

# Health Connection

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



## Number crunching

Ways to manage  
high cholesterol

## Avoiding ear infections

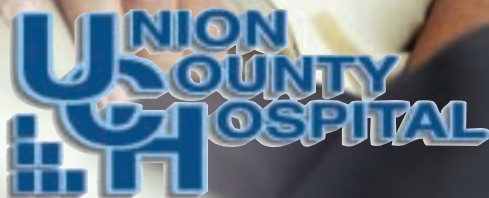
## Healing hernias

## Easing the sneezing

Surviving cold and flu season

## Bad breaks

First aid for broken bones



# You've found a breast lump: Now what?

If the thought of finding a lump in your breast scares you, you're not alone. After all, many of us know someone who has had breast cancer. But some of us are so frightened that we avoid getting mammograms—the very habit that could save our lives if breast cancer develops. If you're in that group, you'll be glad to hear that four in five breast lumps turn out to be noncancerous. Here's a description of some common breast conditions:

**Fibroadenoma:** a smooth, solid, round painless lump that moves easily and can feel like a marble. Occurs most often in African-American women and women under age 30.

**Fibrocystic breast changes:** solid or fluid-filled lumps that

increase in size and tenderness five to seven days before each menstrual period.

**Cyst:** a smooth, fluid-filled lump often sensitive to the touch before the menstrual period. Typically appears in women between ages 35 and 50.

**Lipoma:** a soft and slow-growing painless lump that moves freely.

**Intraductal papilloma:** a small, wartlike growth near the nipple that may cause bleeding from the nipple. Occurs most often in women in their 40s.

**Mammary duct ectasia:** a thick, sticky, gray to green discharge from the nipple.

**Mastitis:** a warm, tender, lumpy area on the breast that appears red. Most often affects breast-feeding women.

**Traumatic fat necrosis:** painless, round, firm lumps that can result from a bruise or a blow to the breast. Occurs in older women and women with large breasts.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU FIND A LUMP?

If you find a lump, see your healthcare provider. He or she will do a clinical breast exam and may recommend one or more of the following tests and procedures:

**Mammography,** or breast X-ray, may be recommended to determine the lump's size and location.

**Ultrasound** examination can determine whether the lump is a fluid-filled cyst or a solid mass.

**Fine-needle aspiration** is an in-office procedure. Fluid is drawn out of the lump with a thin needle. If the fluid is clear and the cyst disappears, you won't need a biopsy. If the fluid is bloody or the mass is solid, your doctor probably will recommend biopsy.

**Stereotactic biopsy** removes a small tissue sample with a thin needle for analysis. Computerized imaging guides the needle with pinpoint accuracy to the exact location to be sampled.

**Surgical biopsy** usually is performed on an outpatient basis. Normally, the surgeon removes the whole lump, but in certain cases he or she will remove only part of it. The tissue is sent to a lab where a pathologist will examine it for cancerous cells.



*The good news:*  
Four out of five  
breast lumps turn out  
to be noncancerous.



## IF PREVENTION DOESN'T WORK

Both a cold and the flu typically involve a runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, cough and fatigue, but only flu characteristically features headache, high fever and that all-over-achy feeling.

Some people are at higher risk for complications from the flu than others and should get prompt medical care instead of trying to self-treat. These include:

- people over age 65
- children and adults with a chronic health condition, such as asthma or diabetes, or a weakened immune system
- pregnant women
- infants and young children
- anyone who lives with children or others at high risk
- healthcare workers and caregivers who are in contact with children or others at high risk

Prescription antiviral medications such as oseltamivir (brand name: Tamiflu) can help shorten the duration of the flu and prevent you from getting sicker if taken within the first 48 hours of symptoms.

If symptoms suddenly worsen, linger more than a week and are accompanied by a dry, hacking cough, the flu might have developed into viral pneumonia. Thick, rust-colored mucus along with a cough may signal bacterial pneumonia. Both types of pneumonia require medical attention.

# Easing the sneezing

## Surviving cold and flu season

**A**utumn is almost upon us. Soon it will be time to rake the leaves, pull out the sweaters and pray the kids don't catch something at school that knocks the whole family out of commission for a week.

