

HealthConnection

A PUBLICATION OF **GREENBRIER VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER**



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Ratliff, D.O.**
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Healthbriefs



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.

› 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.

› 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.

› 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.



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. ●

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integral part in the
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A message FROM OUR CEO

PAUL STOREY
Chief Executive
Officer

DEAR FRIENDS,

Roy Williams, head basketball coach at the University of North Carolina, is a master of the transition game. His team knows how to score quickly and defend successfully during transitions in the game. As in the game of basketball, transitions in health care are a constant. We're pleased to announce some wonderful transitions at Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC). Three new doctors have come to the Greenbrier Valley this fall and winter. Maple Landvoigt, M.D., the area's first board-certified pediatric pulmonologist, recently joined the staff of the Robert C. Byrd Clinic and is an independent member of the GVMC medical staff. He's a 2002 graduate of WVU's School of Medicine. Dr. Landvoigt treats children and adults with cystic fibrosis and specializes in pediatric pulmonology. Phil Caushaj, M.D., (pronounced co-shy), the first board-certified colorectal surgeon on staff, trained at Johns Hopkins and joined us in January along with Nadeem Khan, M.D., a board-certified gastroenterologist. Dr. Khan comes to us from Kentucky, where he practiced for many years. Drs. Caushaj and Khan are members of the GVMC medical staff. Each of these specialists will add depth to our team of professionals. Watch your local papers for more information about these doctors, their office locations and how to schedule appointments. Our commitment to you is to continue developing the scope of quality medical care available to you right here at home.

In addition, please see the article on the back page about GVMC's latest technology advancement. A new 128-slice CT scanner was installed in January. The most detailed imaging studies will soon be available and delivered with less radiation exposure to the patient than with any previous scanner.

Thank you for entrusting us with your care and know that we're working diligently every day to make GVMC your choice for all of your health care needs.

If you have any comments, questions or concerns, please call me at **(304) 647-4411**. I'd love to hear from you.

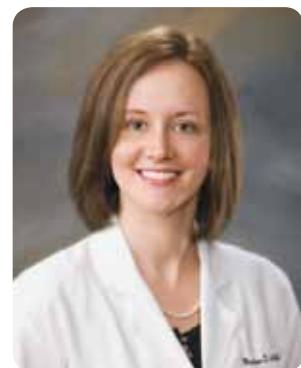
Best wishes for good health,

Paul Storey

*Chief Executive Officer
Greenbrier Valley Medical Center*

WELCOME NEW DOCTOR

The dedicated and experienced doctors at Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC) can help keep you healthy. We'd like to introduce one of the newest additions to you.



Heather Ratliff, D.O.
Internal Medicine, Nephrology

Robert C. Byrd Clinic
(304) 645-3220

We're pleased to announce that Heather Ratliff, D.O., a native of West Virginia, has joined GVMC as an independent member of the medical staff. Dr. Ratliff is board certified in internal medicine and nephrology. She completed a nephrology fellowship at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C. Dr. Ratliff is a member of the American Society of Nephrology.



Did you know?

You can find a complete listing of the doctors at Greenbrier Valley Medical Center or search for a doctor by specialty by visiting www.GVMC.com and choosing "Find a Physician."

Chronic kidney disease

What you should know

Each day, your kidneys filter approximately 200 liters of blood and produce about 2 liters of urine. Your kidneys remove waste, toxins and excess water from the blood; regulate levels of electrolytes and acid in the blood; and produce certain hormones.

Any condition lasting more than three months that damages the kidneys and decreases their ability to perform the functions necessary to keep your body healthy is classified as chronic kidney disease (CKD). According to the National Kidney Foundation, approximately 30 million Americans have this disease.

Who is at risk?

CKD is most commonly caused by diabetes. Other causes include:

- atherosclerosis
- autoimmune disease (such as lupus)
- chronic infections (such as HIV or hepatitis)
- glomerulonephritis (inflammation of the kidneys)
- hypertension (high blood pressure)
- inherited kidney disease (such as polycystic kidney disease)
- medications (such as NSAIDs, chemotherapy or antibiotics)
- obstruction (such as kidney stones or prostate disease)

What are the symptoms of CKD?

Symptoms often don't develop until kidney function is severely reduced. Because the kidneys perform so many functions in the body, kidney failure can affect the body in many different ways. It's important to note that most patients don't have reduced amounts of urine even with severe CKD.

