

WINTER 2006

PREMIERE ISSUE!

Health Connection

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



**Better health
is just a click
away!**

**Shedding light
on nerve damage**

**Building for a
healthy future**

How health-wise are you?





Nimble body, nimble mind

Question:

To fight memory loss and dementia, it's a good idea to:

- A. do a crossword puzzle
- B. take up a new hobby
- C. exercise regularly
- D. all of the above

If you answered D, you're right. Scientists now know it takes more than mental stimulation to keep your brain sharp well into your later years. Physical activity gives your body and your brain a boost. A half-hour of moderate exercise—walking, golfing, gardening, performing household chores—on most days of the week can help you think more clearly and feel better at any age.

HOW EXERCISE HELPS

Exercise increases blood flow to your brain, promoting brain-cell growth, and helps reduce stress—important since chronic stress causes the release of hormones that can damage your brain over time. Some studies suggest exercise increases levels of important chemicals that maintain brain health. Other studies on mice show that exercise appears to delay or prevent plaque development in brain regions used in memory, thinking and decision making.

Regular exercise also helps preserve healthy brain functioning by:

- **Reducing your risk for heart disease.** Exercise lowers homocysteine, an amino acid in your blood that makes

nerve cells in the brain stop working and die.

- **Controlling your blood sugar.** Diabetes is linked with several types of dementia, including Alzheimer's and vascular dementia (common to stroke survivors). Both aerobic and weight-bearing exercises control your blood sugar by increasing your metabolism.
- **Lowering your blood pressure.** Unchecked, high blood pressure can damage blood vessels in your brain and reduce its oxygen supply, leading to a decline in decision making, memory and verbal skills.
- **Controlling your body weight and improving physical fitness.** Studies show a link between dementia and being overweight, possibly because overweight individuals have more cardiovascular risk factors associated with dementia than people at a healthy weight.

DIVERSITY IS KEY

For the most brain benefits, vary your exercise routine often. It's not how hard you exercise but how many activities you participate in that's key to preventing cognitive decline. Johns Hopkins University found that adults ages 65 and older who were involved in a number of activities (such as walking, biking, swimming, dancing and bowling) experienced less dementia than people who participated in fewer activities. One explanation could be that the variety of activities keeps more parts of the brain active.

So don't worry about how much you're sweating or how vigorously you're moving—just enjoy a variety of activities every day and keep trying new ones.

With good health habits and a little luck, you may never face a sudden medical crisis. But sooner or later, many of us find ourselves involved in one. Suppose it's chest pain, stomach cramps or a nasty kitchen accident—what's the right response? Should you get emergency help or just go see your family doctor?

A true medical emergency is a situation that's life threatening or could cause permanent harm if not treated immediately. Every minute counts. That's the difference between cases needing instant, emergency room intervention and those your doctor can handle in the office.

Doctors say there are no wrong reasons to call for medical assistance in a real emergency, especially if it's heart related. At such a critical time, don't drive yourself to the ER or get someone else to drive you—it could be dangerous. Plus, you need the expertise and equipment that's in an ambulance.

Below are examples of symptoms that constitute a medical emergency. Call for emergency assistance right away if you or a friend experiences any of them. And remember, if you're ever in doubt, play it safe and get help. It could save a life.

SEEK EMERGENCY TREATMENT ...

In cases of trauma:

- uncontrollable bleeding
- wounds with gaping edges



- wounds that involve the face or hands
- wounds caused by a puncture or wounds in which glass, metal or other objects have pierced the body
- severe burns
- head, neck or back injuries
- abdominal injuries or sudden, severe abdominal pain
- problems with movement or feeling after injury
- suspected broken bones
- animal or human bites
- contact with poisonous substances
- sunburn with nausea, vomiting, fever and chills

When the ER is your best option

Medical conditions that require emergency care

Any time these symptoms are present:

