

Health Connection

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

Why you may need a colonoscopy

Dodging diabetes

How diet and exercise can help

Control your cholesterol

Smart snacks on the go!



Make time for your mammogram

From salons to restaurants, it seems everything in life requires an appointment or a reservation. But as you set aside time for these little luxuries, don't forget to make one important date: your yearly mammogram.

Mammograms are the most powerful tools in the early detection of breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends every woman 40 or older get a yearly mammogram, although more frequent testing may be required if you've had breast cancer or have a strong history of it in your family.

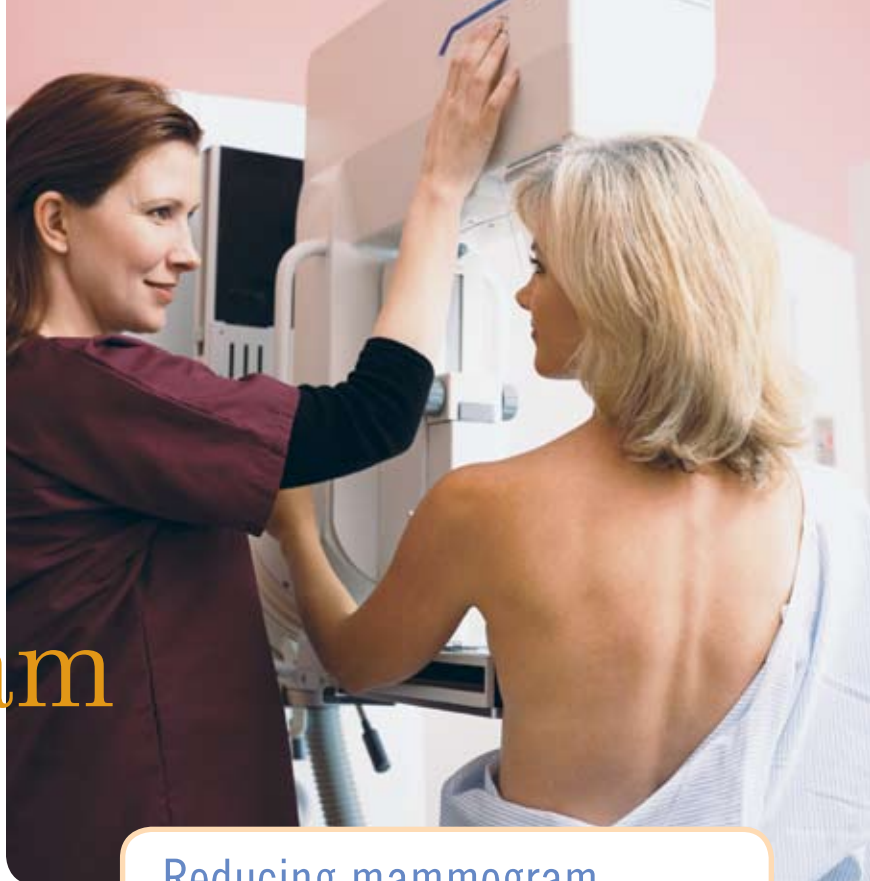
WHAT IS A MAMMOGRAM?

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breast. An image of breast tissue is produced for a radiologist to analyze. He or she looks for tumors or calcium deposits, which can signal cancer's presence.

If you're at high risk for breast cancer, your health-care provider may recommend magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in addition to a yearly mammogram. This test uses magnets and radio waves to produce detailed images of the body. Suspicious areas found during testing may require an ultrasound, which uses sound waves to tell whether the problem area is cancerous.

GET SCREENED

Go to the same breast-screening facility every year so your radiologist can compare your current mammogram with past results. It's important for the radiologist to see whether there are any changes in your breast tissue from year to year. If you're going to a new facility, try to have your old mammograms sent there before your appointment.



Reducing mammogram discomfort

While mammograms may sometimes be uncomfortable, you can take the edge off with these steps:

- Schedule your mammogram for a few days after your period has ended when your breasts are less tender. Avoid the week before your period.
- Take a pain reliever like ibuprofen or acetaminophen an hour before your mammogram.
- Avoid caffeine for two days before your mammogram.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you have breast implants.
- Ask your X-ray technician about thin, foam pads that she can place between your breast and the machine to lessen discomfort.
- Wear a two-piece outfit since mammograms only require that you strip to your waist. This way you'll feel less exposed.



