

# HealthScope

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Win a free  
first-aid kit!

See page 5

Tune in to your  
thyroid health

What your cough  
may mean

A healthy lunch  
is in the bag



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MEDICAL CENTER

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# Ease your arthritis pain

**M**ore than 40 million Americans suffer from arthritis, a condition that can make every move painful. Osteoarthritis is the most common form. It occurs when cartilage, which cushions bones in your joints, breaks down and causes irritation.

Luckily, the following lifestyle changes and remedies can help you manage the pain:

• **LOSE WEIGHT.** It's pretty basic: The more excess weight you carry, the more stress on your joints. But a healthy diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, paired with regular exercise—at least 30 minutes a day—can help tip the scales in your favor. Cut back on saturated fats, which may increase your body's inflammatory response, adding to joint and tissue inflammation.



• **GET OFF THE COUCH.** Inactivity is a joint's worst enemy. Exercise can strengthen and protect the muscles around the joints, preventing them from stiffening and causing more pain. Walking, swimming, some yoga poses and tai chi are easy on the joints. Also beneficial are range-of-motion exercises, such as raising your arms above your head; strengthening exercises, such as weight training; and low-impact aerobic exercises, such as bike riding. Before starting an exercise program, check with your physician. If needed, ask him or her for a referral to a physical therapist who has a program for people with arthritis.

• **TAKE A PILL, IF NEEDED.** Sometimes you need medication for the pain. Over-the-counter options include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs (such as ibuprofen and naproxen), and acetaminophen (such as Tylenol). Topical creams may provide hot or cool sensations to ease pain or contain pain medication that's absorbed into the skin. Your physician may prescribe pills or cortisone injections. Any drug you take can have side effects, so discuss them with your physician before starting a regimen.



• **REST UP.** Your body needs time to heal, so aim for eight to 10 hours of sleep every night, and avoid sitting or standing in one position for too long. Skip high-impact activities such as running. You may also want to look into stress-relievers such as meditation or yoga.

• **ASK ABOUT ALTERNATIVES.** Massage, acupuncture, heating pads, ice packs and supplements such as glucosamine and chondroitin may help reduce symptoms, though studies on the supplements have been mixed. Speak with your physician before trying any home remedies. Sometimes, there simply isn't a remedy that can effectively treat the pain. In that case, surgery to replace the joint may be an option to discuss with your physician.



# Life after the ER

## Following your physician's orders keeps you healthy

**W**hen you're not feeling well and you're surrounded by the hustle and bustle of an emergency room (ER), it's easy to be confused by what a physician is telling you. All you can think about is going home. That's why many people are unclear about how to handle their care when they leave the hospital.

Case in point: A small University of Michigan study found that more than 75 percent of patients didn't understand their discharge instructions or what ER physicians had just told them—although 80 percent thought they did. Some of the patients weren't even sure of their diagnosis.

Unfortunately, these misunderstandings may increase the likelihood of complications once you leave the ER. In reality, the care you receive at the hospital is just one important part of the puzzle. Knowing what to do next—and following those discharge instructions closely—is critical to getting better. Here's what you need to do for the best health care results:

➔ **SPEAK UP.** Don't be afraid to ask questions if you're unsure of your condition, what treatments you were given, your test results or something in the discharge instructions—for example, whether a medication that's been prescribed may interact with one you're already taking. It's best to ask the ER physician caring for you,

rather than having to contact the ER later, when the physician you saw may no longer be on duty.

