

# Health Connection

WINTER 2008

PREMIERE ISSUE!

A PUBLICATION OF GREENBRIER VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER



**Chronic  
sinus troubles?**  
The solution may  
be at GVMC

**Boost your  
bone health**

**Women: Is a heart  
attack in your future?**

**Reclaim  
your energy**



GREENBRIER VALLEY  
MEDICAL CENTER

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# Minimally invasive surgery

## Less pain, faster recovery

**M**inimally invasive surgery (MIS) is the buzzword in healthcare right now. And with good reason.

With advancing technology and surgical techniques, patients now have the benefit of undergoing procedures that require just a few small incisions. In years past, those same procedures would have required large cuts and left equally large scars.

### HOW IT WORKS

MIS—sometimes referred to as laparoscopic surgery—mirrors the techniques of traditional surgery but decreases the patient's surgical trauma. Because surgeons using MIS lose some visibility with smaller incisions, they have to create a larger workspace. They do this by making a small cut in the skin, then gently expanding the body cavity with a gas (such as carbon dioxide). A small camera (laparoscope) is then inserted through the incision and into the newly expanded space to help surgeons see where to operate.

While MIS isn't suited for all types of surgery, it has been used for such procedures as appendectomies, hernia repair, gallbladder surgery, hysterectomies, brain tumors, herniated spinal discs, knee and hip replacements, sinus surgery and certain types of heart procedures.

### MINIMAL TRAUMA, MAXIMUM BENEFITS

The goal of MIS is to treat patients with the least amount of trauma. In addition to minimized scarring, this type of surgery also:

- **Minimizes bleeding.** Decreased blood loss means a decreased chance of blood transfusion.



- **Lessens pain.** Small incisions reduce trauma to the skin and underlying muscles, meaning less postoperative pain.
- **Reduces infections.** Unlike a traditional operation, where the body is wide open, tissue isn't exposed to the air for extended periods during MIS.
- **Shortens hospital stays.** Reducing bleeding, pain and the chance for infection means you'll get to walk out of the hospital sooner.
- **Hastens recovery.** MIS can dramatically reduce recuperation time—in some cases, by half.

## Other minimally invasive procedures

**E**ndoscopic surgery is similar to laparoscopic surgery because it also requires a small camera. However, the equipment (endoscope) passes through an existing opening such as the mouth, anus or urethra.

Robotic laparoscopic surgery uses techniques identical to laparoscopic surgery but allows surgeons to use robotic arms to perform the procedure.

Ablation targets and destroys diseases, such as kidney and prostate cancer, with high-frequency energy, leaving normal tissue nearby intact. It's also been used to correct benign heart arrhythmias.

## WAITING TO INHALE

# Breathing problems you shouldn't ignore

**T**ake a deep breath." The command sounds easy, but for some people it's not so simple.

Being unable to breathe deeply or feeling short of breath may be a sign of a serious condition.

If you have any of the following symptoms, get them checked out by a physician:

- inability to take a deep breath
- shortness of breath without exertion
- shortness of breath after mild exertion, such as climbing a short flight of stairs
- wheezing
- tightness in the chest
- pain or discomfort when inhaling and exhaling
- a chronic cough or clearing of the throat
- difficulty breathing when you lie down
- a lack of energy
- coughing up blood or mucus

Difficulty breathing shouldn't be taken lightly. Lung disease is the number three killer in the United States.

It takes on many forms, including:

- Asthma, a chronic disease in which the passages that

carry air in and out of your lungs become sore and swollen. Asthma is characterized by wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble speaking.

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. In COPD, your airways and air sacs lose their shape and become floppy, like a stretched-out rubber band. Coughing up mucus is often a first sign of this disease. COPD is typically caused by cigarette smoking.
- Pneumonia, an inflammation of the lungs, usually caused by an infection. It's normally accompanied by shortness of breath and a cough or a fever.
- Lung cancer, which can take years to develop. If it's diagnosed early, before it spreads, the survival rate is almost 50 percent.

Breathing difficulties can also be a sign of heart disease or a heart disorder, such as congestive heart failure, heart arrhythmia or pulmonary hypertension.

In these or any other case of breathing distress, your physician can help you find the source of the problem with a thorough physical exam.



If you're having trouble catching your breath, it's time to see your doctor.

