

RUSSELL MEDICAL CENTER


Connections

MEDICAL NEWS YOU CAN USE

WINTER 2010

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John M. James, M.D.,
chief of staff at
Russell Medical Center
and dedicated family man

www.russellmedcenter.com

HealthExtra

{ WELLNESS NEWS FROM THE WORLD OVER }

> Milk your system

Want to get healthy? Just think dairy. A recent study in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition* found that together, low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt provide a unique combination of essential nutrients including calcium, potassium and magnesium.

Many people don't get the recommended three servings of dairy foods each day.

But it's important that we increase our intake.

Why? It's well known that eating plenty of dairy foods helps to strengthen bones, but getting enough of the healthy stuff also assists with weight management and makes it easier to maintain healthy blood pressure.



> Relax, for your health's sake

Think twice before you pass on that get-together with friends. A recent study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine: Journal of Biobehavioral Medicine* shows that the more time you spend doing different types of enjoyable activities, the better your health tends to be. Fourteen hundred people reported how often they participated in leisure activities including visiting friends or family, going on vacation, going to clubs or religious activities or playing sports. Those who spent the most time doing leisure activities had lower blood pressure, waist circumference, body mass index and measurements of the stress hormone cortisol. More benefits of downtime: lower levels of depression, better sleep and more consistent exercise. To reap the rewards, call a friend and take a walk, see a movie or go out for dinner.

> OJ may keep the doctor away

Drinking a glass of orange juice isn't just a delicious way to start your day—it's also heart smart! Research shows that hesperidin, an antioxidant in orange juice, may improve blood vessel function and help lower your risk of heart disease. In a small study, 24 men at risk for cardiovascular disease each drank one of three drinks: either 500 milliliters (ml) of orange juice, an energy drink that contained a placebo capsule or the energy drink fortified with a capsule containing 292 milligrams of hesperidin (the same amount found in a 500-ml glass of orange juice). After one month, the men who drank the orange juice or the beverage that was fortified with hesperidin had lower diastolic blood pressure (the bottom number). So if you're looking for an easy way to keep your heart healthy and strong, consider OJ.

Give blood today!
Each one-pint
donation can help
save up to three lives.

—American Red Cross



Americans consume **9 to 12** grams of salt a day—
more than **four times** the American Heart Association's
recommendation of less than 2.3 grams a day.

> **Paying a high price for obesity**

We know that carrying around extra weight can take a toll on health. But if you're overweight, your wallet can take a hit, too. People who are obese spend about \$1,500 more each year on healthcare—that's about 41 percent more—than an average-weight person, according to a recent study sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As a result, medical costs soar, since additional care is needed to treat the health conditions that obesity causes, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer. According to the researchers, the best way to save money—and improve health—is to lower the obesity rate. Ward off obesity by making healthy food choices and being more physically active.



cancer. Half received their usual cancer treatment plus four weekly educational sessions and monthly follow-up meetings that encouraged self-management and empowerment. The other half received standard treatment with no palliative care. The findings? Those who received the palliative care had an improved quality of life and mood, but they didn't see a significant change in the number of days spent in the hospital or visits to the emergency department or the severity of symptoms compared to people who received usual care. The bottom line: While it may not keep you out of the hospital, palliative care could improve your spirits and provide you with the lift you need to face your battle.

> **Keep an eye on your teen's medication**

As if you need one more thing to worry about when it comes to your teenager: A recent study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* warns that one in five adolescents is lending or borrowing prescription medications. Researchers asked nearly 600 young people ages 12 to 17 whether they had borrowed or loaned a prescription drug and, if so, what kind. Allergy medications and

pain relievers were the most commonly loaned. As it turns out, kids aren't sharing their medicine to get high. Nearly three-quarters of the teens surveyed borrowed the drugs so they wouldn't have to go to the doctor, but many of them eventually ended up at the doctor's office anyway. This is a dangerous trend, as sharing drugs can lead to antibiotic misuse, resistance or drug interactions. Be sure to discuss the dangers of medication sharing with your teen. It could save a life.



