

# HealthWise

YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTHY LIVING—FROM WILKES-BARRE GENERAL HOSPITAL



WilkesBarreGeneral.net • Volume 8, Issue 1

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today!**

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not sleeping?**

# 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.



# Are you in the Circle?



➤ Wilkes-Barre General Hospital's Senior Circle program is growing. Since it was established in 2009, the program has grown to almost 700 members. "Senior Circle offers health and wellness education and social opportunities for active older adults. We're thrilled to have this program at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital," says Daria Kochanievich, Senior Circle advisor. "Membership is inexpensive, the benefits are geared toward the needs of our community and the activities are always a favorite of our members. As an advisor for our Senior Circle group, I'm very proud to work with our hospital to educate the community about Wilkes-Barre General Hospital's health services and the many services for seniors in our community."

## Member benefits

Senior Circle members can take advantage of a private room upon hospital admission (when available), as well as a complimentary meal for one family member or caregiver daily. The national benefits of Senior Circle membership are included in the price as well. "Some of our members join as patients, while others come for the activities or the discounts," Kochanievich says. "The most popular discounts for our members are the free parking in the hospital parkade and the 10 percent hospital cafeteria discount. Our nutrition services department serves healthy, delicious meals daily, and lunch is served seven days a week." ●



## Be part of the fun!

To learn more about Senior Circle or to become a member, call Daria Kochanievich, Senior Circle advisor, at (570) 552-1199.

## From OUR CEO



### DEAR FRIENDS,

I hope this issue of *HealthWise* finds you and your family well. Wilkes-Barre General Hospital is pleased to bring you this issue, in which we look at a variety of health topics important to your family.

**CORNELIO CATENA, FACHE**  
Chief Executive Officer

### Heart disease and stroke

Since February marks the traditional observance of American Heart Month, it's worth remembering that cardiovascular disease remains the No. 1 killer of men and women in the United States. In fact, according to the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease claims the lives of more than 2,150 Americans each day, an average of one death every 40 seconds.

In this issue, we'll cover important information about heart- and stroke-related issues, including the serious health implications of an irregular heartbeat and how recognizing the warning signs of stroke can greatly improve one's chances of recovering from a stroke.

### Quality care, when you need it

You'll also learn about some of the newest members of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital's medical staff—skilled, primary care and specialty doctors who we've brought to the area to meet our patients' health needs.

Finally, we'll tell you about our comprehensive Sleep Disorders Center and the importance of a good night's sleep as a necessary component to ensure your continued good health.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *HealthWise*. As always, I wish you and your family the best of health!