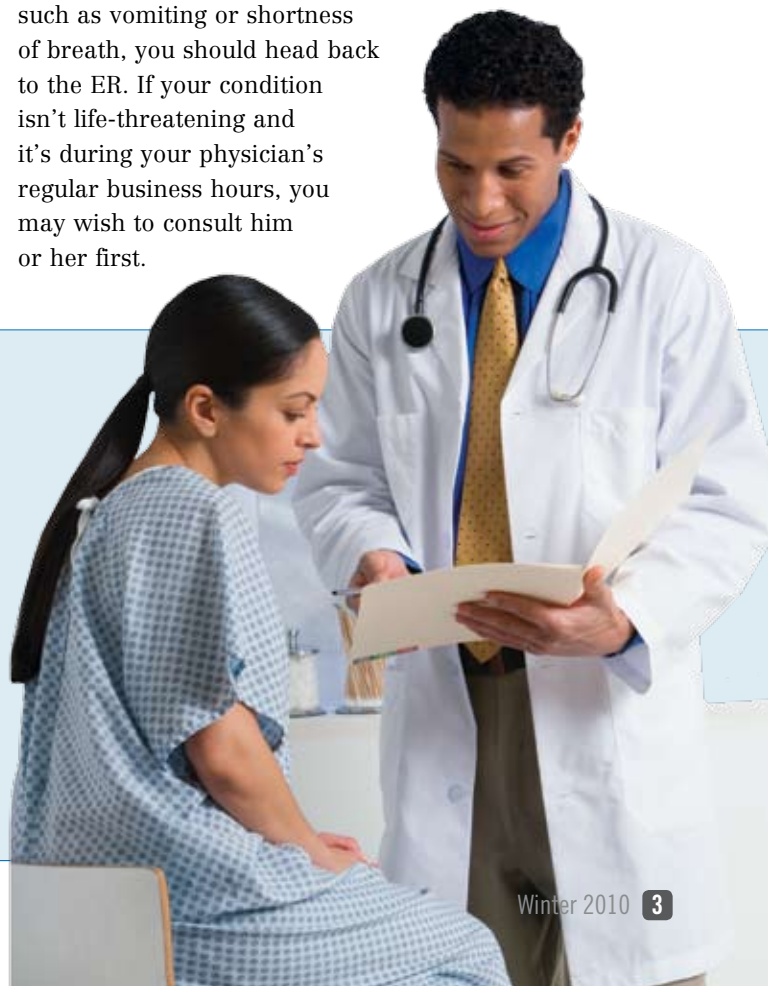
➔ **FOLLOW ALL MEDICATION DOSAGES.** Thoroughly read your discharge instructions. They should spell out what medications have been prescribed, what they treat and how often—and when—to take them.

➔ **FOLLOW UP WITH YOUR FAMILY PHYSICIAN OR A SPECIALIST.** You'll especially need to do this if you've received stitches or a cast. Your discharge instructions will tell you when to go. Double-check with your physician to make sure information about your ER visit, including test results, has been sent to his or her office before your appointment.

➔ **KNOW WHEN YOU SHOULD RETURN TO THE ER.** If your condition worsens or you're noticing new symptoms, such as vomiting or shortness of breath, you should head back to the ER. If your condition isn't life-threatening and it's during your physician's regular business hours, you may wish to consult him or her first.

## How did we do?

**W**hen you check in to the ER, admitting personnel will ask you if it's OK to follow up with you once you're back home. If you agree to it, we'll try to call you within 24 hours of your discharge, asking you six questions about your visit. At that time, if you don't understand your discharge instructions or have any questions about your treatment, a nurse will call you back. This process, called Discharge Callback Administrator, or DCA, helps us improve the way we care for our patients and ensure that you're on the road to recovery.



# The thyroid: A tiny titan

**C**hances are, you've probably never given your thyroid (a small, butterfly-shaped gland located in your throat, in front of your windpipe) much thought. But if you've ever been diagnosed with thyroid problems, you know this small gland can have a big impact on your health.

Thyroid problems are among the most common health conditions, yet because they share common symptoms with other medical disorders, they frequently go unnoticed. These symptoms include fatigue, anxiety, depression, irritability, unexplained weight gain or weight loss, carpal tunnel syndrome, changes in bowel habits or the menstrual cycle, difficulty concentrating and excessively dry skin or hair.

The thyroid produces hormones that regulate the speed of the body's vital metabolic functions. Thyroid hormones affect heart rate, respiratory rate, the rate at which calories are burned, skin maintenance, growth, body temperature, muscle strength, brain and nervous system functioning, cholesterol levels, fertility and digestion.

