

Health Connection

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REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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**Give your baby a
healthy start**
Become an EX
smoker today!

**Changing the
surgical experience**

**Get to the bottom of
gallbladder attacks**

**What you need to
know about prenatal
screenings**



The vein truth

How to keep your blood flowing

Normally, you don't think about them much. Your veins are just there, transporting blood to your heart from other organs and tissues on a daily basis. But when veins become visible, painful or begin affecting your health, you can't ignore them any longer.

WHEN GOOD VEINS GO BAD

Two conditions that you may encounter are:

- **Varicose veins.** When one-way valves in the veins fail to keep blood moving forward, the blood pools, causing swelling. That leaves you with bulging, twisting veins located just under the surface of the skin. While they rarely cause symptoms, varicose veins can lead to pain, blood clots and skin ulcers. You have a greater chance of developing varicose veins if you have a family history of varicose veins or are older, a woman, pregnant, overweight or obese or inactive. Varicose veins can be treated by procedures or surgery, including laser surgery, where laser light energy fades veins.
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT).** DVT is a blood clot that forms in a vein deep within the body, usually in the lower legs or thighs. It can cause a serious problem called pulmonary embolism, which occurs when the clot breaks free and travels to the lungs. Sitting for a long time can increase your risk of getting a blood clot, as can having

surgery and taking hormone therapy or other medications. Symptoms of DVT include pain, swelling, skin redness and warmth and tenderness over the vein. Your physician may prescribe anti-clotting medications to treat DVT.

PREVENTING PROBLEMS

You can take steps to help reduce your risk of vein problems, or help you manage if you already have them. To keep veins in their place:

- **Get moving.** Exercise can help blood move through veins.
- **Avoid sitting or standing for too long.** Don't cross your legs, and if you can, raise your legs above the level of your heart when sitting or resting. If you've had surgery, get moving as soon as possible afterward.
- **Lose weight.** This will help blood flow and take some of the pressure off your veins.
- **Toss your tight clothes.** Don't wear anything that's tight around your waist, groin or legs, as it can cut off blood flow.
- **Skip the stilettos, ladies.** Low heels can help tone calf muscles, which can get blood moving through your veins.
- **Ask your physician about compression stockings.** They can help keep blood from pooling and reduce leg swelling.
- **Get up and walk around while traveling.** If traveling by car, try to stop every hour for a walking break.

Pregnant and still smoking? Become an EX!

You know that smoking is bad for your health—and for the health of your unborn baby. You know you should quit. But the thought of taking that first step toward putting out your last cigarette can be daunting. The National Alliance for Tobacco Cessation has introduced a free quit-smoking program, EX, designed to help people like you.

The EX philosophy is based on re-learning everything you thought you knew about quitting. EX helps you break down your smoking habit into small pieces you can tackle one by one. Instead of going cold turkey, you use EX's customized step-by-step program to re-learn life without cigarettes.

By the time you're ready to toss your packs, you'll have already laid much of the groundwork to prepare you—and your baby—for a smoke-free future. What better time to re-learn life without cigarettes than when you're also re-learning life as a mom-to-be!

BABY STEPS

The EX plan features three steps to start you on your journey to becoming an ex-smoker:

- 1. Re-learn habit.** Certain situations, like eating meals or worrying about finances for a growing family, can trigger your desire to smoke. EX teaches you to control your smoking triggers.
- 2. Re-learn addiction.** The nicotine you inhale causes your brain receptors to get a so-called nice feeling that makes you want to smoke more. EX shows you how to break this cycle.
- 3. Re-learn support.** The right kind of support increases your chances of quitting. Friends and family can help, even if it's by just giving you space. You also can access the EX online community to connect with other pregnant smokers and get



Breathe easy!

It's never too late in your pregnancy to stop smoking. Visit www.becomeanex.org and take the first step toward quitting the habit.



Baby's breath

Once you stop smoking, your baby will get more oxygen. For each day you don't smoke, you help your baby grow and reduce the risks of premature delivery and low birthweight.

advice from quit-smoking experts at the Mayo Clinic. (Your prenatal care provider is a great resource, too.)

AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN

Kicking the habit for good is the best thing you can do for you and your baby. Your newborn will be at lower risk for chest colds, coughs, ear infections, asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). What's more, once your baby grows up, he or she will be less likely to become a smoker.

Medicine cabinet makeover

Taking stock can keep your family healthy

Is your medicine cabinet a disaster area, a catchall for old medications, unlabeled bottles and other hazards? If you answered yes, a good cleaning at least once a year is recommended.