Low-cost testing

Can't afford a mammogram? Call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** for low-cost mammogram options near you. The National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program also offers information about free or low-cost testing for women without health insurance. Call **1-888-842-6355** or visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/nbccedp.

Watch your back

Get relief from pain

Has back pain got you down for the count? In many cases, back pain goes away on its own. But if you're experiencing numbness or tingling, pain that's resistant to medications and rest or pain following a fall or an injury, see your healthcare provider. You could be facing a more serious back problem.

PAIN RELIEF

Most back ailments don't require surgery, so an operation is rarely the first line of defense. As a start, your healthcare provider may recommend hot or cold compresses, specific exercises to reduce pain, medication or pain-relief injections. He or she may also suggest complementary treatments such as massage; acupuncture; and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), which sends electrical impulses to nerves.

If your pain can't be quelled with conservative treatments, you may be a candidate for surgery. The pain's cause and the extent of damage will dictate what procedure may work. Some options include:

- a laminectomy/discectomy, which removes a herniated disc through an incision a few inches long
- spinal fusion, which joins two or more vertebrae with bone grafts, screws and rods to stabilize the spine
- vertebroplasty, which involves injecting a cement-like mixture into the damaged vertebrae to relieve pain and stabilize the spine
- disc replacement, which replaces the damaged disc with an artificial one

Only you and your healthcare provider can determine the right treatment for your condition. If you're experiencing persistent back pain, talk with him or her today to help get you on the road to a pain-free tomorrow.

5 steps to a healthier back

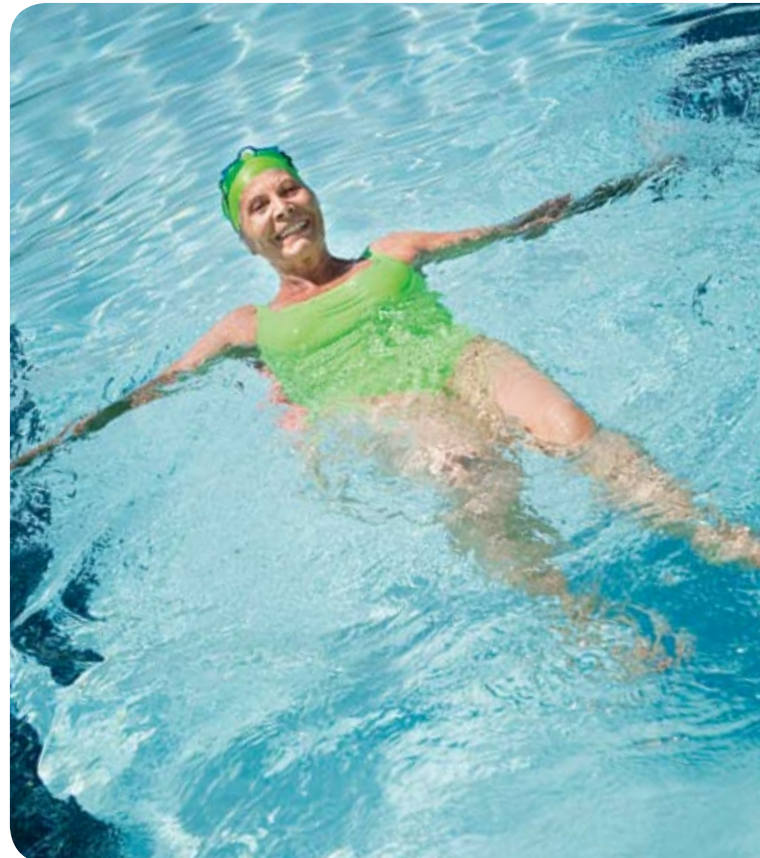
1. Exercise. Low-impact aerobic activities such as walking and swimming can increase back strength without strain. Ask your healthcare provider about exercises that can condition back muscles.

2. Quit smoking. Lighting up reduces oxygen levels in your spinal tissue, which can slow down an ailing back's healing process.

3. Maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight can strain your back muscles. Eat a healthful diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and make sure to include plenty of calcium and vitamin D, which help to build bone strength.

4. Practice perfect posture. If you're standing for long periods, rest one foot on a stool, alternating feet, to take the weight off your lower back. While sitting, make sure your chair supports your lower back. Place your feet flat on the floor.

5. Lift with care. Keep your back straight and bend only your knees as you reach down to lift an object. Hold the object close to your body and straighten your knees to stand.