### When cough drops don't do the trick

**A** chronic cough—one that lasts more than three weeks—may be your body's way of telling you a problem exists. Your cough could be the result of:

- allergies, particularly postnasal drip, which often triggers coughing
- asthma
- heartburn, where acid from your stomach backs up into your throat
- medicines, including beta-blockers for high blood pressure, migraines and glaucoma and ACE inhibitors

# Chronic sinus troubles?

## Technology at GVMC can help



**E**ach year, chronic sinus problems affect 35 million Americans, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Sinusitis is one of the most common illnesses in the United States. At Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, Chris White, D.O., is using a new technology to treat patients who suffer from this condition.

### A NEW VIEW

The LandmarX ENT Element Image Guidance System provides a three-dimensional view of the sinus area. This enhanced view increases procedure efficiency and safety and eliminates cumbersome setups for the patient.

### SURGICAL CONFIDENCE

Before LandmarX was introduced, using older technology procedures was uncomfortable and risky. For instance, before surgery, a patient would report to the radiology department to have a “halo,” or large spherical brace, attached to his or her head to properly calibrate the device. With LandmarX, though, once the patient is in surgery, a strap is placed across the forehead for proper calibration. Another problem was that using an endoscope, or tiny camera, gives physicians a two-dimensional view of their instrument’s path. Dr. White says, “This could be risky in patients who had previous sinus surgery or congenital abnormalities because the endoscope didn’t provide us with a three-dimensional picture of the affected area. Image-guided surgery, though, provides the sinus surgeon with an additional tool, allowing him or her to operate with confidence.”

### QUICKER AND SAFER PROCEDURES

With the new technology, a patient reports to the hospital’s radiology department for a computed tomography scan. The image is downloaded to a disc, which is inserted into the LandmarX system. This displays three views of the patient’s head on screen while providing a view from the tip of the surgical instrument attached to the LandmarX system. As the surgeon navigates the instrument through the sinus cavity, he or she knows the tool’s exact location in relation to surrounding tissues in the three dimensions. Since the surgeon can see what to remove and what to leave alone, procedures are quicker and safer.

“The advent of image-guided surgery has improved patient safety and reduced the need for costly and risky revision surgery.”

—Chris White, D.O.

#### AM I A CANDIDATE?

Before using this technology, you and your doctor should exhaust all other options first. “Patients should first undergo a thorough examination by an ear, nose and throat physician,” Dr. White says. Medical treatments should be tried before considering endoscopic sinus surgery, including a prolonged course of antibiotics (for one or two months), nasal steroid sprays and antihistamines or decongestants as appropriate. If there’s still no relief, surgery may be an option.

“LandmarX ENT Element Image Guidance System is truly advanced technology,” says Dr. White. “The advent of image-guided surgery has improved patient safety and reduced the need

for costly and risky revision surgery. It now gives surgeons the ability to perform technically difficult procedures through the nose endoscopically, sparing patients cosmetically unattractive facial incisions.”

### ! Seek help for sinuses

To determine whether you’re a candidate for this new technology, call (304) 647-4411.

# The smoking gun

## Cigarettes increase stroke and heart attack risk

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and takes a hard toll on the heart and the brain, causing coronary heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States.

When you smoke, the toxic ingredients in cigarettes mutate genes, weaken blood vessels, alter blood consistency and diminish cell function. Smoking also deteriorates artery linings and promotes fat and plaque deposits. As a result, smoking causes:

- decreased blood flow
- diminished oxygen to the heart
- higher blood pressure
- faster heart rate
- increased blood clotting
- decreased HDL (good) cholesterol

#### THE HEART TRUTH

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease, and also causes atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), congestive heart failure and peripheral vascular disease. Smoking also increases your diabetes risk and diminishes your exercise tolerance. Smokers are twice as likely as nonsmokers to suffer a stroke and two to four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease. Women who smoke and use certain types of hormone therapy increase their risk even more. Nonsmokers regularly exposed to secondhand smoke nearly double their risk for heart attack.

### ! Breathe easy!

It’s never too late to stop smoking. Talk to your healthcare provider today about finding a smoking-cessation program for you.

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **sleep disorders**?

Take this quiz to find out.