> **Help to see the glass half full**

Palliative care—a medical specialty focused on the relief of pain and stress of a serious illness—may help you have a rosier outlook. In a report from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers studied more than 300 people with advanced

Put sleep woes to bed

The Sleep Disorders Center at RMC can help

The groggy feeling caused by lack of sleep is only the beginning of problems associated with lack of sleep. It's estimated that one-third of Americans have trouble catching some good zzzs, and that impacts physical functions, mental alertness and, ultimately, our long-term health. Sleep evaluations performed at the Sleep Disorders Center at Russell Medical Center (RMC) can help diagnose and treat various sleep disorders that impact your quality of sleep and health.

SLEEP AND YOUR HEALTH

Sleep allows the body to restore and regulate internal functions, and quality and quantity matter in getting what your body and mind need to stay healthy. "People tend to put sleep last," says F. Anthony McLeod, M.D., FACS, a board-certified otolaryngologist and sleep medicine physician at RMC. "Most adults need seven hours of sleep to feel rested, but a lot are getting less than six. It becomes a habit and weighs on your day-to-day life."

Lack of sleep can cause stress, affect memory, decrease energy levels and make us more prone to illness and depression. The long-term effects of insufficient sleep are more than just chronic drowsiness or difficulty focusing. Sleep deprivation has been linked to an increased risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack and stroke.

"Most adults need seven hours of sleep to feel rested, but a lot are getting less than six. It becomes a habit and weighs on your day-to-day life."

—F. Anthony McLeod, M.D., FACS, otolaryngologist and sleep medicine physician

UNDERSTANDING APNEA

Excessive daytime sleepiness—like falling asleep while driving—or snoring or waking gasping for air may signal a sleep disorder called obstructive sleep apnea. Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the muscles of the soft palate and throat relax during sleep, obstructing the airway and making breathing difficult and noisy. Eventually the airway walls collapse, blocking airflow entirely, which interrupts breathing. Each time breathing stops, the oxygen level in the blood falls, and your sleep is disturbed. "All sleep disorders, like sleep apnea, are associated with heart problems, increased chance of heart attack and stroke, difficult-to-control blood sugar for people who have diabetes and other complications," says Dr. McLeod. "Just getting more sleep can make things better, but if you have sleep apnea, it must be diagnosed and treated as its own disorder."

TAKE THE TEST

"A patient's first step in identifying a sleep problem is often talking to his or her bed partner," says Greg Studdard, R.R.T., director of the Sleep Disorders Center. "A patient may also talk with his or her doctor about sleep issues and may be referred for a sleep study." Patients have an initial consultation with Dr. McLeod, and when



Sleep technician Mick Bullock prepares a patient for her study. Sleep studies are conducted in a comfortable, home-like environment.



referred for a sleep study, they come to the center during their normal sleep time.

The center conducts sleep studies in a secure, home-like atmosphere similar to your bedroom or a hotel room. Before the study, leads are attached to a patient's scalp, legs and arms, along with other information-gathering equipment to measure breathing, oxygen levels, muscle activity, heart rate and more. Patients are undisturbed, and the room is darkened.

After the study, patients receive the results of their study from Dr. McLeod. "We look at how much a person sleeps, the stages of sleep and what percentage of sleep is light and what's deeper," says Dr. McLeod. "We also try

> So long, sleepless nights!

To learn more about sleep studies at the Sleep Disorders Center at RMC, call **(256) 329-7371**.

to identify any breathing problems, or if he or she stopped breathing and for how long. We look at all of that to formulate a treatment plan." Treatment options may include medications, surgery, a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine or addressing sleep habits.

REST EASY

Helping area residents get a better night's sleep isn't the center's only focus. "Providing sleep services to our community is just one more way we're helping people stay close to home for advanced healthcare," says Studdard. "We try to really take the time to let patients know what to expect and give them what they need to know to feel at ease and comfortable." ●

◀ Dr. McLeod is a board-certified otolaryngologist (ear, nose and throat physician) and sleep medicine physician.