"When your thyroid produces too little or too much of these hormones, it can throw your body's delicately tuned balancing act out of kilter," says general surgeon Michael Heuman, M.D. "Left untreated, thyroid disease can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, infertility, osteoporosis, high cholesterol, diabetes, obesity, anemia, arthritis, autoimmune disorders and intestinal problems."

## Make an appointment!

**M**ichael Heuman, M.D.,  
a general surgeon  
with Clarksville Medical  
Specialists, is here to help.  
To schedule an appointment,  
call (931) 502-3700.



Michael Heuman, M.D.  
General Surgeon



The most common thyroid conditions are hypothyroidism (where the thyroid doesn't produce enough thyroid hormone) and hyperthyroidism (where the thyroid becomes overactive and produces too much thyroid hormone).

### CAUSES AND RISKS

Thyroid problems can arise due to an infection, inadequate nutrition, recent childbirth, a family history of thyroid disorders, cancerous or noncancerous tumor growth or excessive radiation exposure.

Thyroid conditions primarily affect older people and women. Women are five to 10 times more likely than men to develop a thyroid disorder. Older women and women who have recently had a baby are more likely to develop a thyroid condition—more than 15 percent of women are diagnosed with hypothyroidism by age 60, and up to 20 percent of women develop a postpartum thyroid disorder.

### TAKE CHARGE

To keep tabs on your thyroid, see your physician for regularly scheduled physicals. If you're experiencing symptoms that suggest a thyroid problem, ask for a thyroid test, a simple blood test.

The good news is that thyroid problems can be treated with antithyroid medication, radioiodine therapy or surgery. Your physician can help decide the best course of treatment for you.

# Just a cough or something more?

**C**oughing is a part of everyday life. It's the body's way of keeping us healthy by removing foreign material from the air passages and lungs. Coughing is natural and necessary, but it can also be a sign of a serious medical condition. Understanding the various types of coughs can help you know when they may be symptoms of a larger issue.

Coughs can be differentiated according to whether or not they produce discharge like mucus or phlegm. Dry coughs occur for various reasons. A piece of dust or some other particle that becomes trapped in the throat can cause a dry cough, as can the common cold and the flu. Allergies and asthma also cause this type of cough. On the other hand, a cough that produces mucus or has a congested sound to it may indicate bronchitis or another respiratory infection.

## WHEN IT'S BRONCHITIS

Bronchitis is an inflammation of the airway to the lungs. It's generally caused by a viral infection, though it can also develop as a result of exposure to chemicals, polluted air or tobacco smoke. A cough that produces mucus is one of the main signs of bronchitis, but others include:

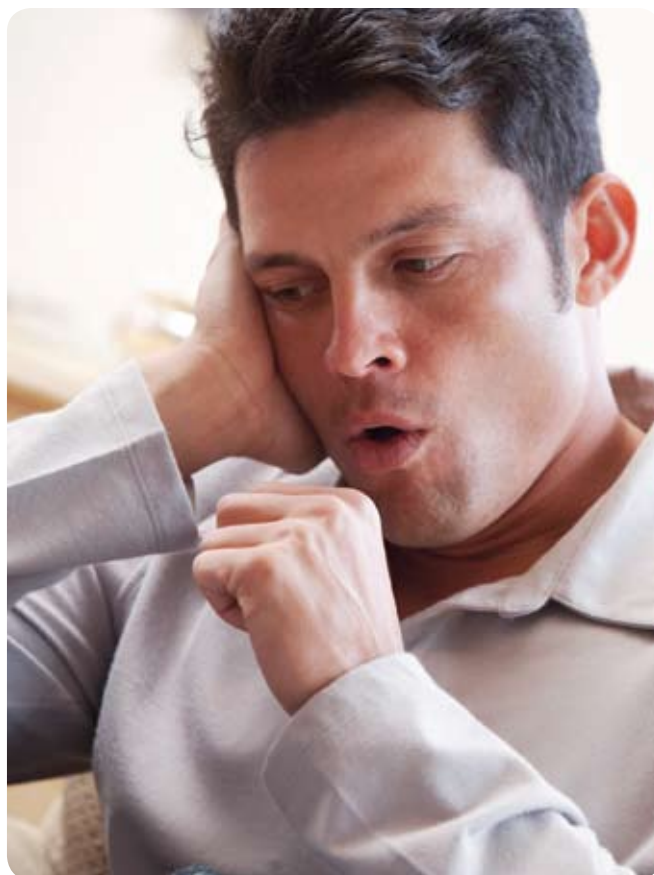
- sore throat
- wheezing
- fever
- chills