1

**Lack of sleep may put you at a higher risk for:**

- a. type 2 diabetes
- b. low blood pressure
- c. asthma
- d. gastric ulcers

2

**Which of the following changes in your sleep routine may be a result of an underlying heart problem?**

- a. waking up during the night to urinate
- b. waking up during the night due to shortness of breath
- c. not being able to fall asleep
- d. both a and b

3

**Restoring your body with sleep has been shown to:**

- a. improve skin tone
- b. improve red blood-cell count
- c. reduce eye strain
- d. improve reaction time and attention span

4

**Women diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea often experience these symptoms:**

- a. snoring loudly with periods of gasping or snorting
- b. waking up with a sore throat
- c. waking up with a headache
- d. all of the above

5

**The most common treatment for sleep apnea is:**

- a. antihistamine medication
- b. surgery
- c. a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) mask worn at night
- d. analgesic medication

ANSWERS: 1. A; 2. D; 3. D; 4. D; 5. C



## WOMEN: Is a heart attack in your future?

**A** heart attack may seem to come out of the blue. Yet your personal risk factors and lifestyle habits may hold clues to your heart's health and what your odds are of suffering from a heart attack.

### LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

High blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg and above) and high blood cholesterol (240 mg/dL and above) are significant clues that you may be developing heart blockages in the form of plaque. Being postmenopausal and having diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis can also increase heart attack risk.

Talk with your healthcare provider about what risk factors are significant for you. He or she can help you control your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and may also recommend testing for metabolic syndrome. Recent research shows this condition may be useful for detecting signs of heart disease in women who might appear healthy. The signs of metabolic syndrome include a waist size greater than 35 inches, higher-than-normal levels of triglycerides and glucose, and insufficient levels of HDL, or good cholesterol.

Also, be aware of what a heart attack might feel like for a woman, as some symptoms can differ from those of men. Chest pain or pressure; nausea; vomiting; indigestion; cold sweat; shortness of breath; light-headedness; fatigue; or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach are all possible signs.

### GO HEART SMART

- Aim for a normal weight.
- Exercise for 30 minutes every day.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Avoid foods high in saturated or trans fat and curb refined carbohydrates—cookies, white bread, sweet drinks—sometimes referred to as “high-glycemic-index” foods.





Mike Lutes  
Chief Executive Officer

Dear friends,

I wish everyone a very safe and healthful winter season. We hope you and your family are in good health, but if you need care, know that you can rely on Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC). We're committed to providing you with quality care and service and are always looking for new ways to expand to meet the community's needs. Here's a look at some exciting changes we're planning for 2008 at GVMC.

#### CARDIAC AND VASCULAR CARE

GVMC is pleased to announce that our cardiac catheterization lab is open to serve you. With the arrival of invasive cardiologist Gary Roberts, M.D., in 2007, GVMC started performing cardiac catheterizations. Now more patients can stay close to home and have this procedure performed instead of traveling to Roanoke, Charlottesville or Charleston.

We've also begun offering new vascular procedures now that Frank Kadel, D.O., vascular surgeon, has joined our medical staff. Previously, patients had to travel outside the area for these procedures. We look forward to providing these services and much-needed technology locally.

#### UPGRADED MAMMOGRAPHY SUITE

We've upgraded and renovated our mammography

suite to better serve you. Renovations include a soothing and inviting color palette. Additionally, Greenbrier Valley Auxiliary purchased new furniture for the suite, giving it a fresh, updated look. We've also purchased a second mammography unit so you can have your mammogram in a timely manner. For comfort, MammoPad cushions are available during your mammogram. The new GE Diamond Mammography System along with the GE Stereotactic Biopsy Unit allow us to provide a much-needed service to the region. Finally, our new MammoTome vacuum-assisted breast biopsy machine provides an accurate specimen for proper breast disease diagnosis.

#### EXPANDED SINUS SERVICE

We're pleased to offer new technology to treat patients with chronic sinus problems. Chris White, D.O., is using the LandmarX ENT Element Image Guidance System, which provides a three-dimensional view of the sinus area. This procedure increases efficiency and safety while eliminating cumbersome setups for you. Read more on pages 4 and 5.

With advanced technology and compassion, we can take even better care of you.

Sincerely,

Mike Lutes  
Chief Executive Officer  
Greenbrier Valley Medical Center

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Greenbrier Valley Medical Center  
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Ronceverte, WV 24970

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