◀ (Far left) Dr. McLeod and Greg Studdard, R.R.T., director of the Sleep Disorders Center, monitor a patient's sleep pattern.



Fight the flu!

Prepare yourself to stay healthy

Battling influenza, a.k.a. the flu, isn't a pleasant experience. The fever, body aches, fatigue and runny nose can make you feel lousy. Each year, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 die from flu complications. And experts are warning that this flu season could be worse, causing more illnesses than usual, due to the H1N1 flu virus. Protect yourself and others with these bug-battling guidelines:

GET VACCINATED

A yearly flu vaccine is the first and most important step to protect against the flu, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The vaccine is especially important for people at high risk for flu complications, such as young children; pregnant women; people with chronic health conditions like asthma, diabetes or heart and lung disease; people 65 years and older; healthcare workers; and people who live with or care for high-risk people. The flu vaccine won't protect you against H1N1, so you'll need a separate vaccine to ward off that illness.



GET MOVING

Research shows that regular exercise boosts your immune system and decreases your risk of getting colds and the flu. If you do get sick, exercise can cut the number

> Yogurt to fight tummy troubles?

Yes! Bacteria can help fight the gastrointestinal symptoms that often come along with the flu. Certain kinds of yogurts have the added bacteria *lactobacilli* and *bifidobacteria*. These bacteria are called probiotics. They're "good" bacteria that naturally live in your large intestine. Research shows that eating foods that contain probiotics can decrease the gas, pain and bloating associated with diarrhea.



of days you're out of commission in half. How? Physical activity may help flush bacteria from the lungs, which could lower your chances of getting a cold or the flu. Exercise also sends antibodies and white blood cells (the body's defense cells) through the body more quickly to detect illnesses faster. Aim for at least two-and-a-half hours of activity a week.

TAKE TIME TO SNOOZE

Sleeping is your body's way of recharging your immune system. The neurons that control sleep work closely with your immune system. Cytokines, the chemicals your body produces while fighting infection, are powerful sleep inducers, which explains why you're so tired when you're battling a bug. On average, most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep a night.

WASH YOUR HANDS

Proper and frequent hand washing is the best way to prevent colds and the flu. Use warm water and soap, scrub your hands for at least 15 to 20 seconds and rinse them well. No water around? Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizing gel that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

EAT RIGHT

You know that a good diet is important for your overall health. But did you know that a poor diet actually lowers your immunity and makes you more vulnerable to infection? Be sure to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean protein. And don't forget to drink water to stay hydrated. ●

Long live your lungs

Healthy habits can help you clear the air

In a single day, you breathe in an incredible amount of air: 8,000 to 9,000 liters worth. Your lungs remove waste from your blood, returning a refreshed, oxygen-full supply to your heart, while defending against toxins from the air. With each breath, you inhale pollen, dust, viruses, bacteria, exhaust fumes and tobacco smoke. And if you have asthma, are sensitive to airborne triggers or are dealing with injury or disease, you're at greater risk of breathing troubles.

CLEAR THE AIR

Smoking is the worst thing you can do to your lungs, and it can take several attempts to finally kick the habit. But it seems that telling smokers their "lung age" through lung function tests significantly improves the likelihood that they'll quit. In fact, a 2008 *BMJ* study suggests that

smokers are twice as likely to quit if their healthcare provider tells them how "old" their lungs are.

GET TESTED

Lung function tests, or pulmonary function tests, measure the size of your lungs, how much air you can breathe in and out, how fast you can exhale, how strong your breathing muscles are and how well your lungs deliver oxygen to your blood. They also check for asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and determine how treatments for existing breathing problems are working.