Sincerely,

**Cornelio Catena,**  
**FACHE**

*Chief Executive Officer*  
*Wilkes-Barre General Hospital*

# 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.

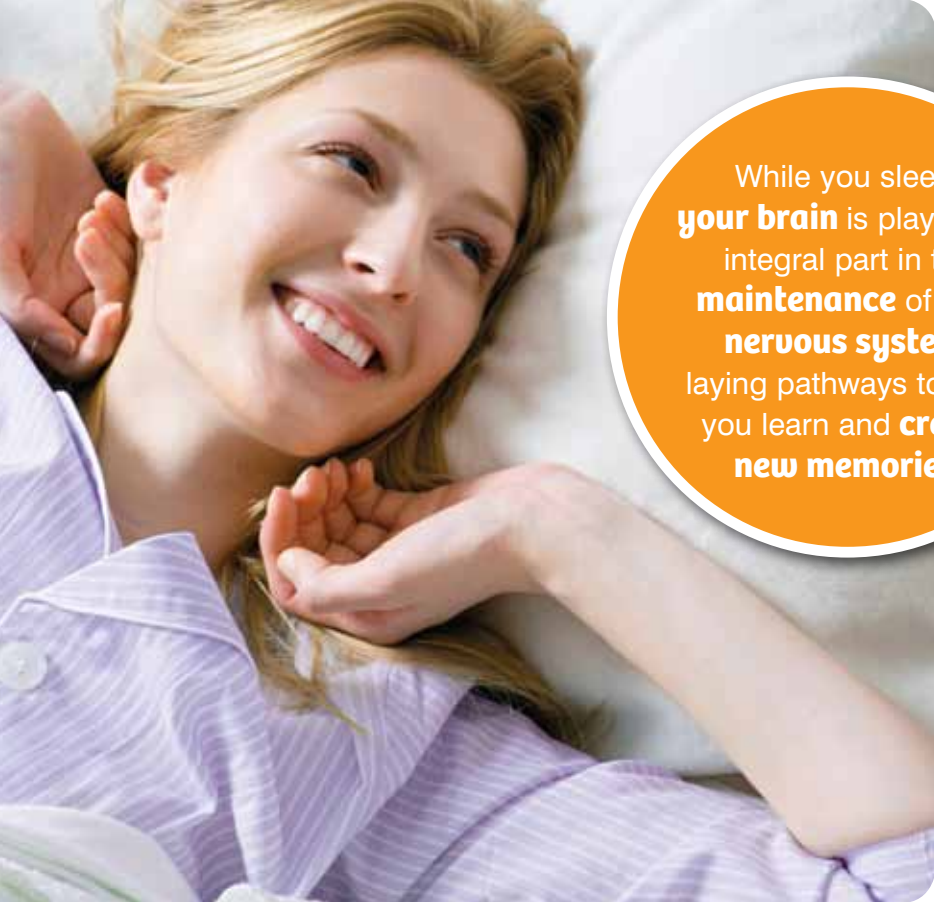
If you cut your sleep sessions short (or get less than the recommended seven to eight hours), you're interrupting these vital processes and, as you probably know, making it more difficult to remember things or concentrate. You may find it more difficult to work, drive or function in general. Hallucinations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



# 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. ●

## 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)

# Be still, my heart

An irregular heartbeat may increase stroke risk



➤ Atrial fibrillation, or irregular heartbeat, is a common heart condition affecting around 2.2 million people in the United States. While on its own it's not life-threatening, it can be a significant risk factor for stroke—a leading cause of death and disability.

Approximately 15 percent of strokes are caused by untreated atrial fibrillation, but many people don't know what atrial fibrillation is or if they have it.

In patients with atrial fibrillation, or "A-fib," the speed and rhythm of the heartbeat changes when the upper chambers of the heart don't contract in proper synchronization with the lower chambers. This fibrillation (or quivering) of the heart's upper chambers, instead of a steady, full contraction, produces a rapid and irregular heart rate.

According to cardiologist Robert Potorski, M.D., A-fib's irregular beating pattern means that the heart is not properly pumping blood, which can result in poor blood flow, blood pooling in the heart's chambers and the potential for blood clots to form—a stroke risk. People with atrial fibrillation have five times the stroke risk of the general population.

"Atrial fibrillation may only happen periodically, or it may be a chronic, long-term condition," says Dr. Potorski, noting that the risk of developing A-fib increases with age. "Men tend to develop the condition more often than women, but women with atrial fibrillation have a higher risk of stroke than men do."

Even though a stroke occurs in the brain, heart health plays an important

“Men tend to develop the condition more often than women, but women with atrial fibrillation have a higher risk of stroke than men do.”

—ROBERT POTORSKI, M.D.

role in helping to prevent stroke. The good news, according to Dr. Potorski, is that

A-fib—and its associated stroke risk—can be reduced by taking good care of your heart. This may range from simply cutting back on caffeine, to addressing existing health conditions. Lifestyle remedies that you can implement on your own include eating a healthy diet, being more active, losing excess weight and taking steps to lower high blood pressure and high cholesterol. ●

*Dr. Potorski is a member of the medical staff at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.*



**ROBERT POTORSKI, M.D.**  
Board-certified Cardiologist

## Know the signs!

**Dr. Potorski says that some people with A-fib have no symptoms at all; others may experience the following:**

- anxiety
- chest pain or pressure
- confusion
- excessive sweating
- fainting
- fatigue, especially when exercising
- a fluttering, "flopping" or thumping sensation in the chest
- lightheadedness or dizziness
- a rapid, irregular heartbeat
- shortness of breath



## Learn more

Visit [WilkesBarreGeneral.net](http://WilkesBarreGeneral.net) and choose "Health Resources" and "Interactive Tools" to test your knowledge. Or call Dr. Potorski at **(570) 819-2825** to schedule an appointment.