- chest discomfort
- difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- nausea, dizziness, fainting or profuse sweating, especially when combined with chest pain and breathing difficulty—classic signs of heart attack
- sudden numbness on one side of the face or limbs, confusion, slurred speech, vision loss, severe headache or dizziness—all signs of a possible stroke
- severe allergic reactions from insect bites, food or beverages
- sudden or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- coughing up or vomiting blood
- fainting, dizziness or hallucinations
- convulsions or seizures
- stiff neck with fever or headache
- sudden severe fever coupled with sensitivity to light
- stupor or dazed behavior
- drug or alcohol overdose
- attempted suicide or suicidal threats or statements

Better health is just a click away

Union County Hospital partners with Discovery Hospital

Everyone's been there. You're concerned about a bad cough, a scratchy throat or a sick friend. Where can you turn to find complete and accurate answers to your healthcare questions? Union County Hospital's Web site, www.unioncountyhospital.com. There, you'll find information and tools you need to manage your personal health and gain a greater understanding of health issues you and your family may be facing. Discovery Hospital is part of Discovery Communications, one of the world's most trusted media sources, providing award-winning cable health programming to households via the Discovery Health Channel and DiscoveryHealth.com.

Studies show that more than 45 million Americans with chronic health conditions use the Internet for health information and services. Being well informed can give you peace of mind and lead to better personal care. Nearly 60 percent of consumers who use the Internet for health information say it improves discussions with their doctors.

When you visit our Web site and click on "Discovery Hospital," you'll find options to address your concerns. By selecting "Diseases and Conditions," you can learn about topics like diabetes, heart disease and many others.

Under the "Tools" section, you'll find a wealth of options for managing your personal health, like health risk assessments, weight-loss support information and smoking cessation tools. The "Symptoms Manager" provides an easy format for you to assess the level of care you need.

The site also provides a multitude of articles for expectant parents. Articles include exercise during



pregnancy, birthing alternatives and "Sleeping—too much or too little?" Our Discovery Channel videos show the development of the baby at each stage.

Our focus at Union County Hospital continues to be to provide exceptional healthcare for those we serve. Our Web site's link with Discovery Hospital further enables us to be the resource you turn to in managing the care of your family.



Visit us online!

Find health information, risk assessments and more at www.unioncountyhospital.com.

Shedding light on nerve damage

New therapy offers relief from pain and numbness



The new Anodyne Therapy System increases blood flow and reduces pain caused by nerve damage.

Peripheral neuropathy, or nerve damage in the feet, legs and hands, can cause pain, numbness and loss of reflexes. But a new treatment called the Anodyne Therapy System offers relief.

Peripheral neuropathy is caused by poor blood flow, one of the most common complications of diabetes. Circulatory problems, medications, chemotherapy, alcohol and other unknown causes may also contribute to it.

Nerve damage can result from damage to blood vessels carrying oxygen and nutrients to the nerves. Over time, the nerves become impaired to the point of producing pain and numbness. Anodyne therapy uses highly efficient light-emitting diodes placed on the skin to increase microcirculation of the area and reduce pain.

Therapy patients come to the hospital three times a week for 30- to 45-minute sessions. Some patients may see positive results

after six treatments, but others require 12 or more.

“Neuropathy is a condition that worsens with time,” says Lisa Hartline, a physical therapy assistant at Union County Hospital. “Symptoms may be minor at first but over time begin causing discomfort and can cause sensory problems. This leads to functional issues such as falls and difficulty walking.”

Data presented at the American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections meeting reveal that peripheral neuropathy patients who received Anodyne therapy reported a 96 percent reduction in falls. Patients with diabetes reported an 87 percent decrease in foot and leg pain.

Diabetic neuropathy is a chronic condition. “Anodyne therapy is not a cure for the underlying disease,” explains Kim Booker, a physical therapist at Union County Hospital.

Continued Care Services
Getting you Home!