If you're experiencing any breathing difficulties or are exposed to lung irritants on a regular basis, ask your healthcare provider if lung function testing could benefit you. Common lung function tests include:

- **Spirometry**, which measures how much air you breathe in and out and how fast you can blow air out
- **Peak flow meter**, which helps track breathing
- **Lung volume measurement**, which shows how big your lungs are and how much air you have left in your lungs after you exhale
- **Lung diffusing capacity**, which measures how well oxygen passes from your lungs to your bloodstream •

> Healthy lungs for life

You can slow or reverse your lungs' aging process

with the following tips:

- **Clear the air.** If you don't smoke, don't start. And stay away from secondhand smoke. If you do have a cigarette addiction, quit now to reduce your risk of lung cancer.
- **Check for radon.** Radon, an odorless, tasteless and invisible gas produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil and water, is the No. 1 cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. Have the radon levels in your home tested, especially if you live in an area where radon is or was a problem. Contact the local department of public health for more information.
- **Stay fit.** Be sure to get regular exercise, at least 30 minutes worth, on most days of the week. It'll keep your body—and your lungs—in good shape.
- **Eat right.** A diet high in fat and cholesterol can increase your risk of developing lung disease, while a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can lower the risk.





Chief of Staff
John M. James,
M.D., works side
by side with his
wife, Diane.

Take the lead

Dedicated healthcare starts here

One of the most recognizable faces at Russell Medical Center (RMC) is Chief of Staff John M. James, M.D. For 36 years Dr. James has dedicated himself to his practice: family and general practice medicine. His influence can be seen throughout his many involvements at RMC and other area healthcare facilities. In addition to his leadership role as chief of staff, he serves on RMC's Board of Directors and the Medical Executive Committee.

Dr. James owns PriCare, P.A., an urgent care and family practice clinic in Alexander City. He works side by side with his wife of 22 years, Diane, who serves as the office manager of the practice. He's also medical director for several area nursing homes and the Bill Nichols Veterans Home. Needless to say, he's a very busy man. He's dedicated to his work and spends his days providing excellent patient care.

THE PATH TO HEALTHCARE

A native of California, Dr. James loves nature and the outdoors. He initially pursued zoology when he went to college with aspirations to be a park ranger, but by his second year, his focus shifted and he began the path to becoming a family practice physician. "Family practice treats all symptoms and all ages, and that's what I like," says Dr. James. He completed his medical education at the University of California at Irvine, followed by an internship with Orange County Medical Center.

When the National Health Service was placing doctors in areas of need, Dr. James' career brought him to Goodwater. "Coming to Alabama was what I wanted," he says. "I had the opportunity to bring medical care to an underserved area, to patients who needed a good doctor, and the South was appealing because of the warm climate and the great outdoors like California."

“If you do the research, you won’t find a better facility with less than 100 beds in the state, if not the country.”

—John M. James, M.D., chief of staff

YOUR HEALTH ADVOCATE

“We see a lot of people with symptoms of hypertension and diabetes,” says Dr. James. Because these diagnoses are common, and with Alabama ranking fifth nationwide in diabetes cases, Dr. James and his staff educate their patients about diabetes and the effects that lifestyle choices have on their overall health. “It’s natural that we focus on education and prevention in an area that’s a problem for so many of our patients,” he says. Dr. James and his staff help patients make healthy choices to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, stop smoking and be physically active.

MORE THAN A DOCTOR

One of the things that makes Dr. James so relatable to his patients is his long-standing commitment to the community. “Dr. James is an excellent physician,” says Jim Peace, president and CEO of RMC. “He spends countless hours with his patients, but one of the best and little known facts is how much he gives. Not only does he put in many hours at his practice, here at the hospital making rounds and checking on his elderly and veteran patients, but he financially supports the area by giving generously to many non-profits that reach out to the needy.”

As a self-proclaimed workaholic, Dr. James says it’s important to give back when you can with whatever you have: time, resources or both. “United Way, American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Children’s Harbor, Big Oak Ranch and the Jimmie Hale Mission are all organizations my wife and I believe in,” says Dr. James. “They rely on the support of our community, and they do great work.”