We're committed to recruiting and retaining **skilled and compassionate** medical professionals.

# Specializing in **your care**

Wilkes-Barre General Hospital is committed to recruiting and retaining skilled and compassionate medical professionals to address your family's health needs. Meet some of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital's newest additions to its medical staff.



**George Chamoun, D.O.**  
Gynecologic Oncology

670 North River St.,  
Suite 201, Plains  
(570) 208-0150



**Alexandria Lynch, M.D.**  
Urology

423 Third Ave.,  
Suite B, Kingston  
(570) 288-3601



**Robert Dompkosky, D.O.**  
Internal Medicine

110 N. Mountain Blvd.,  
Mountain Top  
(570) 474-5209



**James Martino, M.D.**  
Pulmonology

545 North River St.,  
Suite 40, Wilkes-Barre  
(570) 371-3575



**Kristina Kutney, D.P.M.**  
Podiatry

239 S. Mountain Blvd.,  
Suite 600, Mountain Top  
(570) 474-9300



**Amit Neog, M.D.**  
Psychiatry

110 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Wilkes-Barre  
(570) 552-6000

*Drs. Dompkosky, Lynch and Martino are independent members of the medical staff at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital.*

**Looking for a new doctor?**  
Visit **WilkesBarreGeneral.net** to find a family doctor or specialist close to home.



<http://www.wilkesbarregeneral.net>

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# 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 eating 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). ●





# Be kind to your kidneys

## Help prevent kidney disease

➤ You may not think about them often, but tucked away underneath your rib cage, on each side of your spine, your kidneys labor away, filtering about 200 quarts of blood daily to rid it of waste and excess water to make urine. Your kidneys also release hormones that, among other functions, help regulate blood pressure and calcium, and trigger red blood cell production.

Damage to the kidneys can impair their filtering ability and may lead to what's called kidney disease or chronic kidney disease, and ultimately kidney failure. The most common culprits in kidney damage are high blood pressure and diabetes. People with kidney disease are also more likely to develop heart disease.

Unfortunately, early kidney disease doesn't have any symptoms. When it's advanced, a person may have to urinate more or less often, feel tired, lose his or her appetite or vomit, experience swollen hands or feet, feel itchy or numb, have difficulty concentrating or feel sleepy, have darkened skin or have muscle cramps.

The lack of early warning signs is exactly why prevention is so important.

### Keeping kidney disease at bay

To help prevent kidney disease, keep these suggestions in mind:

- If you have diabetes, monitor your blood glucose level closely and work to keep it within your doctor's recommended range.
- If you have high blood pressure, be sure to have regular checkups and ask your doctor about home monitoring. You may need to take blood pressure medication to



The most common culprits in **kidney damage** are **high blood pressure and diabetes**. People with kidney disease are also more **likely to develop heart disease**.

keep it below 130/80 mm Hg.

- If signs of kidney damage are already present, ask your doctor about taking medication to prevent further damage. Regular testing for the presence of protein in your urine and creatinine in your blood can tell your doctor how well your kidneys are functioning.
- Follow a healthy eating plan—a low-fat diet full of fruits and vegetables and whole grains. If you already have kidney disease, you may need to limit your protein intake.
- Quit smoking.
- Use care when taking painkillers such as ibuprofen, naproxen and high-dose aspirin. Long-term use can cause kidney damage.
- Seek medical attention right away if you have symptoms of a bladder infection (for example, cloudy urine, burning when urinating, constant urge to go to the bathroom, fever). Left untreated, infections can result in kidney damage. ●



### Talk with your doctor

Make an appointment with your doctor if you are experiencing any symptoms of kidney disease.

