

Health Connection

A PUBLICATION OF GREENBRIER
VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

**For all your
health needs**
Your primary care
physician's role

**Stay close to
home for care**
Dialysis comes to GVMC

Seniors: Join the circle!
Fun, fellowship and
benefits await

**Move your body
to build your mind**

**Living well with
heart disease**



GREENBRIER VALLEY
MEDICAL CENTER

www.gvmc.com



Do you really need a primary care physician?

Sure, most health plans require a primary care physician (PCP) for specialist referrals. But that's just one reason it's a good idea to have one dedicated clinician to oversee all your health concerns.

THE KEY TO SUPERIOR CARE

Developing an ongoing relationship with one physician who knows you and your medical history leads to a better overall outcome and lower costs. The reason? Your PCP can counsel you on healthy lifestyle choices, such as exercise options, an eating plan and other prudent lifestyle adjustments and modifications. Plus, seeing your PCP regularly makes him or her better at evaluating your symptoms than practitioners who don't know you. Additionally, a PCP provides routine health screenings, which can find diseases early—when they're easier to treat (see “Screenings your PCP may provide”). This, in turn, translates into less invasive and less expensive treatments.

A GUIDING LIGHT

If you've ever wished you could go to one place for all your health concerns or worried whether you're approaching the right physician for a particular ailment, you're in luck. A PCP can be your primary contact to address most personal healthcare needs.

The healthcare system can be intimidating—especially when you're faced with a frightening symptom. A PCP can evaluate the problem and either manage it him- or herself or arrange for the appropriate referrals. And if you need specialist care, your PCP can guide you and coordinate all aspects of your care. Plus, he or she can sort through and help explain the advice of other physicians.

Who's who in the PCP world

When picking a PCP, you can choose from many different types of healthcare professionals:

- **Family practitioners.** Physicians who care for children and adults of all ages. They may also practice obstetrics and minor surgery.
- **General practitioners.** Physicians who provide basic care for all ages.
- **Internists.** Physicians who care for adults of all ages and can treat many different medical problems.
- **Obstetricians/gynecologists.** Physicians who specialize in reproductive health. They often serve as a PCP for women, especially those of childbearing age.
- **Hospitalists.** Physicians who care for people who are hospitalized. Most hospitalists are trained in internal medicine and work with a hospitalized patient's PCP to provide the best care.

• **Nurse practitioners and physician assistants.**

Nonphysician providers of primary healthcare. Often referred to as “physician extenders,” they consult with physicians. They may see children, adults or women only and can prescribe medications and other treatments.

- **Pediatricians.** Physicians who treat newborns, infants, children and adolescents.

Screenings your PCP may provide

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> blood pressure | <input type="checkbox"/> cholesterol | <input type="checkbox"/> diabetes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> breast cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> colorectal cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> obesity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cervical cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> depression | <input type="checkbox"/> prostate cancer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> chlamydia | | |

Strength-train your brain

The mental benefits of exercise

Exercise has long been touted for its physical health benefits, such as improving metabolism, lowering blood pressure and reducing your risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer. But working up a sweat is also good for your head. Here's how:

BEATS THE BLUES

In a review of 80 studies on exercise and depression, researchers concluded that getting physical can act like an antidepressant. The analysis found that exercise decreased depression more than relaxation training (such as meditation or breathing) or engaging in enjoyable activities did. Working out may boost levels of feel-good endorphins, natural painkillers that promote a heightened sense of well-being.

TAMES TENSION

Physical activity releases muscle tension, reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol and raises body temperature, which may have calming effects. Additionally, it can shift your attention away from anxious thoughts to something more pleasant, like your surroundings or the music that gets you moving.

AMPS UP ENERGY

Often feel drained? Inactivity is the likely culprit. Yes, working out may make you tired in the short term, but it helps increase stamina and energy in the long run. And, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, staying active may improve sleep quality, which translates into more next-day pep.