His dedication to the community shows not just through his practice at RMC or his charity, but in his enthusiasm for making quality healthcare available close to home. “We’re blessed as a small town to have a facility like Russell Medical Center,” says Dr. James. “If you do the research, you won’t find a better facility with

less than 100 beds in the state, if not the country.” He notes that what makes RMC such a great place is the high quality of care and its location in such a desirable place to live. “Add all that up and it’s really unbeatable.”

ENJOYING THE LAKE MARTIN LIFE

When Dr. James isn’t on the job, you’ll find him and Diane relaxing at their home on Lake Martin. As country music enthusiasts, one of their favorite pastimes is attending concerts at The Amphitheater at The Wharf in Orange Beach, and they have plans to see Tim McGraw and Rascal Flatts this year. Family is very important to Dr. James and Diane, and they’re happy to tell anyone how proud they are of their four children and four grandchildren.

RMC is pleased to have a dedicated family man, community member and talented physician serving its patients. “He’s truly one of the best examples that we have of being not only a great doctor but also a generous citizen in our community,” says Peace. ●



> Do you need a family physician?

To make an appointment with Dr. James, call **(256) 234-4131**.

John M. James, M.D., has a long-standing commitment to the community as a physician and supporter of local non-profits.

Use as directed

Medicine do's and don'ts



When your healthcare provider prescribed a new medication, you took it faithfully at first. But now you want to stop, either because you've had side effects, you feel better, you're not feeling better, you can't afford a refill or you can't remember what to take and when. But if you abruptly quit, serious consequences can result.

No matter what your reasons, don't stop taking your medicine or skip doses until you check with your healthcare provider.

The chart below shows the risks of stopping common medicines too soon.

> 'Take two and call me in the morning'

Minimize side effects and get the most out of your medicine:

- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions and read the drug information sheet that comes in the package.
- Ask any questions before taking the medicine.
- Take your medicines for the entire length of time they're prescribed, even if you feel better.
- Know what your medicines look like if you're taking more than one.
- Keep your medicines organized. Use a chart like the one at www.fda.gov/downloads/AboutFDA/ReportsManualsForms/Forms/UCM095018.pdf.
- Store your medicines in their original containers.

> Know before you forgo

MEDICINE	WHY YOU TAKE IT	DANGERS OF STOPPING
▶ Antidepressants	To improve mood, sleep, appetite, emotional responses and concentration	Increased anxiety, feelings of sadness, irritability, fatigue, headaches, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and diarrhea
▶ Blood pressure medications	To regulate developing high blood pressure (prehypertension) or high blood pressure (hypertension)	Untreated hypertension can cause blood vessel damage, congestive heart failure, heart attack, kidney damage, vision loss and stroke.
▶ Antibiotics	To fight bacterial infections, such as ear infections, severe sinus infections, strep throat, urinary tract infections and many skin infections	An incomplete course of antibiotics doesn't kill resistant bacteria, which can lead to new and hard-to-treat infections or antibiotic resistance.
▶ Anti-anxiety medications	To treat anxiety disorders, such as panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and social phobia	Anxiety symptoms often return; you may have withdrawal symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, dizziness, headache and flulike symptoms.
▶ Oral hypoglycemic medications	To manage diabetes and regulate insulin and blood sugar levels	Blood sugar can rise quickly; if it remains high, you're at risk for heart attack, stroke, kidney damage, blindness and amputation.

Lotions, potions and ...warnings?

Look out before reaching over the counter

You have a bad case of acne, calves so sore it hurts to walk or an unsightly wart that won't go away, but you have no time for a doctor's visit, so you head to the drugstore for an over-the-counter (OTC) remedy. No big deal, right? Not always. Some of these are pretty powerful medications and can be poisonous—and not just if you swallow them—so you need to take caution, especially with the three lotions listed here:

Muscle-pain creams Methyl salicylate is a winter-green-scented chemical that's found in deep-heating creams, such as Ben Gay and Icy Hot, which are used to

relieve sore muscles and joints. It works like aspirin and if you use too much, it can cause nausea, vomiting, breathing problems and kidney failure. To be safe, don't use methyl salicylate creams for more than a week, and never rub the stuff on cuts or damaged skin.