But with a few simple precautions, parents and children can keep colds and flu away—or at least from spreading. Here are some basic tips to avoid getting sick, whether you're 2 years old or 90:

- Wash your hands several times a day with soap and water—and even more frequently if you're around anyone with a cold.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze or cough. Then wash your hands.
- Protect and strengthen your immune system by getting enough rest, exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Don't share eating utensils or drinking glasses.
- Avoid crowds of people where germs may spread.
- Most important: Keep annual flu vaccinations up to date.

## Call your pediatrician or primary care provider if ...

Your sick child has any of these symptoms:

- labored breathing, often signaled by the abdomen rising and falling dramatically
- a fever of approximately 102° F that acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol) can't control or that's present for more than three days
- inconsolable crying or irritability
- blood in vomit or stool
- recurring vomiting or loose stools
- greatly diminished food or fluid intake
- pulling or tugging at the ears, which may indicate an ear infection





# Healing hernias

By James L. Harris, D.O., FACOS  
General Surgeon

**C**haracterized by intense pain in the groin and abdomen, hernias are an uncomfortable health problem. However, hernias are easily mended with a simple surgical procedure. In fact, hernia repair is one of the most common surgeries in the United States.

## HERNIA FACTS

Hernias occur when the intestines protrude through weakened abdominal muscles, often appearing where the upper thigh and abdomen meet. The bulge is most apparent when bending over or coughing. Pain also becomes more intense while in these positions; thus, lying down helps ease the pain. The bulge may contain tissue that lines the inside of the abdomen, fatty tissue, fluid and intestine.

When the intestine becomes caught in the bulge, known as strangulation, blood flow may be cut off from

the intestine. If this occurs, immediate surgery is necessary. Call your physician right away if you also experience vomiting, nausea, a fever or severe cramping. Also, consult your physician if you have a tender bulge and discomfort around the groin. Although these symptoms aren't as severe, a hernia might have developed.

Depending on the hernia's severity, surgery may not be immediately needed, though surgery is the only way to treat the condition. Typically performed in day-surgery clinics, hernia repair takes only 45 to 90 minutes. While patients can resume their normal life right away, heavy lifting should be avoided for a few weeks after surgery.

Although causes of hernias are often unknown, some conditions and activities increase abdominal pressure that may lead to a hernia. Being overweight, chronic coughing and lifting heavy weights put extra strain on the abdominal area. When this occurs, the abdominal muscles weaken and the intestines protrude. Some factors that may increase risk can't be controlled, including being male, a history of hernias and muscle weakness from birth or aging.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Although most hernias can't be prevented, you can reduce your risk by:

- **Exercising.** Aerobic exercise like running will help keep muscles strong.
- **Monitoring weight.** People 10 to 15 percent above their ideal weight (by height) have a greater chance of developing a hernia.
- **Avoiding rapid weight loss.** Some weight-loss programs encourage diets low in protein and vitamins necessary for developing strong muscles.
- **Quitting smoking.** Chronic coughing from smoking doubles the hernia risk.
- **Avoiding straining during bowel movements.** Straining places pressure on the abdomen and increases hernia risk.
- **Practicing safe lifting.** Use your legs instead of your back. Following these tips will help lower the chances of a hernia. However, if you do get a hernia, recognizing the signs will help pave the way to a fast recovery.



James L. Harris, D.O., FACOS

Learn more!

**F**or more information about hernias,  
call Dr. Harris at (618) 833-2872.

# Avoiding ear infections

By Mukesh Chaudhry, M.D.  
Family Practice Physician

**M**iddle ear infections, also known as otitis media, are one of the most common illnesses affecting infants and young children. Three out of four American children have had at least one ear infection by age 3. Ear infections typically begin with a cold, which can cause fluid build-up behind the eardrum.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Signs of an ear infection in your child may include:

- lethargy
- cries that differ from cries of hunger or fatigue
- rubbing or pulling at his or her ears
- a lack of response to sounds
- a loss of appetite
- dizziness or loss of balance

Children most at risk for ear infections include those who:

- attend childcare facilities
- have siblings with a history of recurrent ear infections
- have a family history of asthma or allergies
- are exposed to secondhand smoke

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

Earache and ear infection treatments depend on many factors, including the diagnosis, medical concerns, how often the child has ear infections, the child's age and whether the infection affects the child's hearing.