The two different types of bronchitis are acute and chronic bronchitis. Acute bronchitis is spread from person to person and is common in winter. It may accompany a cold or the flu, and healthy people who contract acute bronchitis generally improve in two or three weeks.

"Chronic bronchitis is a serious condition that can last for years and requires regular treatment," says pulmonologist Sriram Krishnasamy, M.D. "Smoking is a notorious cause of chronic bronchitis, but regular exposure to pollution or harmful chemicals can also be responsible."

## Free health news—and a chance to win a first-aid kit!

**W**ant to know how to win one of five first-aid kits that we'll be giving away in March? Then make sure you're signed up for our monthly eNewsletter. Read our March issue to learn how to enter. To register for Gateway's eNewsletter, visit [www.todaysgateway.com](http://www.todaysgateway.com).



Coughing isn't a disease, but rather a symptom of things going on inside the body. Some coughs are harmless, while others indicate significant medical conditions. Becoming informed about coughs and other common symptoms can help you know when it's time to see a physician. If you're curious about bronchitis and other respiratory infections, contact your physician for more information.

## ! Breathe easy!

**S**riram Krishnasamy, M.D., a pulmonologist with Clarksville Medical Specialists, can help you breathe easy. To make an appointment, call (931) 542-2647 today.



Sriram Krishnasamy, M.D.  
Pulmonologist

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

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

Take this quiz to find out.

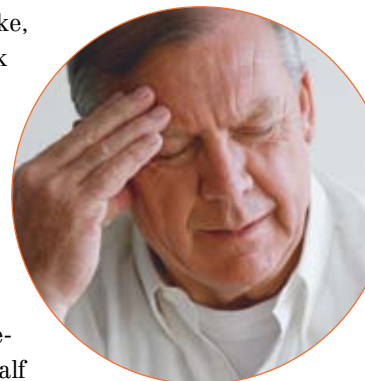
- 1** What percentage of American adults are overweight or obese?
  - a. 25
  - b. 33
  - c. 50
  - d. 66
- 2** Which of the following has not been linked to obesity?
  - a. hyperthyroidism
  - b. cancer
  - c. gallbladder disease
  - d. infertility
- 3** Obese children have a higher risk of:
  - a. asthma
  - b. early puberty
  - c. skin infections
  - d. all of the above
- 4** One problem with body mass index (BMI)—a calculation that assesses obesity—is that:
  - a. It doesn't take height into account.
  - b. It doesn't measure muscle, so a muscular person can have a high BMI.
  - c. It doesn't factor in age.
  - d. none of the above
- 5** How much excess weight do you usually have to be carrying to be considered for weight-loss surgery?
  - a. 30 pounds for women, 50 for men
  - b. 50 pounds for women, 70 for men
  - c. 80 pounds for women, 100 for men
  - d. There's no minimum weight requirement for weight-loss surgery.

ANSWERS: 1. (d), 2. (a), 3. (d), 4. (b), 5. (c)

## { MINI-STROKES }

# Heed the warning

It may not be a full-blown stroke, but a transient ischemic attack (TIA)—also called a mini-stroke—is your warning that one could be just around the corner. TIAs produce symptoms similar to strokes, but they usually only last a few minutes and don't cause damage. About a third of people who have TIAs will subsequently have a stroke, and about half of them will have it within a year.