- Post Surgical Rehabilitation
- Physical & Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Cardiac Rehabilitation
- Radiology
- Laboratory
- Home Health
- Long-Term Care

*Caring for our community,
One Friend at a time!*

UNION COUNTY HOSPITAL
517 North Main St.
Anna, IL
(618) 833-4511
www.unioncountyhospital.com

Learn more!

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call our Therapy Services department at (618) 833-9694.

“Anodyne treats the symptoms of the disease. Some patients will need to continue the therapy with a home unit.”

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

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

Test your knowledge and learn more about asthma.

- 1** Which of the following statements about asthma is *not* true?
- Cockroaches are a major trigger of asthma symptoms.
 - Asthma can develop at any age.
 - Approximately 4,000 Americans die from asthma each year.
 - People with severe asthma should avoid exercise.

- 2** Which of the following is a risk factor for asthma?
- hay fever
 - chronic sinusitis
 - obesity
 - all of the above

- 3** Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease. According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, the number of U.S. children estimated to have asthma is:
- 1.5 million
 - 5 million
 - 10 million
 - 20 million

- 4** All of the following are asthma triggers *except*:
- stress
 - home appliances that use natural gas as fuel
 - corticosteroid medications
 - mold

- 5** If someone is having an asthma attack, one of the first things you should do is:
- Take him or her outside for fresh air.
 - Have him or her breathe into a paper bag.
 - Help the sufferer get his or her prescribed asthma drugs and inhaling equipment.
 - Use the sufferer's Epi-Pen to administer an injection of epinephrine.

Conspiracy theory

How 5 risk factors join forces against your health

When it comes to heart disease, you know that risk factors like family history and being overweight don't work in your favor. Now, experts say a combination of five factors—a condition called metabolic syndrome—also conspire against you, adding up to a far greater chance of suffering a heart attack, stroke or diabetes.

You have metabolic syndrome if you have three or more of the following problems:

- **abdominal obesity**—a waist circumference of 40 inches or more for men; 35 inches or more for women
- **high blood pressure**—135/85 mm/Hg or higher
- **high triglyceride levels**—150 mg/dL or more
- **abnormal cholesterol**—HDL cholesterol levels of less than 40 mg/dL for men and 50 mg/dL for women
- **high blood glucose or insulin resistance**—a fasting glucose, or blood sugar, level of 100 mg/dL or higher

Studies show people with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke than people without these factors.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You can head off future trouble if you take these steps now:

- **Lose weight.** Losing as little as 5 percent to 10 percent of your body weight can reduce insulin levels and bring blood pressure down.
- **Eat healthier.** Include more fiber-rich foods like whole grains, beans, fruits and vegetables to aid weight loss and lower insulin levels. Reduce the salt, calories and fat you consume.
- **Exercise.** Get at least 30 minutes of moderately strenuous activity most days of the week.
- **Kick the habit.** Smoking increases insulin resistance and worsens many health problems.
- **Schedule regular checkups.** Get timely checks on your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Consider drug therapy.** Your doctor may prescribe aspirin therapy or medication to control risk factors.



MATCH GAME

Finding the right doctor for you and your family

Different stages of life bring different medical scenarios. Still, one factor remains a constant: the need for a primary care provider who knows you well and can treat you and your family best. So, how should you go about choosing a primary care doctor?

The first step is to put together a list of candidates. Ask friends, family members, co-workers or people you know who work in the medical community. You'll need to find out which doctors are on your health plan.

Once you've chosen a few candidates, call their offices and find out more by asking:

1. Which hospital does the doctor use?
2. What are the practice's office hours?
3. How far in advance do I have to book a routine visit?

4. If I'm sick, will the doctor see me the day I call?
5. Who covers for the doctor when he or she isn't available?
6. How long is the average waiting room time?
7. What is the office policy on appointment cancellations?
8. What do I do if I have an emergency after office hours?
9. Does the doctor give advice over the phone for common problems?
10. How long will I have to wait for a call back from the doctor or a staff member?