Acne creams Topical salicylic acid is used to help clear up and prevent acne. It can also help treat skin conditions such as psoriasis, dandruff, corns, calluses and warts. It comes in varying strengths, some only available by prescription. But even the OTC versions can be strong and may irritate your skin, so be sure to follow the directions on the package label. And if you're taking aspirin or water pills or are using products containing methyl salicylate, check with the pharmacist about possible precautions or interactions.

Anti-aging lotions Once available only by prescription, today you'll find many forms of Vitamin A (retinol) on drugstore shelves. They're used for treating different skin conditions, such as sun spots and wrinkles. Retinol is a powerful antioxidant that fights free radicals—molecules that can break down your skin cells and cause wrinkles. However, retinol may cause skin irritation, rashes, burning or redness in some people. Pregnant women or women who may become pregnant should avoid vitamin A products because they can increase the risk of birth defects. ●



Apply with care:
Some over-the-counter
creams contain powerful
ingredients.

A helping hand with diabetes

RMC's support group can help

The statistics are staggering: Alabama ranks fifth in diabetes prevalence in the United States, with one in 10 adults having been diagnosed with this disease. In fact, complications from diabetes ranks seventh in the leading causes of death among Alabamians. While no cure for this disease exists, you can decrease your risk of complications with good diabetes self-management.

The Diabetic Support Group at Russell Medical Center (RMC) helps area residents who have diabetes do just that—with an extensive program of presentations and events that focus on important topics like combating temptation in your diet, healthy daily eating habits, prevention measures and vision and foot care.

LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

Diabetes affects every part of the body and can lead to other health conditions including high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and nerve damage. “The effects of diabetes are far-reaching, and many patients don’t understand what’s truly going on with the disease,” says Sandra Patten, R.N., enrichment programs facilitator at RMC. “Our Diabetic Support Group is designed to encompass all aspects of diabetes management.”

Patten says the group strives to take the discussion out of the doctor’s office and bring it into a patient-centered environment. “Members get a chance to discuss their diabetes concerns with other people who have it and know how to live with it,” says Sunil Sharma, M.D., family and general practice physician at RMC.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Linda Moore, R.D., L.D., dietitian at RMC, is a staple for members’ many questions about the



Linda Moore, R.D., L.D., shows the right portion sizes using a life-size food pyramid.

all-important diabetes diet. “Diet is key in managing diabetes,” says Moore. “Many patients have come in for counseling before and learned about the diet breakdown, but it’s an ongoing process. It’s a learning process to find a nutrition plan that works for each individual.”

Doctors also come to group meetings to discuss members’ questions and concerns. “When we meet with the group, we can talk about other ways to treat diabetes besides medications,” says Dr. Sharma, “and we’re available as a resource to address their concerns.” Other topics that have been featured at meetings include the importance of regular eye exams, preventive care and neuropathy. “I think patients who participate in this group actually have more resources to manage their disease,” says Dr. Sharma.

INCREASING AWARENESS

RMC’s Auxiliary raised funds to purchase a food pyramid model to educate the group and community about healthy eating and meal planning. The life-size representation of the food groups allows Moore to give hands-on demonstrations of concepts like portion size and a balanced diet. “Nutrition is an important part of prevention for any disease,” says Moore, “and being able to give real-life object lessons is a powerful tool to really ensure that patients can see the dietary changes they need to make.” ●

> Join us!

To learn more about the Diabetic Support Group at RMC, call Enrichment Services at **(256) 329-7145**.

Joint decisions

Knee replacement transforms a life

Lake Martin resident Lynda Kearse knew for years that a knee replacement would be in her future. After she contracted Lyme disease in 1998, Graham Howorth, M.D., orthopedic surgeon at Russell Medical Center (RMC), warned that the disease would affect her knees. “It took a long time to get cured,” Lynda says, “and one of the residual effects was Lyme arthritis, which centered in my knees.” Dr. Howorth told Lynda she’d know when it was time to replace her damaged arthritic knees, and that time finally came last year.