So where do you start? First, move all your medicine out of the medicine cabinet, since it's not recommended that you store medicine in the bathroom. Bathrooms are humid places, and that humidity can make your medicines less effective, or, in extreme cases, toxic. Instead, find a cool, dry place to keep your medicines.

Next, get rid of any medication that's expired. However, don't throw it down the toilet, which poses an environmental risk. Instead, throw old drugs in the trash, taking care to mix them with kitty litter or coffee grounds to make them less attractive to children and pets.

Also, make sure to keep medication in its original container, which contains important information like when the drug expires, how much to take, possible drug interactions and who it was prescribed for. Don't leave that cotton plug in any bottles either, as it can draw moisture into the bottle.

Here are some things you may have in your cabinet that deserve a closer look:



Clean out your medicine cabinet at least once a year to keep your family healthy and safe.

SYRUP OF IPECAC. It used to be recommended to make a child throw up if he or she had swallowed poison. However, there's no evidence it works and it may actually cause other treatments to fail. Throw it out! Instead, call poison control in an emergency.

COUGH AND COLD MEDICINE. It's not recommended for kids younger than age 4. And never give a child an adult-strength medication, as it could cause a serious reaction.

ASPIRIN. It's safe for most adults, but if you have kids, be extra careful. Aspirin's been linked to a rare

condition called Reye's syndrome, which can cause brain damage and liver function problems in children and teens, especially those taking the drug to treat chickenpox or the flu. Instead, keep other pain relievers and fever reducers, like acetaminophen and ibuprofen, on hand.

UNUSED ANTIBIOTICS. Don't save them for later or give them to another person. Get rid of them.

THERMOMETERS. If they break, old mercury thermometers can expose you to toxic mercury. Use an oral thermometer for older kids; choose an axillary (under the armpit) or rectal one for younger children.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **diabetes**?

Take this quiz to find out.



CURB YOUR CHOLESTEROL

Every year, more than a million Americans have heart attacks, and about 500,000 die from heart disease. One of the major risk factors for such heart trouble is high cholesterol. This fatlike substance builds up in your arteries and slows or blocks blood flow to the heart.

Some experts recommend that you start cholesterol testing by age 20; others say to start at age 35. Using a simple blood test called a lipoprotein profile, your physician can determine if your cholesterol levels are too high. Here's what's considered healthy:

>**Total cholesterol:** less than 200 mg/dL

>**LDL (bad) cholesterol:** less than 100 mg/dL is optimal; 100 to 129 mg/dL is near optimal/above optimal

>**HDL (good) cholesterol:** 60 mg/dL or higher may protect the heart; less than 40 mg/dL for men (less than 50 for women) puts you at a greater risk for heart problems

>**Triglycerides (another type of blood fat):** less than 150 mg/dL

WORK ON IT

Are your levels higher than they should be? You can often make a big impact on your cholesterol by making a few small changes:

- **Cut back on saturated fat and cholesterol.** The American Heart Association recommends that you keep your saturated fat consumption to less than 7 percent of your total daily calories. So if you consume about 2,000 calories a day, no more than 140 of them should come from saturated fat, or about 16 grams a day. Avoid trans fats and stock up on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids (salmon, walnuts, almonds).

- **Get active.** Engage in physical activity for at least 30 minutes daily.

- **Lose weight.** Being active and revamping your diet can help. Dropping even 5 to 10 pounds can lower cholesterol.

- **Quit smoking.**

- **Follow your physician's advice.** That includes taking medication, if needed.

1 Which of the following is not a symptom of type 2 diabetes?

- a. fatigue
- b. increased hunger
- c. difficulty urinating
- d. slow wound healing

2 Having diabetes can increase your chances of developing:

- a. glaucoma
- b. digestive problems
- c. gingivitis
- d. all of the above

3 Your physician may diagnose you with diabetes by performing a:

- a. thyroid test
- b. glucose test
- c. complete blood count
- d. none of the above

4 According to the National Institutes of Health, what percentage of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight?

- a. 60
- b. 70
- c. 80
- d. 90

5 Which of these statements about diabetes is true?

- a. You don't have to avoid sweets and chocolate.
- b. You'll eventually develop it if you're overweight.
- c. It makes you more likely to get colds or other illnesses.
- d. Eating too much sugar can cause it.