The wisdom of a colonoscopy



By Job Pontillas, M.D., FACS
Board-Certified General Surgeon

About 149,000 new cases of colorectal cancer are diagnosed each year, making it a leading cause of cancer death in the United

States. Fortunately, precautions can be taken to reduce your risk of developing the sometimes fatal disease. One of the most important precautions is to get a colonoscopy, which can detect abnormal growths before they even become cancerous, or find the disease early, increasing your chance of survival.

A colonoscopy is the most commonly used outpatient procedure to determine whether you have colorectal cancer or abnormal tissue that might become cancer. The procedure allows your physician to visually examine the entire colon and rectum for abnormalities such as inflamed tissue, irregular growths and ulcers. It's also used to look for causes of bowel habit changes and to evaluate symptoms like abdominal pain, rectal bleeding and unexplained weight loss.

PREPARING FOR THE PROCEDURE

For a colonoscopy to be accurate, the colon must be clear of stool and fluids that may obscure the view of the colon and rectal lining. Therefore, your physician will likely ask you to do the following at least 24 hours before the procedure:

- Avoid eating solid foods.
- Drink only clear, non-alcoholic liquids such as black coffee, tea, water or clear broth.

A colonoscopy is an important precaution against colorectal cancer since early detection and prevention are key.



- Stop taking iron pills or medications containing iron, as they can alter the colon lining's color.
- Take laxatives or enemas prescribed by your physician.

It's important to inform your physician if you have diabetes or take blood thinners, including aspirin or other pain relievers, as your colonoscopy preparation may be slightly different.

A colonoscopy is usually painless but can sometimes cause anxiety. Therefore, most people opt for either anesthesia or a mild sedative to minimize any discomfort during the procedure.



During the exam, your physician will insert a colonoscope—a long, flexible lighted tube with a tiny video camera on the tip—into the rectum. The camera transmits images of the colon onto a screen for your physician to carefully examine the colon’s lining. If a polyp or abnormal tissue is found, he or she may decide to remove it immediately or take a biopsy and test it for cancer. The recovery time after the procedure is about an hour, and you’ll likely need someone to drive you home.

Screening guidelines

According to the American Cancer Society, these tests can help find polyps and cancer in adults ages 50 and older at average risk for colon cancer:

- flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years*
- colonoscopy every 10 years
- double-contrast barium enema every five years*
- CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy) every five years*

Three tests that can help find cancer early but won’t detect a polyp before it becomes cancerous are:

- fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year**
- fecal immunochemical test (FIT) every year**
- stool DNA test (frequency unclear)*

Talk with your physician about the screenings you need.

*Colonoscopy should be done if test results are positive.

**For FOBT or FIT used as a screening, the take-home multiple sample method should be used. An FOBT or FIT done during a digital rectal exam in the physician’s office isn’t sufficient for screening.

! Early detection is key!

Getting screened for colorectal cancer is a key step in maintaining your health. If you have questions about colonoscopy, call your physician or Job Pontillas, M.D., FACS, at (618) 833-2872.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

Our growth continues

Dear friends,

Union County Hospital plays a vital part in our community by providing needed healthcare services to residents of Union and the surrounding counties. As the needs of our patients grow, our hospital also must grow to meet those needs. All indications show that we’re meeting this challenge.



Jim Farris
Chief Executive Officer

In the past several months, we’ve:

- opened our new addition, which includes our Emergency Room, Radiology Department, registration area, lobby and gift shop
- recruited a board-certified general surgeon
- started in-house bone densitometry services

Within the next few months, we’ll begin renovation of our Outpatient Clinic and Surgical Suite and announce more new services.

Our volumes continue to grow as we expand to fulfill our role in this community. We appreciate your continued support.

Regards,

JIM FARRIS
Chief Executive Officer
Union County Hospital



HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about headaches?

Take this quiz to find out.

- 1 What is the most common type of headache?**
 - a. sinus
 - b. migraine
 - c. cluster
 - d. tension
- 2 Which statement about caffeine is true?**
 - a. It can only worsen headaches and should always be avoided.
 - b. It is a common ingredient in headache medications and makes them more effective.
 - c. Science has not proven caffeine to be an effective headache treatment.
 - d. none of the above
- 3 About how many Americans suffer from chronic headaches?**
 - a. 15 million
 - b. 25 million
 - c. 35 million
 - d. 45 million
- 4 Which of the following tests can best help your healthcare provider evaluate your headaches?**
 - a. MRI
 - b. EKG
 - c. sonogram
 - d. bone scan
- 5 What can you do to reduce headache occurrence?**
 - a. drink at least 600 mg of caffeine a day
 - b. work harder to take your mind off your headache
 - c. exercise regularly
 - d. skip breakfast

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



Dodge diabetes with exercise and diet

The diabetes prevention equation seems simple enough: *healthy eating + regular exercise = a reduced diabetes risk*. Incorporating the equation into your everyday life? Not so simple. But here are some ideas to get you on the right path.