CRANKS UP CONFIDENCE

If you're nervous, working up a sweat gives you a confidence boost. How does getting sweaty raise self-worth? The effect is thought to be brought about by the sense of accomplishment that comes from meeting fitness goals or challenges.

BOOSTS BRAIN POWER

Regular physical activity can help keep your thinking, learning and judgment skills sharp as you age. In one study of 62- to 70-year-olds, those who were still working and retirees who exercised sustained their levels of cerebral blood flow and performed better on cognition tests than inactive retirees. What's more, in a few studies of subjects older than age 65, those who worked out for at least 15 to 30 minutes three times a week were less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.



How much is enough?

If you have a physical disability, talk with your physician before exercising. Once you get his or her OK, do the following activities to reap the mental and physical benefits:

- A minimum of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (like brisk walking) each week. If you're just getting started, break your workout into three brisk 10-minute walks a day, five days a week. Not into walking? Do water aerobics, go for a bike ride, play doubles tennis or mow the lawn—anything that gets you moving.
- Muscle-strengthening activities that target all major muscle groups on two or more days a week. Try heavy gardening (digging, shoveling), yoga, lifting weights or other weight-bearing moves like push-ups or sit-ups. Aim for eight to 12 repetitions per activity.



Rob Followell
Chief Executive Officer

Dear friends,

It's a beautiful time of year in Greenbrier County. Fall brings cooler weather, football, school activities and new developments at Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC).

EXPANDING THE ER

We held a groundbreaking in July for our new emergency room

(ER) expansion. The 20-month expansion will more than double the size of our existing ER. The project is moving along as expected, and we'll update the community on our progress as we move ahead.

NEW EQUIPMENT AND PHYSICIANS

GVMC continues to enhance the care we provide every day. We recently purchased advanced digital mammography equipment and magnetic resonance imaging equipment with breast coils for extensive imaging.

We're also pleased to announce the arrival of nephrologist Heather L. Ratliff, D.O., to GVMC. With the addition of Dr. Ratliff, we're now offering in-house dialysis to our patients. Read more about Dr. Ratliff on the back page of this issue of *Health Connection*.

I continue to be inspired by the support we receive from many of you in our community. If you have any comments, questions or concerns, please call me at **(304) 647-4411**. I'd love to hear from you.

In good health,

ROB FOLLOWELL
Chief Executive Officer
Greenbrier Valley Medical Center

How to cope with year-round allergies

For many people, the misery of sniffles, sneezing and watery eyes

doesn't end with the spring or summer. If you suffer from allergy symptoms throughout the year, chances are you have multiple allergies to irritants both indoors and out.

Reducing your contact with indoor and outdoor allergens may help make your symptoms more manageable. Try these measures:

- Limit contact with pets.
- Avoid carpets, which can trap dust and animal dander.
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter.
- Run a HEPA cleaner in your bedroom.
- Make sure basements, bathrooms and kitchens are well ventilated and cleaned frequently to prevent mold and mildew.
- Use a dehumidifier in damp basements.
- Keep windows closed and use air conditioning during peak pollen months.
- Stay indoors during peak pollen hours from 5 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- Make your home a smoke-free environment.
- Avoid aerosols, paint, perfumes and cleaning products with strong fumes.



! Ease the sneezing!

See your physician for an evaluation and prescription medications if over-the-counter remedies and self-care measures don't offer enough relief or your symptoms worsen. To find more health information, visit www.gvmc.com.



A circle of friends

Senior program offers valuable health services and social events

As of May, Greenbrier Valley Medical Center's (GVMC) senior group is now part of the national Senior Circle program. GVMC's Senior Circle chapter offers the same member benefits and discounts as before, with several new national discounts added.