PERSONALIZED TIMELINE

Dr. Howorth had already taken a good look inside Lynda’s knee after her previous surgery for a torn meniscus, and he worked with her until she was ready for a permanent solution. Synvisc shots lubricated her knee joints so she could keep up with her daily activities, and she and Dr. Howorth talked at length about when would be the best time for replacement surgery. “He didn’t sugarcoat anything, and he let me decide what was right for me,” says Lynda.

Soon, the pain was too much to bear, and she was ready for surgery. “I was in pain all the time. I couldn’t stand or bear weight for a long time and had trouble getting up and down,” she says. “It was really affecting my life.”

A PRECISE FIT

Lynda had an MRI and X-rays to determine the extent of the damage and identify the size and type of the artificial joint she would need. Dr. Howorth placed her new joint using the advanced OrthoPilot Navigation System, which uses

computer-generated images to assist the surgeon in precise joint placement. With OrthoPilot, the incision is smaller with less scarring, fewer tendons and less muscle are cut and issues with bone misalignment are virtually obsolete. This made Lynda much less apprehensive about the procedure. A more precisely placed joint means more comfort for the patient, too. “When they first got me up after surgery and I put weight on my knee, there was nothing—no pain,” says Lynda.

ON HER FEET AGAIN

Today, Lynda keeps busy with the activities she loves, including volunteering for the Auxiliary at RMC, where she’s served for more than 13 years and is currently treasurer. “I don’t have any physical limitations,” she says. “I can kneel in church and easily walk up and down stairs.”

For anyone waiting to have orthopedic surgery as Lynda did, she encourages them to go for it. “Once you’ve had it done and worked through the healing process, you have a new lease on life!” ●



> Stop the pain

To learn more about treatments for your aching joints, visit www.russellmedcenter.com or call (256) 329-7149.

Thanks to advanced technology for knee replacement, Lynda Kearse is back volunteering with the Auxiliary at RMC.

Be your own doctor

Self-monitoring tips to keep you in shape

Taking an active role in your healthcare makes the most positive impact on your health. And at-home monitoring allows you to detect potential problems early so your healthcare provider can make adjustments to your treatment to help ward off serious problems. Consider these doctor-approved do-it-yourself tests:



Tip! MEASURE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

Measuring your blood pressure at home can show you and your healthcare provider how much (or how little) your pressure varies during the day and can provide early detection if you're in the beginning stages of high blood pressure. Your provider uses the measurements to determine whether medicine is needed or how your current medication is working. You can pick up a blood pressure monitor without a prescription at your drugstore.

Blood pressure lower than 120/80 mm Hg is considered normal. High blood pressure is 140/90 mm Hg or higher. Most healthcare providers suggest that you check your blood pressure several times a day before they determine whether or not you have high blood pressure.

>> Call the doctor if: your blood pressure continually reads 140/90 mm Hg or higher or if you feel dizzy or have chest pain, confusion, ear noise or buzzing, an irregular heartbeat, a nosebleed, tiredness or vision changes. If your blood pressure spikes suddenly, you could be at risk of a stroke, and if your numbers reach 180 mm Hg or higher over 120 mm Hg or higher, your blood vessels can become

damaged and your heart won't be able to pump blood properly. If you experience a severe headache, anxiety or shortness of breath, get medical attention immediately.

Tip! CONTROL YOUR DIABETES

Checking your blood sugar with a glucose meter is essential to staying healthy. There's no "right" number of times a day to test. At certain times, such as when you're first diagnosed, you'll benefit from testing several times a day to help get your blood glucose in a healthy range.

You can use a blood glucose monitor to draw and test a drop of blood from your finger, hand, forearm or thigh. Different types of meters are available, including some with memory and others with easy-to-read displays for people with vision problems.

>> Call the doctor if: your blood sugar levels are either very high or very low, as this can be a sign of an underlying infection or trouble with certain medicines. If you feel nauseous, sluggish or shaky; have blurred vision; are feeling faint; or have stomach pain or vomiting, get immediate medical attention.