EXERCISE

- Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most or all days. This includes aerobic activity like brisk walks, dancing, swimming or biking, as well as strength-training exercises with free weights and weight machines.
- Vary your exercise routine so you don't get bored. Bring a buddy to keep you company.
- Walk instead of driving when you can, take the stairs instead of the elevator or do some gardening.

DIET

- Substitute traditional white rice and noodles with brown rice and whole-wheat pasta to get your fiber fill.
- Limit fat to less than 30 percent of your daily calories by opting for lean meat cuts that end in "loin," filling up on fruits and veggies and going for low-fat dairy such as skim milk and nonfat yogurts and cheeses.
- Sip low- or no-calorie drinks such as water and diet drinks.
- Eat fish twice a week.

Germ warfare

Keep kids healthy in five easy steps

Although it's not possible to keep your children entirely germ free, you can take some preventive measures to minimize exposure to sickness-causing invaders:

1 Teach your children how to properly wash their hands. Show them how to use soap and warm water and vigorously rub their hands together for 15 to 20 seconds, or about the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice, making sure to get in between fingers and under nails. Stress the importance of hand washing before eating and after such activities as recess, going to the bathroom, sneezing or coughing. If your children are older, give them alcohol-based sanitizer for when water isn't available.



2 Keep your children's vaccinations up to date. Review your children's vaccination schedules with your pediatrician at each visit.

3 Tell kids not to share personal items, such as a straw or towels.

4 Remind your children not to touch their noses, eyes or mouths, so germs can't be spread easily.

5 Stop your kids from being "germ-spreaders." Show them how to cover sneezes and coughs with a tissue or the crook of an arm. If a child is vomiting, has diarrhea or has a fever, don't send him or her to school.



ROAD TRIP

Healthy snacking on the go

You have hours to go before you arrive at your vacation destination, and you've got some hungry kids on your hands. While you may be tempted to fall back on the convenient—but not so healthy—potato chips for them to munch on, try these healthy snacks instead:

• **Go au naturale.** Fruits such as bananas, grapes and apples are easy to eat and, except for a little washing, require no preparation. Unsweetened applesauce and fruit cups (packed in natural juice, not syrup) are also good fill-in snacks.

- **Dress up veggies.** For example, make celery sticks more appetizing by spreading peanut butter down the middle and sprinkling on some raisins.
- **Break out the breakfast cereals.** Fill a small resealable bag with whole-grain cereal.
- **Pack in the pop.** Before you leave, air-pop some popcorn, then top it off with a little Parmesan cheese or garlic powder.
- **Take to the trail.** Mix a little low-fat granola with nuts like almonds or peanuts, then toss in some raisins or cranberries for the perfect trail mix.

Maintain your cholesterol for a healthy heart



By Terri Braddock, F.N.P.
Union County Hospital Family Practice

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance made in the liver and found in foods like dairy products, eggs and meat. The body requires only a small amount of cholesterol to function and produce hormones, vitamin D and acids that help digest fat.

High cholesterol, like smoking, age and obesity, is one of the many risk factors for heart disease, and learning how to manage it is essential to optimal heart health.



High cholesterol occurs when your body has too much LDL, or bad, cholesterol. LDL cholesterol can form plaque that may build up on the inside walls of arteries, blocking blood flow. If an artery that supplies blood to the heart or brain is completely blocked, a stroke or heart attack may result. The optimal LDL level is less than 100 milligrams per deciliter (mg/dL). LDL levels of 160 mg/dL and above are considered very high.

HDL, or good, cholesterol is the type that helps rid the body of bad cholesterol in the blood; therefore, the higher your HDL levels, the better. Low HDL levels are below 50 mg/dL for women and 40 mg/dL for men. An HDL level above 60 mg/dL is optimal. To increase your body's HDL levels:

- increase aerobic exercise
- stop smoking
- lose weight
- reduce your intake of trans fatty acids
- add soluble fiber to your diet

Take the first steps to a healthier you today!

! Keep your heart healthy!

To avoid serious health conditions, control your cholesterol levels. Need help with a heart-health plan? See your physician or call the Union County Family Practice Clinic at (618) 833-2872.

www.unioncountyhospital.com

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