Senior Circle membership is open to people ages 50 and better and encourages healthy, active lifestyles through education, social activities and trips. The GVMC Senior Circle chapter offers a variety of monthly health and wellness events, exercise classes, day trips and parties for just \$15 a year. The program teaches members how to embrace life changes during their 50s and celebrate all the changes that come after.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL BENEFITS

Local membership benefits include:

- private room upgrade when staffing and availability permit
- health and wellness programs and exercise and fitness classes
- complimentary caregiver meals, when member is admitted
- fellowship, parties, crafts and games
- day and overnight trips
- free copying, faxing and notarizing of important papers
- a year-round cafeteria discount

National membership benefits include:

- car rental discounts at National and Alamo and a free upgrade at Enterprise
- subscriptions to *Inside Circle* and *Circle News* magazines
- discounts on ADT monitoring and emergency-response systems
- ScriptSave prescription discounts
- EyeMed vision discounts
- Beltone hearing care discounts



! Join the circle!

To join Senior Circle or learn more about the program, call advisor Betty Morgan at (304) 647-6096.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about breast cancer?

Take this quiz to find out.

- 1** Your risk of developing breast cancer is increased by which of the following?
 - a. radiation exposure to the chest as a child or a young adult
 - b. first pregnancy after age 30
 - c. use of estrogen and progesterone to treat menopausal symptoms for four or more years
 - d. all of the above
- 2** Which is not a risk factor for developing breast cancer?
 - a. having a family history of the disease
 - b. being overweight
 - c. antiperspirant use
 - d. excessive drinking
- 3** Symptoms of breast cancer typically don't include:
 - a. changes in the size or contour of the breast
 - b. breast pain
 - c. an indentation of the nipple
 - d. a clear or bloody discharge from the nipple
- 4** Which of the following is not true about male breast cancer?
 - a. One in five men with breast cancer has a close male or female relative with breast cancer.
 - b. The average male is 60 to 70 years old at diagnosis.
 - c. Being overweight doesn't increase breast cancer risk.
 - d. Health conditions that affect the testicles may increase risk.
- 5** An annual mammogram once you turn 40 is important because:
 - a. your chance of being diagnosed with breast cancer increases with age
 - b. you may have a small cancer that won't show up until your next annual screening
 - c. the sooner you're diagnosed with breast cancer, the easier it is to treat
 - d. all of the above

ANSWERS: 1. (D), 2. (C), 3. (B), 4. (C), 5. (D)



Living with heart disease

Being diagnosed with heart disease can be scary. You may wonder: Will I still be able to do the things I love? By making a few adjustments, you can control your condition and enjoy life to its fullest. Here's how:

Master your medications. If your physician prescribes cholesterol- or blood pressure-lowering pills, tape a note to your mirror, set an alarm—whatever's necessary—to ensure you take them as directed every day.

Learn food math. Don't worry: You can still eat delicious meals. But you'll have to learn to read labels and keep tabs on your daily intake of certain foods. The basics:

- Keep total fat to less than 35 percent of your calories (saturated fat should equal just 7 percent).
- Limit cholesterol to 200 mg a day.
- Restrict sodium to 2,400 mg or less a day.
- Eat just enough calories to maintain or achieve a healthy weight.

Move more. Joining a gym is great (if you'll go), but it's not a requirement. Cleaning your house, walking your dog briskly and biking to the store are all examples of valid activity. Just 30 minutes a day will help protect your heart—even if you do only 10 minutes at a time. Of course, always check with your physician before beginning any exercise program.

If you follow these recommendations, you'll drop any extra pounds slowly, which means your weight loss is more likely to stick. The great news: Losing even 5 to 10 percent of your current weight can reduce your risk of heart attack and improve your overall health.

Keeping little athletes safe



Kids love sports, and we love watching them play. But each year, more than 3.5 million children under age 15 are treated for sports-related injuries, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). That number is on the rise. One reason: Many kids now play the same sport year-round, resulting in overuse injuries such as chronic muscle strains, stress fractures and tendonitis. Plus, some sports have gone more extreme. Cheer-leading alone injured almost 70,000 children in 2007. So how can you keep your child out of the ER?