Consider your interaction with staff during your phone calls. Were they friendly, efficient and knowledgeable?

Narrow your list to one or two physicians and make an appointment to talk to them. Most likely, you'll have to pay for these visits. As you talk to the doctor, notice whether he or she pays attention to your questions or seems distracted, giving "stock" answers.

Now you should be ready to choose the doctor who can treat you and your family best—and give you peace of mind.

Food for thought

Eating right can help you control diabetes

If you're one of the 16 million Americans who have diabetes, you understand that nutrition should always take center stage. Healthy food choices, along with exercise and medication, are vital to keeping your blood sugar, or glucose, in line and avoiding complications.



hydrate intake, sugary sweets and desserts helps control blood sugar levels. However, you must consume a moderate amount of carbohydrates to supply your body with the valuable energy they provide. But choose quality fuel. Variety among all food groups is key: fresh fruits and vegetables in abundance; beans,

brown rice and whole-grain breads and cereals; lean meat, poultry and fish; and low-fat dairy products. Drink plenty of water, too, and avoid sweetened drinks. If you drink citrus juice, limit the serving to no more than 6 ounces. If you drink soda, switch to a diet variety.

It's important to stick to proper portion sizes. Learn how to measure and weigh portions. Read food labels, paying particular attention to serving sizes and total carbohydrates. A diabetes educator or dietitian can help you develop an eating plan. By learning to eat properly and controlling your weight and blood sugar levels, you can avoid most diabetes complications.

WHEN YOU EAT

If you have diabetes, you should eat three balanced meals and two snacks a day. Spacing food and trying to eat meals at the same time each day will help control blood sugar and weight. Eating reasonable portions of carbohydrates throughout the day—instead of consuming all your servings at one meal—will keep blood sugar levels stable.

WHAT YOU EAT

Planning what you'll eat at each meal will help you keep blood sugar within a healthy range all day. Limiting carbo-

Improvements brought to life

A lot of exciting changes are occurring here at Union County Hospital. At long last we have our construction project under way (see *Building for a healthy future*, right). It promises to bring new life to our facility and give us the opportunity to better serve our community.

This project is certainly the most visible change going on at Union County Hospital, but it's by no means the only one. Other changes demonstrate our continued commitment to improving the care we provide to patients.

In addition to making improvements to our building, we have been upgrading the equipment available to our staff to help them do their jobs. In 2005 alone, more than \$425,000 was spent on equipment, including replacement of our cardiac telemetry system (\$168,000), new EKG unit (\$9,953), anesthesia machine and monitor (\$77,167), scopes (\$53,521) and harmonic scalpel (\$20,833). Additional purchases are planned for 2006.

We also have been improving the staff's capabilities. In 2004, we began a focused effort on development of our clinical staff members. Our goal is to make sure all our staff is well trained and prepared to provide high quality, personalized care to all our patients.

As we move into this new year, we eagerly await the opening of our new addition. We feel all our patients will benefit from our focus on making improvements as well.

To a healthy 2006,
JIM FARRIS, CEO



Building for a healthy future

Union County Hospital is expanding and renovating to provide the best care for our community. On Jan. 7, construction began on a new 13,000-square-foot wing, which will house an expanded emergency room, radiology department, registration area, lobby and gift shop.

This spring, renovation will begin on the hospital's medical surgical unit by upgrading finishes and modifying the nurses station.

Following completion of the new construction, the outpatient clinic, currently on the second floor, will be relocated to make it easier for

patients to access. Finally, we'll install a sprinkler system in the nursing home and medical surgical unit as an adjunct to the hospital's new fire alarm system.

In July, the new wing is expected to be ready for us to occupy and the medical surgical unit completed. The



outpatient clinic relocation also should be finished by year's end.

These exciting changes promise to carry us well into the future. It's further evidence of our commitment to providing high quality, modern healthcare to you.



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Union County Hospital
517 N. Main St.
Anna, IL 62906

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WINTER 2006

Health Connection

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