Common signs and symptoms of CKD can include:

- fluid retention with swelling of the feet and legs, around the eyes and in or around the lungs causing shortness of breath

- high blood pressure
- loss of energy and generalized weakness
- nausea, vomiting, abnormal taste and loss of appetite
- skin changes such as generalized itching, a pale or yellow color and easy bruising
- slowed thoughts or confusion
- tremors or muscle twitching

Simple urine, blood and imaging tests are used to detect CKD. Urine is most often checked for the presence of blood or protein in the urine, which indicates kidney damage. Imaging, such as ultrasound, may be used to look at the structure of the kidneys. A kidney biopsy may be needed when the cause of CKD is unclear.



Learn more about CKD

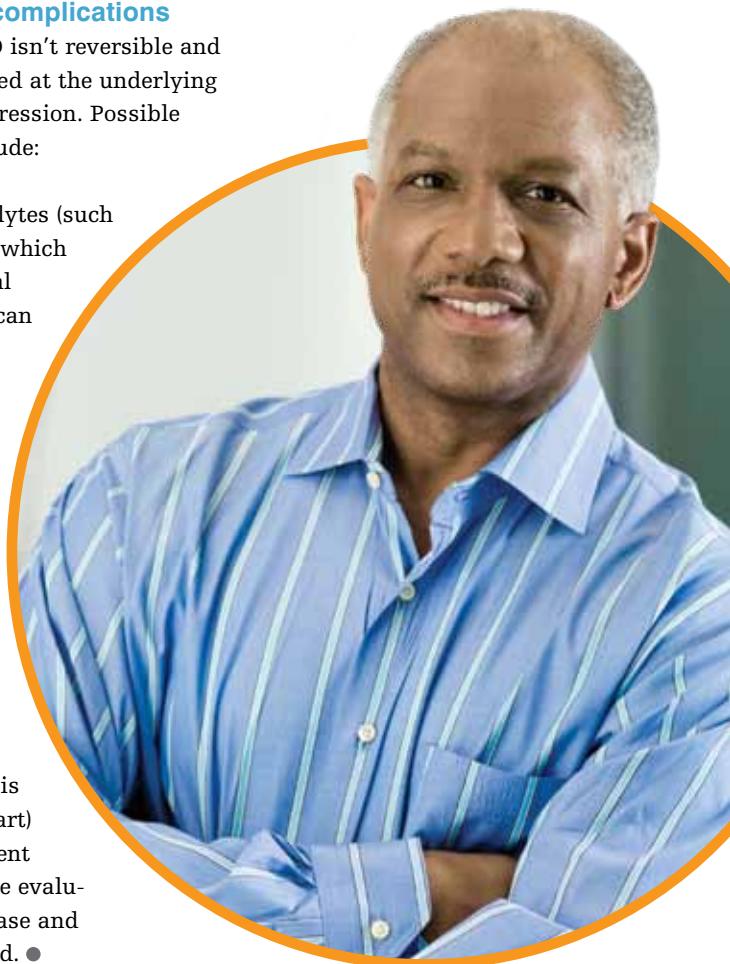
For more information about chronic kidney disease, visit www.GVMC.com, choose "Health Resources" and type "kidney disease" in the search box.

Treatment and complications

In most cases, CKD isn't reversible and treatment is directed at the underlying cause to slow progression. Possible complications include:

- anemia
- abnormal electrolytes (such as high potassium which can cause abnormal heart beating and can be life threatening)
- increased acid in the blood (which makes it hard for other organs to function properly)
- bone weakness and increased risk of fracture

Because the most common cause of death in patients with CKD is cardiovascular (heart) disease, every patient with CKD should be evaluated for heart disease and aggressively treated. ●



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 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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WINTER 2013



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A sharper image

Advanced digital CT scanner provides better-quality pictures in less time

Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC) is proud to be the first hospital in the region to offer a 128-slice computed tomography (CT) scanner. This new CT scanner produces fast, high-quality images, enabling doctors to see more anatomical detail.

This new machine allows GVMC doctors to detect and treat a wide range of illnesses, including heart disease, cancer, stroke and lung disease. This technology will help doctors make more accurate diagnoses and recommend appropriate treatments.

"Better images mean better diagnoses and, ultimately, greater patient satisfaction," says Gary Mabry, director of radiology for GVMC. "We can use the image information we receive from the scanner to generate detailed 3-D images, which enhance a doctor's ability to evaluate treatment plans and deliver care."

Patients needing a CT scan will find that GVMC's new scanner offers a more pleasant experience. "Those with breathing difficulties or in other distress will

really appreciate the faster scan time," Mabry says. "Also, the radiation exposure to the patient is reduced using the new technology."

GVMC is pleased to provide this important advancement in health care to this community. Patient appointments can be made through your doctor's office. ●



Learn more!

For more information about digital imaging, call **(304) 647-4411** or visit www.GVMC.com.