ANSWERS: 1. (c) 2. (d) 3. (b) 4. (c) 5. (a)

Single-incision laparoscopic surgery at DRMC: One cut above the rest

DeKalb Regional Medical Center (DRMC) is taking laparoscopic surgery to a whole new level. With a big vision and the latest technology, our physicians now perform gallbladder surgery through a single incision. Traditionally, the minimally invasive surgery has involved up to four incisions.

“The procedure represents the newest surgical technique development since the first laparoscopic cholecystectomy, or gallbladder removal, performed in 1987,” says Steve Isbell, M.D. “This technique offers a feasible advanced surgical procedure.” The single-incision procedure can be used in a wide variety of surgeries, such as bariatric (weight-loss), urologic and gynecologic procedures.

Traditional laparoscopic techniques usually require up to four half-inch or smaller incisions. In contrast, the new procedure requires only one access point through the patient’s bellybutton.

“The single-incision technique offers a better cosmetic result than the four-port technique, in that the one incision is camouflaged by the umbilicus, or bellybutton,” says William Harris, M.D. The obscured incision can reduce the potential for visible scarring—a clear advantage over traditional laparoscopic cholecystectomies that can leave visible scars at entry sites.

A MEDICAL MILESTONE

With the single-incision technique, says Jeffrey Thompson, M.D., the medical community has achieved another milestone. “It’s exciting when we can offer patients a surgical experience that can minimize some of the discomfort traditionally associated with surgery,” he says. “In a nutshell, that’s what the single-incision procedure is all about.”

Says Ashley Lamar, director of marketing, “Our commitment is to stay one step ahead of a constantly evolving medical environment and to provide our patients with a high quality of compassionate care.”

ONE CUT = MORE BENEFITS

The single-incision surgery has other potential benefits as well. One 20-millimeter incision through the bellybutton reduces possible wound pain that can sometimes result from more entry sites. And, in many cases, a patient can go home the same day as his or her surgery. Typical open surgery requires a three- to seven-day stay.

“At DRMC, patient care is our highest priority,” says Jeff Rains, chief executive officer. “Procedures including the single-incision technique are instrumental in helping us fulfill our goal of offering patients the latest advancements in medicine.”

! Get the inside story

Find out whether single-incision laparoscopic surgery is an option for you. Call (256) 845-3150 or visit us online at www.dekalbregional.com.





When your gallbladder attacks

Like most people, you probably don't think much about your gallbladder. But, if you've ever had a gallbladder "attack," there's little doubt that your gallbladder has made you well aware of its presence.

WHAT DOES THE GALLBLADDER DO?

The gallbladder, a small pear-shaped organ just below the liver, plays an important role in helping your body digest food. It releases bile into the intestines, which breaks down fat.

Gallstones are the usual culprits when it comes to a gallbladder attack. When bile in the gallbladder becomes chemically unbalanced, gallstones develop. Most are solid clumps of cholesterol that range in size from a grain of sand to a golf ball.

GALLSTONE SYMPTOMS

Most people with gallstones have no symptoms. But if a gallstone becomes large enough to block the passageways, or ducts, of the gallbladder, pancreas or liver, pain can be severe.

Symptoms include:

- abdominal pain
- nausea, vomiting and diarrhea especially after high-fat or spicy meals
- dark urine
- fever
- chills
- yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes

Are you at risk?

Your risk for developing gallstones increases if you:

- eat foods mostly high in fat and cholesterol
- follow unhealthy "crash" diets that require skipping meals or drastically cutting calories
- are female
- are pregnant
- are taking birth control pills or hormone therapy
- are overweight
- are older than age 60
- are Native American
- are Mexican-American

Get medical treatment for gallstones right away. An obstructed bile duct can cause permanent damage or your gallbladder to rupture—and be potentially fatal.

The most common treatment is to surgically remove the gallbladder. Most healthy people can function normally without a gallbladder. Removal is usually performed laparoscopically with no overnight hospital stay. Most patients return to normal activities within days.



Don't get stoned!

Learn more about gallstones. Call (256) 845-3150 or visit www.dekalbregional.com and click on "Health Resources."

Flu, flu, go away!

It's fall again, and with the changing of the seasons often comes the dreaded flu. Recently, the seasonal flu has been upstaged somewhat by H1N1. Both strains are serious, may lead to complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis and can result in hospitalization and even death.

