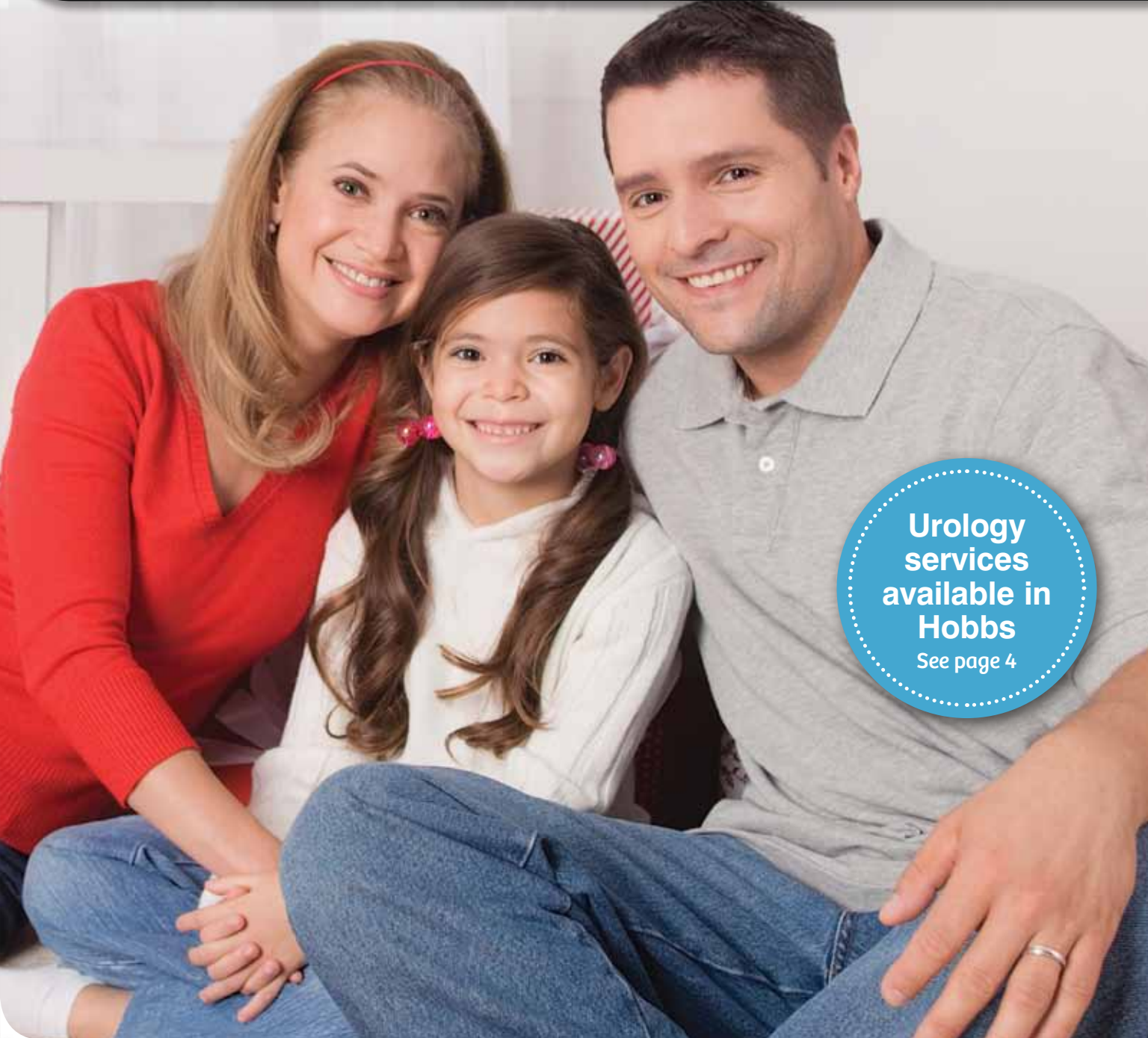




LEA REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER

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 OUR CEO

TIMOTHY THORNELL
Chief Executive
Officer

DEAR FRIENDS,

Looking back, 2012 was a year of growth for both Hobbs and Lea Regional Medical Center (LRMC). We recruited a cardiologist and a urologist who now offer services previously unavailable in Hobbs. We also obtained a 64-slice CT scanner, which provides clearer images with less scan time for patients and implemented electronic medical records in our doctors' offices.

Looking forward to the rest of 2013, our goal remains the same. We're focused on recruiting primary care doctors and specialists so that your family can continue to get the care you need locally.

Our other primary emphasis is quality. We've placed a tremendous focus on patient satisfaction, and we hope you've noticed the positive changes. From our 30-Minutes-or-Less ER Service Pledge to hourly rounding by nurses for our inpatients, we want to make sure that you receive quality care while you're at LRMC.

We hope you'll look to us when you need quality, compassionate healthcare. We're proud to be your community hospital.

Best regards,

Timothy Thornell

*Chief Executive Officer
Lea Regional Medical Center*

Urology services now available in Hobbs

More than 22 million men, women and children will share a common health concern this year: They'll all seek medical treatment from a urologist for conditions ranging from bladder infections and kidney stones to erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence. With the arrival of board-certified urologist, Ruel Taylor, D.O., a member of the Lea Regional Medical Center medical staff, those services are now available right here in Hobbs.