At-home monitoring gives you instant information about your body.



Dieters who step on the scale every day lose twice as much weight over a two-year period as those who weigh in less often.

—*Annals of Behavioral Medicine*

Tip! **MONITOR YOUR CHOLESTEROL**

Some cholesterol test kits measure your total cholesterol; others also measure HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol and triglycerides. Even lab testing can show varying results, and there can be even more variations with tests done at home. Ideally, your total cholesterol should measure less than 200 mg/dL. Anything above this is considered borderline high or high.

>> Call the doctor if: you've made changes to your diet and are exercising at least 30 minutes a day and your cholesterol is still high. Your doctor can re-check your treatment and may prescribe medication or change your medicine to help get your numbers down. There are usually no physical symptoms of high cholesterol but sometimes it can cause chest pain; get immediate help if this is the case.

Tip! **WATCH YOUR WEIGHT**

Your bathroom scale is a powerful tool in achieving weight loss. Weigh yourself at least once a week if you're trying to lose weight. Remember to set a goal of slow and steady weight loss—1 to 2 pounds a week.

>> Call the doctor if: you've been reducing your food intake and have been exercising but you're not losing weight. Your medications could be interfering with weight loss, or you may have a condition that affects your metabolism, such as hypothyroidism.

Tip! **OBSERVE OVULATION**

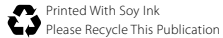
If you're trying to get pregnant, ovulation is an exciting time. It usually takes place on the 14th day of the menstrual cycle. But for some women, ovulation can vary from month to month, so pinpointing "the" moment can be tricky. There are a few home tests you can take to give you a better idea of when conception is more likely.



Your basal body temperature, which rises during ovulation, could provide a good clue: Take your temperature every morning, using a digital thermometer. Jot down your readings and look for a pattern—you'll be most fertile two to three days before your temperature rises. You can also try an at-home ovulation kit, which tests your urine for hormonal peaks that happen prior to ovulation.

>> Call the doctor if: you've tried to get pregnant for at least one year without success. If you're 35 or older, see your healthcare provider if you've tried for six months; he or she can help you find out why you haven't conceived. ●

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Physician Referral Line (256) 329-7149

Community calendar | Heart-healthy events at RMC

To register or for more information about these events, call Enrichment Services at **(256) 329-7145**.

Get your heart health score

During American Heart Month, Russell Medical Center will be offering cardiac calcium scans. The scans use a 64-slice CT scanner to look for coronary calcium, which accompanies fatty plaque buildup in the heart's arteries that can block blood flow to the heart. If you or someone you love has a family history of heart disease or other risk factors such as being obese, having a stressed lifestyle, smoking or having diabetes, this screening is for you. An RMC cardiologist and your primary care physician will receive a copy of your test results. ●

> Get screened!

Cardiac calcium scans cost \$100 and are not covered by insurance. An appointment is required. Call **(256) 329-7145** for detailed information and to register.



NOT ALL CALORIES ARE CREATED EQUAL

Cooking demonstration and nutritional luncheon

- February 16, noon–1 p.m.
- RMC Community Room

The cost is \$5; lunch is provided.

DIABETIC SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

- February 18, noon–1 p.m.
- RMC Community Room

The cost is \$5; lunch is provided.

FREE LEG PAIN SCREENING

Simple screening to detect possible blocked arteries resulting from PAD (peripheral arterial disease).

- February 25, 3–6 p.m.
- Total Fitness at RMC

T.O.U.C.H. (TODAY OUR UNDERSTANDING OF CANCER IS HOPE) SUPPORT GROUP

For cancer survivors and their loved ones

- First Wednesday of each month, noon–1 p.m.
- RMC Community Room

DEMENTIA SUPPORT GROUP FOR FAMILY AND CAREGIVERS

- Third Monday of each month, 10–11:30 a.m.
- RMC Community Room

For more information, call the volunteer services department at **(256) 329-7177**.