

Health Connection

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY ONE FRIEND AT A TIME
AT UNION COUNTY HOSPITAL



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Healthy Woman
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See page 6

To wait or medicate?
A look at both sides

Get free WiFi
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Health Fair

Win the
flu-bug battle





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.

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.

The antibiotics controversy: Too much of a good thing?



By Marcy Emmons, P.A.-C.
Family Practice Clinic

When you or a loved one is under the weather, the first instinct is to head to the medicine cabinet, the local pharmacy or the family physician in search of a remedy.

Patients and parents of sick children routinely leave their physician's office with a prescription for an antibiotic to make things all better. However, a new trend is emerging—to wait, rather than medicate. This is because overuse and improper use of antibiotics may result in a more serious illness or the risk of unnecessary exposure to side effects. In the long run, inappropriate use of antibiotics may render them ineffective against certain bacterial infections.

THE SUPER BUG!

Antibiotic resistance—the growth of super-bacteria that don't respond to medication—has been called America's most pressing public health crisis by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). More than 80 percent of Americans take one or more prescription drugs, and 27 percent take more than five prescriptions simultaneously at any given time—an increase of 60 percent since 1995, says recent data from the American Pharmacists Association.

Antibiotics were first used in the 1940s. When used properly, antibiotics treat bacterial infections, reduce potential complications from diseases, support the body's natural defenses and save lives. Over time (shelf life or length of time a person uses it), certain antibiotics routinely lose their effectiveness and pharmaceutical companies replace them with newer, stronger formulas.

The concern comes when certain antibiotics aren't used properly, leading to the emergence of drug-resistant strains of bacteria. Antibiotic drug resistance



develops when potentially dangerous bacteria mutate and render certain medications less effective or completely ineffective. Health experts believe that overuse and misuse of antibiotics are key causes. The FDA says that many important bacterial infections are becoming untreatable. When a person is infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, treatment of the patient is more difficult—and the infection may spread to other people.

Several strains of “super bugs” and drug-resistant bacteria that can't be killed with antibiotics have developed over the years: tuberculosis, malaria, pneumonia, skin infections, certain sexually transmitted diseases and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (better known as MRSA). These drug-resistant infections can cause serious disability and even death. MRSA—a potentially deadly drug-resistant staph infection—can be acquired in the hospital or a community setting through close personal contact (e.g., in schools, gyms and contact sports). Each year in the hospital setting, MRSA causes several thousand surgical and bloodstream infections and is such a prevalent concern that patients diagnosed with MRSA are segregated from the rest of the hospital population.

The development of these drug-resistant infections has caused health experts to re-evaluate the treatment of certain illnesses and the use of antibiotics. In 2004, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Otolaryngology issued guidelines encouraging physicians to use a one- to three-day “observation period”



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Dear friends,

In past issues, we've focused on many of the physical improvements and upgrades to Union County Hospital.

Examples include new equipment and our renovation and construction projects. In this issue, we want to make you aware of new and improved online services designed to make your experience with us more enjoyable and convenient.



Jim Farris
Chief Executive Officer

before prescribing antibiotics for an ear infection, watching and waiting and focusing on pain relief.

Aside from growing concerns about antibiotic resistance, several considerations impact your physician's decision about how to treat an illness. At the most basic level, the type of illness—bacterial or viral—will decide the course of treatment. Antibiotics can help fight bacterial infections, such as strep throat and ear or sinus infections, but not viral infections like colds, flu, coughs and sore throats. For illness caused by a viral infection, your physician can help recommend at-home or over-the-counter remedies for symptom relief while a virus runs its course.

Following proper protocols for antibiotic use can help you and your family return to better health more quickly and more safely, too.

JUST A CLICK AWAY

I hope you'll take a moment to read the article about our online services. You can now find a local physician, obtain information about a variety of medical conditions and find and apply for a job with us all online at www.unioncountyhospital.com. We also have wireless Internet capability so our patients and visitors can stay connected to family and work while they are with us.

These and other services are now available to you 24/7. They're further evidence of our ongoing commitment to meet your health care needs.

Regards,
JIM FARRIS
Chief Executive Officer
Union County Hospital

! Are you healthwise?

Test your knowledge about proper antibiotics use at www.unioncountyhospital.com. Click on "Health Resources" and choose "Interactive Tools." There, you'll find quizzes on antibiotic use, safety issues like Reye's syndrome and drug interactions. For more information about this topic or to schedule an appointment, call Marcy Emmons, P.A.-C., at (618) 833-2872.

Link to learn!

A quick stop at www.unioncountyhospital.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.



We have WiFi—and much more!

The Internet possibilities are endless at Union County Hospital (UCH). We now offer all our patients and their visitors wireless Internet capability. This service not only makes staying connected convenient for patients in the hospital, but their visitors and physicians have the opportunity to be online whenever they need to be—at no cost!

FEATURED ONLINE

While on the Internet, you can take advantage of key information available to you through our Web site, www.unioncountyhospital.com. There, you can access our “Find a Physician” search feature to see who we have on our medical staff. You can immediately learn about your physicians, such as their specialties, where they were trained and how long they’ve been practicing medicine. Our Web site also offers health resources information about any health condition, medication or even recommended treatment plans. Simply click on “Health Resources,” and you’ll be able to enter your questions for a prompt response. This feature can help you with information to discuss with your physician.

An additional new convenience for our patients and physicians is our picture archival and communication system. Now, our radiology department can transmit images directly to your physician’s office for quick reviews. This technology also allows us to download images to CD for patients who would like to have their own copy or take them to their specialists for review at their next appointment.



This past July, our employed physician clinic and Convenient Care Clinic began implementing a new technology called “E-Prescribe,” powered by AllScripts. We’re excited to once again provide patients with not only the convenience of having their prescriptions sent directly to their pharmacy but a way to always view a list of their medications and instructions with their provider before leaving their provider’s office.



Visit us online

To find a physician, search for health information and more, visit www.unioncountyhospital.com.

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.unioncountyhospital.com

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

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.

Health Connection is published as a community service of Union County Hospital. 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 health care provider.

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FALL 2010



UCH Health Fair 2010!

Friday, Oct. 8, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.

Special health services

- basic metabolic panel testing
- blood pressure checks
- blood sugar checks
- complete blood count testing
- lipid panels
- mini bone density scans
- prostate-specific antigen screening
- pulse oximetry
- skin cancer screening

Health information

- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease display
- home health services

Entertainment schedule

- Wii bowling open to Union County students in sixth to eighth grades and ninth to 12th grades
- Senior Circle bingo
- and much more!

Fun for kids

- Bounce Blast
- crafts and games
- face painting

- mammograms
- nutrition
- therapy services

Many area businesses will offer information and giveaways!



Fun for the entire family!

Kick off ColorFest with a healthy start!

ColorFest is also on Friday, Oct. 8! For more information about this event, call (618) 833-4511, ext. 4359.

Plus food and refreshments and free popcorn all day!



My promise to you ...
years of experience, years of caring.

Job B. Pontillas, M.D. • Union County General Surgery Clinic • 618-833-2872

Member of the Medical Staff at

