Institute of East Texas and an independent member of the medical staff at Woodland Heights Medical Center. For an appointment, call **(936) 632-8787**.



Join us February 16!

Check in on your heart health! Woodland Heights Medical Center is hosting a Heart Fair on Saturday, Feb. 16, from 8–11 a.m. at Lufkin Mall. For more information, call **(936) 637-8688**.

