

# HealthScope

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**Get back to your active lifestyle**  
Gateway offers gentler knee surgery

**Gut check**  
Could it be appendicitis?

**6 ways to raise a healthy eater**

**Gateway recognized for excellence**



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# The facts about fibroids

**Y**ou're constantly running to the restroom, your back hurts and your periods are particularly painful. What's going on? You might be dealing with uterine fibroids, noncancerous tumors that grow out of uterine tissue.

Physicians aren't sure why some women develop fibroids, but if you're overweight or African-American or an immediate family member has fibroids, you're at increased risk.

## WHAT DO FIBROIDS FEEL LIKE?

In most cases, you won't even know that you have fibroids. But consult your physician if you experience any of these signs:

- heavy or painful periods
- bleeding between periods
- constant pelvic pain
- a feeling of fullness in the lower abdomen
- an increased need to urinate
- pain during sex
- lower back pain
- reproductive problems, including infertility, multiple miscarriages or preterm labor

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Your physician will do a pelvic exam to see whether your uterus is enlarged or misshapen. If he or she spots abnormalities, an imaging exam, such as an ultrasound, can confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment depends on your symptoms' severity, the



fibroids' size and location, your age and whether you want children:

- If you don't have symptoms, treatment is usually unnecessary.
- If you're approaching menopause, you may be advised to do nothing, as fibroids tend to stop growing or even shrink when hormone levels drop.
- If you have occasional discomfort, try an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- If you're bleeding heavily, your physician may recommend hormonal treatments to lighten your flow or an iron supplement to prevent anemia.
- If your fibroids are large, your physician may suggest hormones to temporarily stop menstruation and shrink the growths. These hormones are sometimes prescribed before surgery to make it easier to remove the fibroids.
- If your fibroids are growing quickly or causing excessive blood loss, your physician may present several surgical options. Myomectomy (removing the fibroids while leaving the uterus intact) is the best option for women who wish to have children. Myolysis (freezing or using an electric current to destroy growths) and hysterectomy (removing the uterus) are other possible treatments.

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**W**e need your input! We'd like to know what you think about our publication so we can better serve your needs. Please take a few minutes to complete our online survey. Your responses will be used to improve our services to the community and to enhance our publication.

Filling out the online survey is easy: Simply go to [www.healthconnectionmag.com](http://www.healthconnectionmag.com) and complete the survey.

By completing our survey, you'll be automatically entered in a random drawing to win one of five gift cards.

All surveys must be completed online by June 1, 2009, to be eligible to win. One entry per person, please. Thank you for your time and assistance.

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. We do not sell, rent or give away your e-mail address.

# Gut check

## Could it be appendicitis?

**W**hat's tiny and useless but can cause a whole lot of pain if it's unhappy? Your appendix, a finger-shaped pouch attached to your lower intestine. And if your appendix ever becomes inflamed and fills with pus, you'll have a raging case of appendicitis, a potentially life-threatening illness.

### WHO'S AT RISK?

Though anyone can get appendicitis, it often strikes between ages 10 and 30. It usually happens when the appendix is blocked by fecal matter or a swollen lymph node following a digestive tract infection. A small number of people are diagnosed following traumatic abdominal injury, while others are genetically predisposed. In all, about 280,000 appendectomies are performed each year in the United States, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

### NOT JUST A BELLYACHE

A hundred different ailments can cause stomach pain, but your appendix might be the culprit if you have:

- pain that starts around the belly button and moves to the lower right of the abdomen and gets worse when you move, take deep breaths, sneeze or cough
- abdominal swelling
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- constipation or diarrhea
- an inability to pass gas
- a low-grade fever

### TIME TO TAKE IT OUT?

This isn't a wait-and-see kind of problem. Removal is the only effective treatment for appendicitis, so if you're having symptoms, head to the emergency room, stat. Once there, a physician will check for pain location and ten-



derness, run a blood test for infection and send you for a computed tomography (CT) scan to confirm the diagnosis. He or she will also look to rule out other possibilities for your symptoms, including ectopic pregnancy, ovarian cysts, kidney stones and Crohn's disease. If you *do* have appendicitis, your appendix will be surgically removed before it can rupture. It may be done laparoscopically (the surgeon makes a few small incisions in your abdomen) or with traditional open surgery (the surgeon makes one large incision). Since experts have been unable to pinpoint the appendix's function, it's unlikely that you'll suffer any long-term effects.