You can't always keep flu out of your home, but you can certainly reduce the risk of getting infected. Try these tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- **Get vaccinated.** This year, the seasonal flu vaccine comprises three strains of flu including H1N1. It's especially important for pregnant women; young children; people older than 65; people who have chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease or lung disease; and others at high risk for complications.
- **Play defense.** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, then throw the tissue out; wash

your hands often (use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available); keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth; avoid close contact with sick people; and stay away from crowds during a flu outbreak. Stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

- **Take your medicine.** If you get sick, your physician may recommend an antiviral drug to make the symptoms milder, shorten the time you're sick and prevent complications.



5 must-eat foods

Despite what you might read on the Internet, there's no magic food to prevent disease or cure you of all your ills. However, certain foods are high in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals and, when combined with an overall healthy diet, may help you maintain good health. Consider adding these good, and good-for-you, foods to your diet:

1 Blueberries. Blueberries have plenty of fiber and vitamins A and C, and they may improve short-term memory. Add them to cereal or yogurt for a tart kick.



2 Sardines. Those little fish canned in oil pack a powerful nutrient punch, supplying plenty of protein, calcium and heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins B12 and D. Try them in sandwiches, salads or sauces.

3 Almonds. Thanks to good fats, vitamin E and fiber, almonds are exceptionally good for your heart. Grab a small handful daily or sprinkle them on a salad.



4 Red beans. They're high in potassium, iron and magnesium (not to mention low in fat and an excellent source of protein), and may play a role in preventing heart disease and some forms of cancer. Try adding them to stews instead of meat.

5 Sweet potatoes. That orange color is due to loads of beta carotene, which may help slow the aging process. Sweet potatoes also provide vitamins B6, C and E; folate; and potassium. Try them baked or sliced into wedges for another take on french fries.

Living life after cancer

3 steps to stay healthy

You've heard the words every cancer patient wants to hear: You're in remission. Now it's up to you to take care of yourself. Here are three tips to help:

→ **Put the right food into your body.** While a healthy diet doesn't guarantee your cancer won't return, it can help you regain strength so you feel better. Ask your physician what kind of diet you should follow and if you have any dietary restrictions. He or she may connect you with a dietitian experienced in creating balanced meal plans for people who have had cancer. In general, aim for five to seven servings of fruits and vegetables a day and plenty of whole grains. Cut the amount of fat you eat by baking and broiling foods and opting for skim milk and other non- or low-fat dairy products. Lower your sodium intake by limiting salt-cured, smoked or pickled foods. If you're still experiencing the side effects of cancer treatment, such as poor appetite, dry mouth, change in taste or smell, trouble swallowing or weight loss, ask your physician how you can combat them.

→ **Learn to manage fatigue.** To get a handle on fatigue, a common complaint of cancer survivors, take short naps, but remember that sleeping too much can actually sap energy. Exercise regularly, and pace your daily activities so you don't get too tired too quickly. Ask for help from friends and family and consult your physician if your fatigue seems to get worse. And take heart: Your energy will return!

→ **Go to each and every follow-up appointment with your physician.** This is your chance to tell him or her about any symptoms you've been having. He or she will address your concerns and may order lab tests or imaging tests to check for cancer recurrence or treatment side effects. How often you see your physician depends on your individual case, but if you had breast cancer, for example, you'll probably go every four to six months, with appointments becoming more infrequent the longer you're cancer free. After five years, you may only have one appointment a year.

How often you see your physician depends on your case, but your visits will become more infrequent the longer you're cancer free.



Prenatal screenings: A must for moms-to-be



Preparing for a new baby is a busy and exciting time: choosing a name, decorating the nursery, celebrating with family and friends. But your most important job as a mother-to-be is to stay healthy—for you and your baby.

You can expect to undergo a variety of screening tests and blood pressure checks to make sure your baby is thriving and healthy. Routine prenatal screenings include:

- **Blood tests** to check for anemia, which causes fatigue and raises the risk of preterm delivery. Blood tests also look for an absence of Rh factor protein, which may indicate incompatibility between your and baby's blood type.
- **Urine tests** to look for sugar, protein or bacteria in the urine, which could indicate a urinary tract infection.
- **A Pap test** to check for cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases such as chlamydia, gonorrhea and herpes.
- **Ultrasound exams**, which use sound waves to transmit your baby's picture, revealing shape, position and gender. They record your baby's heartbeat and look for physical problems such as cleft palate, congenital heart defects or

malformation of internal organs. They also show the baby's relationship to the placenta.

- **A glucose screening** to diagnose gestational diabetes. If you are older than age 25, are obese, have a family history of diabetes, previously have given birth to a baby weighing more than 9 pounds or have sugar in your urine, you're at risk for diabetes.
- **A group B streptococcus (GBS) test** detects the presence of GBS bacteria by swabbing the vagina and rectum. GBS bacteria can cause infections in newborns during delivery.

