



Health Connection

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Dr. Limonte
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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

CHAD CAMPBELL
Chief Executive Officer

DEAR FRIENDS,

I hope you had a happy new year. Carlsbad Medical Center (CMC) had a productive and successful 2012. We recruited four new doctors (two Ob/Gyns, a neurologist and a pediatrician), brought in new technology such as a 1.5T MRI and a nuclear medicine camera, and launched new service lines such as urodynamics. We also kicked off our 30-Minutes-or-Less ED Service Pledge, which is helping to improve our patients' experience in our emergency department.

I'm very proud of our hospital being named a Top Performer by The Joint Commission for the second year in a row (see page 8). We received the honor in 2011 for quality measures in pneumonia and surgical care. In 2012, we were able to add the quality care we provide for heart failure to that list of accomplishments. Out of over 3,400 hospitals, CMC is 1 of only 244 hospitals to be named a Top Performer two years in a row.

During the past year, we've also continued our commitment to give back to the community. Whether it was helping raise money for the United Way, nursing scholarships or families in need, our employees were there to help. We're extremely proud to be part of this community, and we look forward to a great year. Thanks for your continued support.

Best regards,

Chad Campbell

*Chief Executive Officer
Carlsbad Medical Center*



So many services!

Visit www.CarlsbadMedicalCenter.com to learn about healthcare services at CMC.

PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT



Leonel Limonte, M.D.
Board-Certified
Neurologist

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Carlsbad Medical Center (CMC) and Pecos Valley Physician Group would like to introduce you to Leonel Limonte, M.D. Dr. Limonte is a Diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in neurology and neuromuscular medicine. He earned his medical degree at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee and completed his neurology residency as chief resident in neurology at Jackson Memorial Medical Center in Miami. With more than 20 years of experience, Dr. Limonte diagnoses, treats and helps patients manage headaches, seizures, pain, memory problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, movement disorders, stroke and other brain and nervous system disorders. Dr. Limonte is a member of the medical staff at CMC. For more information or to request an appointment, call Pecos Valley Neurology at (575) 628-0107, or visit www.PecosValleyDocs.com.

Finding a doctor is at your fingertips

www.PecosValleyDocs.com

 Pecos Valley Physician Group launched its new website, www.PecosValleyDocs.com, in October to help make it easy for patients in southeastern New Mexico to learn more about the doctors and services that are available locally. Patients can learn about the background and education of a provider, get directions to their doctor's office, print out new patient forms from home and even request appointments online. "We're excited about the new website," says Wally Stamper, executive director of Pecos Valley Physician Group. "One of the features patients appreciate most is the online option to request appointments. We're glad to make it easier." ●





Diagnosing your heart health

BY PATRICIA GURCZAK, M.D., FACC, BOARD-CERTIFIED CARDIOLOGIST

➤ Advanced diagnostic and interventional techniques allow doctors to gather information about heart problems more than ever before. These procedures help to not only diagnose heart trouble but also relieve pain and resolve heart problems early to avoid a more serious heart episode and major surgery down the road.

Diagnostic tests generally fall into two categories. Noninvasive tests use imaging, such as X-rays or computed tomography (CT) scans, which take a picture of the heart. Invasive tests might use a catheter inserted inside the body through an artery or vein to pinpoint the source of heart trouble.

Noninvasive tests

➤ Echocardiograms/electrocardiograms.

An echocardiogram uses ultrasound to view the heart's structure and function, while an electrocardiogram uses electrodes applied to the body that are connected to a machine that records the heart's electrical activity.

➤ **CT coronary angiogram.** This heart imaging test can help detect blockages, such as fat or plaque deposits, that have narrowed the coronary arteries and cause coronary artery disease.

Invasive tests/intervention techniques

➤ **Cardiac catheterization.** This procedure provides a look at the inside of the heart and surrounding structures. A catheter (a long, thin and flexible plastic tube) is inserted into an artery or vein in the arm or groin and threaded into the heart's arteries or chambers. Your doctor is then able to measure blood pressure in the heart, the heart's pumping capability and the amount of oxygen in the blood.

Cardiac catheterization is not only a diagnostic method but also, in many cases, a first step in surgical procedures that can help minimize or stop a heart attack. Once the catheter is in place, it can be used to perform interventional procedures such as angioplasty or stent implantation.

➤ **Percutaneous intervention.** This catheter-based procedure restores blood flow to the heart. A catheter with a balloon at its tip is threaded through a blood vessel to the narrowed artery. Once in place, the balloon is inflated to compress built-up plaque against the artery wall; this opens the area and restores blood flow. Angioplasty is frequently used to relieve symptoms of coronary artery disease, such as chest pain (angina), and it can reduce heart muscle damage when performed early during a heart attack. Sometimes the cardiologist will place a stent (a metal support structure) inside the artery that has been opened with a balloon to help the artery remain open. ●

Dr. Gurczak is a member of the medical staff at Carlsbad Medical Center.



Learn more about the cardiac care services at CMC

Dr. Gurczak practices at Cardiovascular Associates of Carlsbad, 2420 W. Pierce St., Suite 100. For more information or to request an appointment, call (575) 234-1855 or visit www.PecosValleyDocs.com.



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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The Joint Commission

We're a Top Performer!

Carlsbad Medical Center (CMC) has been named one of the nation's Top Performers on Key Quality Measures by The Joint Commission, the leading accreditor of healthcare organizations in America. The hospital was recognized for exemplary performance in using evidence-based clinical processes shown to improve care for certain conditions, including children's asthma, heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, stroke, surgical care and venous thromboembolism, as well as inpatient psychiatric services.

CMC is 1 of 620 hospitals in the United States earning the distinction of Top Performer on Key Quality Measures for attaining and sustaining excellence in accountability measure performance. CMC was recognized for its achievement on the following measure sets: heart failure, pneumonia and surgical care. The ratings are based on an aggregation of accountability measure data reported to The Joint Commission during the 2011 calendar year. The list of Top Performers represents 18 percent of more than 3,400 eligible accredited hospitals reporting data.

This is the second year in a row that CMC is being recognized as a Top Performer. CMC is 1 of only 244 hospitals that achieved the distinction two years in a row. Last year, The hospital was recognized for its achievement in the measure sets of pneumonia and surgical care.

Each accountability measure represents an evidence-based practice—for example, giving aspirin at arrival for heart attack patients, giving antibiotics one hour before surgery and providing a home management plan for children with asthma.

"We understand that what matters most to patients at CMC is safe, effective care. That's why we have made a commitment to accreditation and to positive patient outcomes through evidence-based processes. CMC is proud to be named to the list of The Joint Commission's Top Performers on Key Quality Measures," says Chad Campbell, chief executive officer of CMC. ●



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