Delay treatment and your appendix will likely rupture. If that happens, chances are good that you'll develop an infection of the abdominal cavity called peritonitis and then pain will take over and your entire abdomen will swell. Fever, thirst and low urine output will likely follow. This infection can cause organ failure, infertility and even death if not adequately contained with an abdominal cavity cleaning and intravenous (IV) antibiotics.

### Where does it hurt?

**A**fter migrating from your navel, pain from appendicitis nearly always settles at a place on your abdomen called **McBurney's Point**, named after the 19th century surgeon Charles McBurney, an authority on appendicitis. **Find it by drawing an imaginary line from your belly button to your right hip bone; you'll feel tenderness about halfway between the two points.**

# Less trauma, faster recovery

## Gentler knee surgery at Gateway

**M**ore than 300,000 total knee replacements are performed annually in the United States. The good news is that patients suffering from joint pain can now benefit from minimally invasive total knee replacement at Gateway Medical Center. The new procedure offers hope to the aging population: Baby boomers have spent years pursuing high-demand activities, and they're quickly nearing the age at which they stand to benefit most from these new surgical techniques.

With traditional knee replacement, patients often spend a week or more in the hospital, and recovery can take months. With the new approach, however, surgeons use smaller instruments and make smaller incisions (3 inches,

versus the standard 12-inch incision). This means the kneecap and joint don't have to be dislocated and the quad muscles may be manipulated out of the way rather than cut. Specially

◀ Combining minimally invasive total knee replacement with computer navigation technology benefits patients.



designed retractors pull muscles out of the way, improving the surgeon's field of view. As a result, patients typically experience less soft-tissue trauma, heal faster and recover quicker.

"With this technique, patients may return to independent living sooner, reducing their dependence on friends and family," says orthopedic surgeon William Beauchamp, D.O. "Often, patients can flex their knees, walk unassisted and get into and out of bed as quickly as 24 to 48 hours after surgery."

### ACCURATE NAVIGATION

Surgeons are also combining minimally invasive total knee replacement with new computer navigation technology, essentially an orthopedic global positioning system. The new computer equipment, used often for precision neurosurgery, allows orthopedic surgeons to more accurately align the implant.

## ! Get back in the game!

**Y**ou don't have to live with pain. To learn about minimally invasive total knee replacement at Gateway, talk with your physician about whether you may be a candidate for this procedure or visit [www.todaysgateway.com](http://www.todaysgateway.com). This procedure isn't for everyone.



IMAGE COURTESY OF STRYKER ORTHOPAEDICS

### TLC for knees

**I**f you have problem knees, you may help them feel better by trying the following:

- Lose weight to lighten the load.
- Stay agile and limber.
- Engage in knee-friendly activities such as swimming.
- Try straight leg raises to strengthen the quadricep muscles that support your knees.
- Wear knee protectors when playing sports.
- Try an over-the-counter pain reliever to ease minor discomfort.
- Consider supplements such as glucosamine sulfate and chondroitin sulfate for added protection.

# Don't be quiet about incontinence

It's no laughing matter. The involuntary leakage of urine known as urinary incontinence is an embarrassing condition for nearly 11 million women in the United States. Any sudden movement—a sneeze, cough or even a laugh—that puts pressure on the bladder can cause a woman to leak urine.

Stress urinary incontinence (SUI) is especially common in women who have had children. And for many women, learning to cope with the condition seems like their best and only option. But minimally invasive options are available to help treat SUI. Gateway Medical Center now offers a new treatment using the GYNECARE TVT SECUR system.

## HOW IT WORKS

The treatment is performed during a 10- to 15-minute procedure and, in most cases, can be done under local anesthesia. The technique features a minimally invasive approach that eliminates the need for surgical exit incisions in the skin. During the procedure, the surgeon inserts a piece of mesh tape through the vagina and positions it under the urethra, the tube by which urine exits the bladder. The mesh tape creates a supportive sling or hammock under the urethra, maintaining a seal to prevent unintentional urine loss.

“Although many women experience SUI, most of them aren't aware it's a treatable condition,” says urologist Timothy

◀ The new treatment features a minimally invasive approach that eliminates the need for surgical excisions in the skin.



IMAGE COURTESY OF ETHICON, INC.