Treatments include:

**Wait-and-see approach.** It's tough for parents to see their child in pain, but it may be in the child's best interest to focus on pain relief, such as children's Tylenol or Advil.

**Antibiotic therapy.** Antibiotics should help the child start feeling



better within a couple of days. Give the child the entire prescription, which could last five to 10 days.

**Preventive antibiotics.** If a child has more than four ear infections in one year or three or more infections in six months, the physician might suggest a low-dose antibiotic for a few weeks or months as a preventive measure. Antibiotics alone will not clear ear fluid, but they might help prevent bacteria growth.

**Drainage tubes.** If ear fluid affects the child's ability to hear or if the infections don't respond to antibiotics, the physician may suggest the insertion of small drainage tubes through the child's eardrum. This helps drain the fluid and balance ear pressure. As the child's eardrum grows, the tube is eventually pushed out and the drainage hole seals.

Some ear infections require antibiotics but many ear infections may clear without using medication. You and your physician can decide on the best approach for your child.



Mukesh Chaudhry, M.D.

## Keep your child's ears healthy!

**I**f you have questions about ear infections or would like to make an appointment for your child, call Dr. Chaudhry at **(618) 833-2872.**

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

### How much do you know about Alzheimer's disease?

Take this quiz to find out.

**1** Which example of memory loss may be a sign of Alzheimer's disease?

- a. forgetting where your keys are
- b. forgetting what month and year it is
- c. forgetting the name of a person you just met
- d. forgetting to return a phone call

**2** British researchers have recently learned that drinking this beverage can inhibit enzymes associated with the development of Alzheimer's:

- a. orange juice
- b. coffee
- c. tea
- d. white wine

**3** All the following may be early warning signs of Alzheimer's *except*:

- a. speaking in jumbled sentences
- b. getting lost in familiar areas
- c. having rapid mood swings for no apparent reason
- d. losing sense of balance or experiencing vertigo

**4** Which health condition is suspected of increasing the risk of Alzheimer's?

- a. yo-yo dieting
- b. high blood pressure
- c. asthma
- d. low bone density

**5** Which is the most misdiagnosed mental disorder in older adults?

- a. Alzheimer's disease
- b. depression
- c. anxiety attacks
- d. insomnia

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

## NUMBER CRUNCHING

### Managing high cholesterol



**T**he bad news: High cholesterol plays a key role in whether you develop heart disease or suffer a heart attack or stroke. Excess cholesterol, a waxy, fatlike substance in your blood, builds up on artery walls, reducing blood flow. The good news: You can do something about it.

Many factors contribute to high cholesterol. While you can't change your genes, age or gender—which all affect cholesterol—you can take the following steps to improve your cholesterol levels and your health.

To lower your LDL, or bad, cholesterol and raise your HDL, or good, cholesterol:

- **Eat smart.** Saturated fat and trans fats raise LDL cholesterol levels. Instead, use polyunsaturated or mono-unsaturated fats like olive, safflower, sesame, soybean, canola and peanut oils. Eat no more than six ounces of lean meat, fish or skinless poultry a day. Choose plenty of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain foods. Switch to fat-free or low-fat dairy products and increase soluble fiber found in foods like oats, beans and citrus fruits.
- **Get regular exercise**—at least 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- **If you smoke, quit.** Smoking lowers HDL cholesterol and increases the blood's tendency to clot.
- **Consider medication.** If lifestyle changes aren't enough, your healthcare provider may prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs.

### Leveling off your numbers

**A**im for these desired cholesterol levels. If you already have heart disease or other risk factors, your doctor may set different goals for you.