- **Don't start too soon.** Don't let your child join a team until he or she is at least 6 years old, says the AAP.
- **Get a pre-season checkup.** Visit your pediatrician to make sure your son or daughter is indeed sports-ready.
- **Gear up correctly.** Make sure your child doesn't compete without the right sporting shoes, helmet and safety equipment.

- **Teach the wisdom of warming up and cooling down.** Insist that young athletes exercise lightly for at least three minutes, then stretch the muscles to be used for at least 30 seconds each before practice or a game.
- **Fill 'er up.** Make sure your child carries a water bottle and knows the importance of drinking frequently, even if he or she isn't thirsty. Dehydration can cause fatigue and sickness.
- **Watch carefully.** Discourage participation in just one sport. If your child shows sign of strain or injury, insist he or she stop playing immediately—then see your pediatrician.

Healthy eating on the run

You're out and about when hunger pangs hit. Stopping at the nearest fast-food joint, you order a cheeseburger, fries and a soda and quickly wolf it all down in your car. Minutes later you feel sluggish, bloated—and guilty.

The good news: Your healthy diet doesn't have to suffer just because you're racing from one obligation to the next, spending the day running errands or hitting the road for a family vacation. Be prepared with these smart-snacking tips:

- **Always take water with you.** If it's too

bland, add a slice of fruit or a splash of juice.

- **For an on-the-run breakfast,** grab low-fat string cheese and a piece of fruit.
- **Fill an insulated lunch box with fresh fruit,** carrots, celery sticks, walnuts, yogurt or peanut butter on 100 percent whole-wheat bread for snacks during the day. Keep protein bars or snack bags of almonds or raisins in your purse, glove compartment or tote bag for hunger attacks.
- **If you must hit the drive-through,** opt for a kid-sized meal with fresh fruit or a side salad (with low-fat dressing) instead of fries, and a grilled chicken sandwich instead of one that's breaded and fried. Skip the mayo and other fatty spreads.
- **Need a coffee break?** Order the low-fat, sugar-free version of your favorite frozen coffee or latte and skip the whipped cream and caramel drizzle.





Health Connection is published as a community service of Greenbrier Valley Medical Center. There is no fee to subscribe.

The information contained in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have medical concerns, please consult your healthcare provider.

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Advanced care is right here!

In-house dialysis comes to GVMC

Beginning this fall, dialysis will be available right here at Greenbrier Valley Medical Center (GVMC) for hospitalized patients who require dialysis.

They'll no longer need to travel out of town for their care. This care advancement and improvement in convenience have been made possible with the addition of board-certified nephrologist Heather L. Ratliff, D.O., to our staff. Dr. Ratliff, a West Virginia native, is a 2004 graduate of the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lewisburg. She



Heather L. Ratliff, D.O.
Nephrologist

completed her nephrology fellowship with Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

ABOUT YOUR KIDNEYS

People may require dialysis when their kidney function reaches less than 10 percent of normal capacity, and end-stage renal disease sets in. At that point, dialysis treatments must be performed several times a week. To reduce your risk of kidney disease and maintain the health of this vital organ, drink plenty of fluids, exercise regularly

and keep a healthy weight. If you smoke, try to stop. Keep diabetes and blood pressure in check. And ask for a urinalysis during visits with your physician. A urine sample can give your physician valuable information about your overall kidney health.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF DISEASE

Few systems in the body are unaffected when you suffer from chronic kidney disease. Although you may not have severe symptoms until the disease gets worse, you may have some of these symptoms:

- fatigue
- poor appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- sleeplessness
- muscle cramping at night
- swollen feet and ankles
- dry, itchy skin
- puffiness around the eyes, especially in the morning
- a need to urinate more often, especially at night



! Stay healthy!

To learn more about the health of your kidneys and your entire body, visit www.gvmc.com and click on "Health Resources."