RUEL TAYLOR, D.O.
Board-Certified Urologist

Urology is a surgical specialty focused on male and female urinary tracts and male reproductive disorders. A wide variety of conditions affecting different areas of the urinary tract exist. Signals that it's time to seek the help of a urologist include:

- blood in the urine
- never feeling "empty"
- pain while urinating
- slow stream
- urine leakage
- urinating too frequently
- waiting to start

"One of the things I enjoy most about being a doctor is really listening to my patients. I like being able to make an impact on their quality of life," Dr. Taylor says. ●



Schedule an appointment

Call Lea County Urology at **(575) 492-1188** to make an appointment with Dr. Taylor. Same- and next-day appointments are available.

Lea Regional PROS offers incontinence solutions

If you suffer from incontinence or chronic pelvic pain, you may be able to benefit from the services offered at Lea Regional Physical Rehabilitation Outpatient Services (PROS). Many symptoms of incontinence are caused by weakness in your pelvic floor muscles. A specially trained physical therapist will create a personalized program to help you strengthen those muscles and regain control over many of your symptoms, without surgical intervention. To find out more about the services offered at PROS, call **(575) 393-8470**.

Surgical procedure may offer help for people with GERD

➤ Do you have chronic heartburn? Difficulty swallowing, regurgitation, sore throat or morning hoarseness? Worried about whether you can go out to eat with your family without that familiar pain in your chest or frequent indigestion?

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)

If you answered yes to these questions, you may have a condition called gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and you're not alone. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, nearly one third of the population may be affected. GERD is caused when the valve between your esophagus and stomach doesn't close properly, which causes food and gastric acid to reflux into your esophagus. Left untreated, GERD can damage the lining of the esophagus and lead to complications including bleeding, scarring and ulcers, and may put you at a greater risk of developing esophageal cancer.

Surgical solution

We have good news for GERD patients in Hobbs—Al Jecius, M.D., a board-certified general surgeon on staff at Lea Regional Medical Center, may be able to help. Dr. Jecius is the only surgeon in the area who performs Nissen fundoplication, a surgical procedure that restores the valve between the esophagus and stomach to stop symptoms. The Nissen procedure is performed laparoscopically, which means patients have a smaller incision and quicker recovery time.

"I'm often able to take care of the patient's reflux once and for all, and it feels great to know I've really made a difference for my patients and possibly

reduced their risk of developing cancer," Dr. Jecius says.

Medication doesn't always work

Many patients think that antacids are the only way to treat chronic heartburn, but when it comes to GERD, sometimes medication doesn't work. Medication may treat the symptoms, but the reflux can continue to damage the esophagus. Over time, these medications often become less effective, and up to 75 percent of patients have their symptoms return as soon as they stop taking it.

"For our patients, it's all about quality of life. Patients who've had the Nissen procedure are grateful because they don't have to worry that their daily activities are going to cause problems any longer," says Shawanna Read, C.N.P., Dr. Jecius' certified nurse practitioner. "Sometimes people don't realize that there's more that can be done to treat their reflux, and we have the technology and equipment to help them right here in Hobbs," Dr. Jecius says. ●



AL JECIUS, M.D.
Board-Certified General Surgeon



SHAWNNA READ, C.N.P.
Certified Nurse Practitioner



Get worked up about reflux

A reflux workup is a comprehensive process that evaluates the degree of reflux, individual anatomy and function. If you're interested in undergoing a reflux workup, call Dr. Jecius at (575) 492-1561.

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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Women and heart health

Join us on February 21

➤ For men, it's often that classic, crushing, "elephant on my chest" pain, but did you know that heart attack symptoms for women can be different than for men?

Though some women still get chest pain, they are much more likely to have dizziness, lower back pain, nausea, upper abdominal pain or just a general feeling that something is wrong.

"If something doesn't feel right with your body, tell your doctor and find out what's wrong," says Michelle Lopez, R.N., nursing project manager at Lea Regional Medical Center. "If it's an emergency, call 911. Don't hesitate."

One of the best ways to avoid a heart attack is to reduce your risk factors. Eating a balanced diet, incorporating exercise into your daily routine, giving up tobacco and finding a positive way to deal with anxiety and stress are lifestyle changes that can make a huge difference.

"Start slow, but start. Even going for a walk around the block is considered exercise," Lopez says. "Women are often the caregivers and forget to take time for themselves. Taking 15 minutes a day to focus on yourself is a great way to deal with stress!"



Know your numbers

Not sure if you're at risk? The best way to find out is to schedule an appointment with your doctor to find out your risk factors. Ask your doctor for your blood pressure, body mass index (BMI), hemoglobin A1C (blood sugar), HDL (good cholesterol), LDL (bad cholesterol), total cholesterol, triglycerides, waist circumference and weight. Knowing your numbers is important because they can give you a baseline for your cardiac risk—and as you start making lifestyle changes, you can watch your numbers decrease! ●



Save the date!

Join us on **Feb. 21** for Red Wine and Chocolate, a Healthy Woman event. Mukeshbhai Patel, M.D., an independent cardiologist on staff at Lea Regional Medical Center, and Michelle Lopez, R.N., nursing project manager at Lea Regional Medical Center, will be on hand to give you the latest info on heart health. Join us for heart-healthy red wine and dark chocolate samples. This event has limited space, so visit www.LeaRegionalMedical.com to sign up today!