Total cholesterol      less than 200 mg/dL

HDL cholesterol      greater than 50 mg/dL

LDL cholesterol      less than 100 mg/dL

Triglycerides      less than 150 mg/dL

# Bad breaks

## First aid for broken bones

If your child were to take a spill from a bike or your best friend turned an ankle while stepping off the curb and you suspected a bone is broken, would you know what to do? Try taking these actions:

- **Determine whether you need emergency help.** All fractures will need medical attention, but call for emergency help if the injury involves the head, neck, back, pelvis or upper leg; there's heavy bleeding; bone has pierced the skin; or a toe or finger on the injured arm or leg is numb or blue at the tip. Also, call for help if you can't transport the injured person by car because he or she can't sit upright or use safety or seat belts.
- **Remove clothing from the injured part.** Use scissors to cut clothing away; don't try to pull the limb out of clothes.
- **Stop any bleeding.** Use a sterile bandage or clean cloth



and apply constant pressure to the wound. Have the person lie down and don't wash the wound or poke the bone back into the skin.

- **Make a splint.** Keep the limb in the position you find it. Place soft padding around the injury with something firm (like a board or rolled-up newspaper) next to it, using first-aid tape. Make sure the splint extends past the joints above and below the injury.
- **Apply cold packs.** Wrap ice in a towel and place it on the injured area to control swelling and pain until help arrives.

### In case of emergency ... We're here for you

**T**here's no telling when an accident or a sudden illness will occur. But when it does happen, turn to us, the clear choice for emergency assistance. Our emergency department provides patients with fast, dedicated and compassionate care. What's more, our ER is backed and supported by an entire hospital dedicated to helping you get well.

**In an emergency, every second counts. Call us for emergency help anytime you suspect someone needs urgent care.**



## The whole-grain truth

### Think outside the breadbox to include more healthy foods in your diet

**G**rains like wheat, rice, oats and corn are a staple in the American diet and for much of the world. Whole grains

and foods made from whole grains are an important source of fiber, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. When refined grains like white flour and white rice are processed, much of the fiber and nutrients are lost.

Eating more whole grains can help you lower cholesterol and control your weight, reducing risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, gastrointestinal problems and cancer. Aim to eat at least three servings of whole grains each day. The earthy, nutty flavors and chewy textures are a great way to add a new dimension to your menu. Whole-grain breads, cereals, tortillas and crackers are just the beginning. Explore a variety of whole grains like barley, groats, wheat berries, buckwheat, triticale, bulgur, millet and quinoa.

#### HOP ABOARD THE GRAIN TRAIN

Upping your intake of whole grains is easier than you think. Try making some of these simple diet switches:

- Start your day with a bowl of bran flakes, shredded wheat or oatmeal.
- Buy whole-grain breads, bagels, rolls, tortillas, muffins, waffles and pancakes.
- Substitute rolled oats or crushed bran flakes for bread crumbs in recipes.
- Switch to whole-wheat pasta.
- Bypass the potatoes and try bulgur, barley, quinoa or brown or wild rice.
- Snack on un buttered popcorn or whole-wheat crackers or pretzels.
- Substitute barley or brown or wild rice for pasta or noodles in soups, stews, casseroles and salads.
- Use whole-wheat pastry flour in place of much of the all-purpose flour in recipes.

# Life can be healthy, balanced and fun.

Find out how.

**Union County Hospital invites you to join us for our Healthy Woman Kickoff on Thursday, October 26.**

Healthy Woman is a new, free community resource provided by Union County Hospital. It's designed to provide women of all ages with the information they need to maintain a healthy body, mind and spirit. Join us for our kickoff event and be part of the fun from the start.



## **HEALTHY WOMAN KICKOFF THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26**

- Free Women's Expo with local vendors and health screenings
- Door prizes, giveaways, dinner and national speaker Suzanne Metzger, Ph.D.



Dr. Metzger's thought-provoking talk will make you laugh and teach you the value of a positive attitude in everyday life. Stay tuned to hear more about our Healthy Woman kickoff.

Log on to our Web site at [www.unioncountyhospital.com](http://www.unioncountyhospital.com) to become a member of our free Healthy Woman program and to find out more about the kickoff plans.

Healthy Woman will offer monthly presentations and interactive events covering a wide variety of women's issues, all designed to improve your life and the lives of those you love. To join Healthy Woman today, sign up at [www.unioncountyhospital.com](http://www.unioncountyhospital.com) or call (618) 833-4511, ext. 359.

Membership is free, and the benefits last a lifetime.



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# Health Connection

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