### INSIDE A TIA

A TIA occurs when a blood clot briefly blocks an artery, cutting off part of the brain's blood supply. Like a stroke, symptoms arise without warning. They include:

- sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg—usually on one side of the body
- sudden confusion, speech problems or trouble comprehending
- sudden problems walking, dizziness and loss of balance or coordination
- sudden severe headaches
- sudden vision problems such as loss of sight in one eye

If you suffer any of these symptoms, call an ambulance or have a friend take you to the ER right away. Physicians usually have to make a diagnosis based on your medical history.

### IS A TIA IN YOUR FUTURE?

You're at higher risk for a TIA if you:

- have a family history of TIA or stroke
- are 55 years or older
- are a man
- are African-American

Those are things you can't control, but you can help change other risk factors:

- blood pressure 140/85 mm Hg or higher
- high cholesterol
- heart disease, carotid artery disease and peripheral artery disease
- obesity
- cigarette smoking
- heavy drinking
- physical inactivity
- diabetes
- a high-fat, high-sodium diet

# Sending out an SOS: Texting can be bad for your health

It's not uncommon to see people crossing busy streets or even driving with their cell phone or BlackBerry® in hand, dashing off a quick message. Texting shifts your focus away from the task at hand and can be downright dangerous.

While no hard numbers exist, the American College of Emergency Physicians has reported an anecdotal rise in serious and fatal injuries involving texting—especially among teens and young adults. That includes face, chin, mouth and eye injuries for those who trip and fall while texting, and fatal trauma stemming from car accidents. Texting has also been linked to medical phenomena like “BlackBerry thumb” and “teen texting tendonitis”—catchphrases for conditions that result from the repetitive thumb motions of texting. These conditions can cause pain and numbness in the thumbs and joints of the hand.

## BE TEXT SAVVY

Steer clear of texting troubles by following a few guidelines:

- Avoid texting while doing things like walking and driving. Turn your phone off to avoid temptation.
- On the road, pull over if you need to text immediately.
- Set a good example behind the wheel: Don't engage in distracting behavior in front of your kids.

- Contact your cell-phone provider if you're worried about your child's texting habits. Some companies now offer services that ban texting at certain times of the day.



# A healthy lunch is in the bag!

Every day at noon, workers around the country run to the corner deli for a sandwich, hit a local eatery with co-workers or order in. But if you're watching your waistline—or your wallet—packing your own lunch is a smarter solution. A homemade lunch is more nutritious and economical, as long as you pack it correctly. The recipe for a healthy lunch includes:

- **PROTEIN** Try lean turkey, ham, roast beef, tuna or a bean-based entree, such as hummus or a black bean burrito.
- **GOOD GRAINS** Pack whole-wheat pasta salad and sandwiches made on multigrain bread.
- **FRUITS AND VEGGIES** The deeper the color of the vegetable or fruit, the more vitamins and minerals it contains. Slice up baby carrots, peppers, broccoli, apples, blueberries and oranges.



- **CALCIUM** Slip fat-free yogurt, cottage cheese or string cheese into your bag.
- **H<sub>2</sub>O** Water has no calories, so it's a perfect choice, but if you need a little more flavor, try adding a squeeze of lemon, lime or orange. Watch out for fruit juices, energy drinks and sodas, which are loaded with sugar.
- **FLAVOR APPEAL** Switch it up a bit by adding interesting items, like walnuts in a salad or horseradish spread on a roast beef sandwich.
- **MINIMAL SODIUM** Thinking of one of those “healthy” frozen meals? Watch out for sodium. Total daily intake for a healthy individual shouldn't exceed 2,300 milligrams (mg), and some frozen meals can contain a big portion of your day's allotment. Follow the FDA's recommendation for a healthy frozen meal by choosing one that has 480 mg of sodium or less per serving.



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## MEET OUR MEDICAL STAFF

We'd like to introduce you to the newest members of Gateway Medical Center's medical staff.



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To learn more about our new medical staff members, visit [www.todaysgateway.com](http://www.todaysgateway.com).