# Time is **brain** Take action at the signs of stroke



## We're here for you!

For more information about the Stroke Center at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, call (570) 552-4349.

When stroke happens, time is absolutely critical. In fact, according to the American Stroke Association (ASA), the chances of survival—or even recovery—are far greater if stroke care is administered within three hours of the onset of symptoms. That's why you should know about the Stroke Center at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital. **As the region's only Joint Commission-accredited Primary Stroke Center, Wilkes-Barre General Hospital has been acknowledged as a center of excellence for stroke care.** This, according to the Joint Commission, means the hospital makes exceptional efforts to provide the services and critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes for stroke patients.

### A team effort

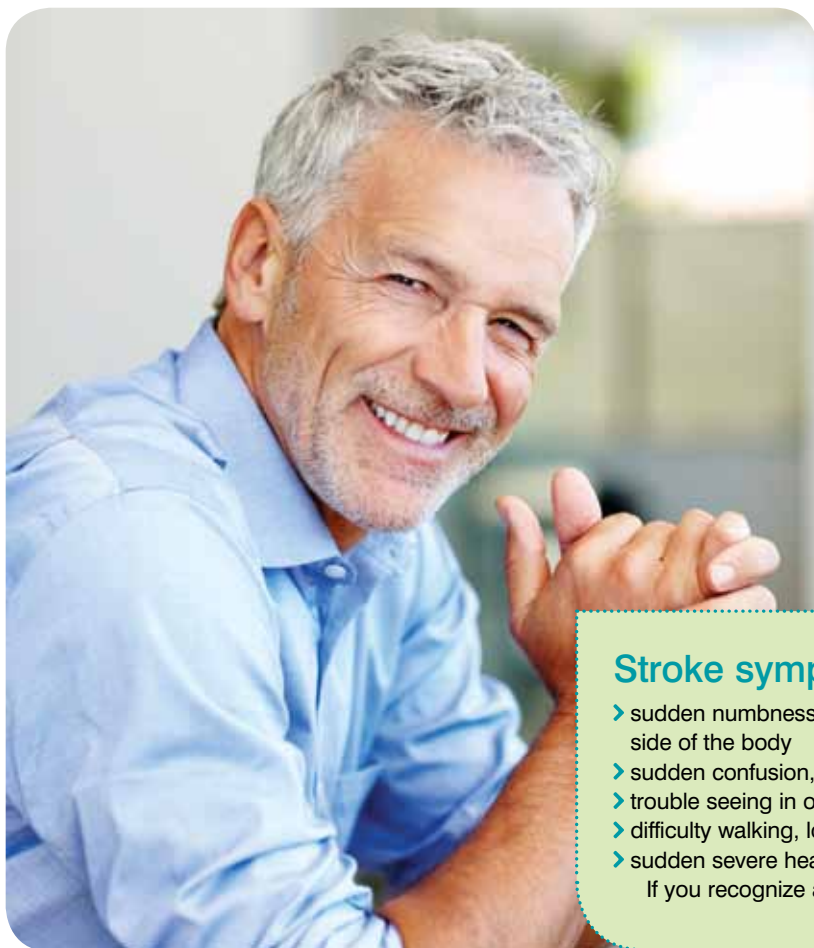
"We follow best-practice guidelines set forth by the ASA for treating stroke patients," says Diane Kane, R.N., stroke program coordinator. "For example, we have a stroke team that jumps into action when a stroke patient needs care. Our radiologists work hand-in-hand with our neurosurgical team, pharmacists, nursing and imaging professionals and other support staff to identify the exact nature of the stroke and plot the best course of treatment.

"Our team is prepared to medically manage all of our stroke patients' needs," Kane adds. "From our specially trained nursing staff and specialist doctors to our on-site Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, we can help ensure full continuity of care for our patients."