! Test your pregnancy knowledge

Are you staying healthy for your baby? Find out by taking our healthy pregnancy quizzes. Visit us online at www.dekalbregional.com, click on "Health Resources" and go to "Interactive Tools."



HEALTHY WOMAN
has moved ONLINE

Connect now to communicate with friends, neighbors and other women like you – in a whole new way!

Visit Healthy Woman Online!

Healthy Woman Online is a free resource to empower women ages 25–65 to make informed health and well-being decisions. Join today to:

- be the first to learn about and sign up for events
- connect with other Healthy Woman members
- receive information about your health, relationships and life issues

To confirm that you want to remain or to become a member of the Healthy Woman program, you must sign up at www.dekalbregional.com

FOR QUESTIONS, E-MAIL US AT HEALTHY_WOMAN@CHS.NET

New baby, new health woes?

How to handle common post-pregnancy symptoms

After what felt like an eternity of pregnancy, you've finally welcomed your little one into the world and are ready to kiss the swollen feet, the constant bathroom breaks and the heartburn goodbye. Trouble is, while these symptoms disappear, a whole new set of post-pregnancy ones may occur:

PROBLEM: Hair loss

Thick hair is one of the benefits produced by pregnancy hormones. However, now that your baby's here, you may find all that extra hair falling out.

SOLUTION: You can't stop it, so use it as an excuse to try a new hairstyle that covers the thinned-out areas. You can expect your hair to return to normal in about six months. In the meantime, limit the use of any hair tools or products that can cause damage, such as a hair dryer or flat iron.

PROBLEM: Incontinence

Thanks to pregnancy and the birthing process, your bladder muscles are probably stretched out. A trickle of urine when you laugh or cough isn't uncommon.

SOLUTION: While urinary incontinence typically gets better within three months, Kegel exercises, which strengthen your pelvic floor muscles, can help. Ask your physician how to do them, and what other options are available.

PROBLEM: Sweating

Waking up in the middle of the night sweating like you just ran a marathon? Sweating is one way your body gets rid of the excess fluid from pregnancy. Hormones can also cause it. You may soak the sheets for weeks or for the whole time you breastfeed.

SOLUTION: Stay hydrated with water, wear light cotton clothing and turn on a fan.



Postpartum depression

About one in every eight women experiences postpartum depression within three months of delivery. You may have a loss of interest in activities, fatigue, sleep problems, appetite changes and suicidal thoughts. If you have any of these symptoms, talk with your physician immediately.

PROBLEM: "New mom's syndrome" (de Quervain's tenosynovitis)

Awkward hand and wrist positioning when holding your child can lead to pain and swelling of tendons in the wrist, making it uncomfortable for you to grasp objects or make a fist.

SOLUTION: Use a splint or brace to keep your thumb and wrist straight, and ease discomfort with heat or ice. Medications such as ibuprofen, naproxen and corticosteroids can also help. If you have a particularly bad case, you may need physical therapy or surgery.

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FROM US TO YOU

Dear neighbor,

There is one thing certain about the health care industry—it's always changing. The issues and challenges facing the health care industry seem to be endless at times. The recent events of health care reform have been discussed, debated, embraced

and protested. There has not been a time that the health care industry has faced more changes and challenges than currently upon us. Nationwide, health care spending is growing at an alarming rate, at a time when the baby boomer generation is beginning to use health care services more frequently. Physician shortages, nursing shortages, uninsured patients and financial pressures are common themes challenging the industry.

READY FOR CHANGE

Change is evident. It's the one persistent challenge that faces our industry and the local health care we provide to the people of DeKalb County. Despite all that's upon us, I am confident that the health care providers in our community stand ready to face the tasks ahead. We are passionate about the services we provide and the care

we deliver. We are positioned for growth and ready to answer the needs of our community.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, physicians and staff who help us deliver quality health care, DeKalb Regional Medical Center remains focused and ready to excel in these difficult times. We're here for you and we are committed to our community. We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

JEFF RAINS
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb Regional Medical Center

Link to learn!

A quick stop at www.dekalbregional.com can offer you valuable information. Click "Health Resources," and you will find an award-winning online health library that includes 12,000 adult and pediatric topics in English and Spanish. Also available are daily health news headlines, audio podcasts, interactive health assessments, a drug interaction checker and much more.