### Complete care

Patients at the Stroke Center have the full resources of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital at their disposal, including an imaging suite, a sophisticated neurosurgical suite, highly trained emergency and other clinical and support professionals, and ongoing education for all stroke care staff members.

"It's a matter of having the right professionals, processes and advanced technology available at a moment's notice," Kane says. "That's what our Stroke Center brings to all of our stroke patients." ●



## Stroke symptoms and warning signs

- › sudden numbness or weakness of the face or extremities on one side of the body
  - › sudden confusion, difficulty speaking or understanding
  - › trouble seeing in one or both eyes
  - › difficulty walking, loss of coordination or dizziness
  - › sudden severe headache with no known cause
- If you recognize any of these symptoms, call 911 immediately!

# Get moving, mama!

➤ You're tired and easily winded these days, and probably the last thing on your mind is exercising. Sure, there are more hurdles to conquer now as your body adapts to pregnancy, but there are many benefits of being a mother-to-be who works out.

For starters, it can keep your weight gain in check. It can also help alleviate those aches and pains related to pregnancy and temper constipation and swelling. Exercising also reduces your risk of gestational diabetes, improves your mood and sleep, may shorten labor, increases your energy level and helps you recover more quickly from pregnancy.

So what are you waiting for? It's time to get started!

## Exercise safely

When choosing to exercise while pregnant, it's important to get the OK from your doctor. Some conditions, such as preterm labor, may make it more difficult for you to exercise safely. Pregnant women should also avoid working out in hot conditions, certain yoga poses (such as those that have you lie flat on the back later in pregnancy), contact sports, high-impact sports and activities that increase your risk of a fall (such as skiing or horseback riding).

## Your best bets

So what can a pregnant woman do? Plenty! Why not try these?

- **Swimming** provides a great cardiovascular workout without beating up your joints. It also has the bonus of keeping you cool while you exercise.
- **Walking** is a simple—and free—way to keep moving.
- **Cycling** can give you a great workout while taking the stress off of your joints, but it can present a fall risk. Consider exercising on a stationary bike instead.
- **Stair-climbing machines** can really help you raise your heart rate; just make sure to hold onto side rails!



## Warning signs

Make sure you drink plenty of water when you exercise and discontinue your activity if you feel unwell. Call your doctor if you experience:

- breathing problems
- chest pain
- contractions
- dizziness
- headache
- loss of amniotic fluid
- loss of fetal movement
- pain or swelling in the legs
- vaginal bleeding
- weak muscles

- **Aerobics** provides a great workout for the heart. If you've never taken an aerobics class or you're feeling a little more unsteady on your feet these days, take a class specifically geared for pregnant women.
- **Running or jogging** can keep you in good form, especially if you've previously incorporated this exercise into your routine. If you're just starting to run or jog, make sure to talk with your doctor.

Remember, unlike when you may exercise to lose weight, your workout goal when you're pregnant is not to shed pounds, but rather to stay active and maintain optimal weight gain during this special time in your life. ●

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# Sleep well for good health!

➤ Lack of sleep can cause stress, affect memory, decrease energy levels and make us more prone to illness and depression. The long-term effects of insufficient sleep are more than just chronic drowsiness or difficulty focusing. Sleep deprivation has been linked to an increased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack and stroke.

The Sleep Disorder Center at Cross

Creek Pointe can help individuals suffering from any of a number of sleep disorders, including sleep apnea, snoring, restless leg syndrome and insomnia, to name just a few. With a beautifully appointed and comfortable environment designed to detect and diagnose sleep disorders, our team of sleep specialists can evaluate your sleep to determine if treatment is needed.

The center accepts all major insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid! ●



## Get your zzzs!

The Sleep Disorder Center at Cross Creek Pointe is located at 1065 Highway 315, Plains. To arrange a tour of the facility or to schedule your sleep study, call **(570) 829-6900**.