Duffin, M.D. “Women may suffer in silence and put off activities they enjoy. GYNECARE TVT SECUR allows us to correct the problem in a minimally invasive way that doesn't require a patient to undergo general anesthesia or experience a long recovery time.”

Patients may be able to go home as early as a few hours after the procedure and can expect a short recovery period with little interference in daily activities.

GYNECARE TVT SECUR isn't for women who are, or intend to become, pregnant. Women on anticoagulation therapy also aren't candidates.

Although rare, complications associated with the treatment include injury to blood vessels of the pelvis and abdominal wall, difficulty urinating and bladder and bowel injury.

## ! Get back to living!

To see if this new procedure or any other treatment for SUI may be right for you, talk with your physician or visit [www.todaysgateway.com](http://www.todaysgateway.com).

## PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHTS

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



**RACHEL BACKSTROM, D.O.**  
Anesthesiologist



**MYRON STOKES, M.D.**  
General Surgeon



**THOMAS WATANABE, M.D.**  
Emergency Physician

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

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

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

Take this quiz to find out.

**1** Approximately how many people suffer from allergies?

- a. 50 million
- b. 35 million
- c. 27 million
- d. 18 million

**2** You're more likely to develop allergies if you:

- a. eat shellfish
- b. have a family member who has allergies
- c. had pets as a child
- d. regularly garden

**3** Which does *not* aggravate allergies?

- a. cigarette smoke
- b. cockroach droppings
- c. pet saliva
- d. they all can trigger allergies

**4** Where does pollen first appear in the spring?

- a. weeds
- b. trees
- c. grass
- d. mold

**5** What reduces pollen allergies in the spring?

- a. not drying laundry outside on a clothesline
- b. removing your shoes before coming indoors
- c. not going outside before 10 a.m.
- d. all of the above

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

# Get your blood pressure under control

**H**igh blood pressure truly is sinister: You can have it but not know it until you suffer a heart attack, stroke or another serious health complication.

Hence, its nickname: the silent killer. Seeing your physician regularly is the best way to determine whether you have high blood pressure—or hypertension. He or she will measure the force of blood in your arteries by looking at your systolic (the higher number) and diastolic (lower number) pressure. Elevated levels (140/90 mm Hg or more) indicate hypertension,



while numbers ranging from 120/80 to 139/89 point to prehypertension, a condition that puts you at risk for high blood pressure in the future. Normal blood pressure is under 120/80. Although hypertension has no cure, you can take steps to control it and protect your health:

- **Eat a healthy diet.**

High-fat and sugary foods contribute to high blood pressure,

so reach for foods from the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet. They include whole grains, fish and poultry, nuts, fruits and vegetables and low-fat and low-sodium foods.

- **Get moving.** Aim for 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity most days of the week. If you're short on time, break up your workout into three 10-minute segments over the course of the day. Take a walk around the block, dance to your favorite CD or work out to an exercise DVD.

- **Take your meds.** Sometimes medication is the only way to lower your blood pressure. Because hypertension drugs work only when they're regularly in your system, you should never miss a dose or stop taking them.



## HOW DOES WATER GET CONTAMINATED?

When it comes to swimming pools, water parks and play fountains, most disease comes from fecal matter on the bodies of sick splashers. If chlorine and pH levels aren't carefully calibrated, other swimmers could swallow live bacteria. In hot tubs, naturally occurring germs can cause rashes and respiratory problems, ranging from the common cold to pneumonia. Large bodies of water—from rivers to the ocean—can be contaminated by sewage, animal waste, swimmers' feces and even parasites.

## HOW CAN I AVOID CONTRACTING RWI?

Take these precautions to stay healthy when you swim, dive or just splash around:

- Avoid pools with murky or chemical-smelling water (properly chlorinated pools don't have an odor).
- Don't share towels, kickboards or toys.
- Keep water out of your mouth and never swallow it.
- Stay on dry land if you have open sores.
- Skip bodies of freshwater on very hot days, since bacteria flourish in warm water.
- Plug your nose when swimming in freshwater to keep parasites out.
- Shower before and after swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks and change diapers in the bathroom, not poolside.

# Warding off water illness

**A**s the weather warms up, we all look forward to swimming laps in the pool; splashing in the ocean, stream or river; or lounging in a hot tub. But those waters may mask something ominous: Contaminated water can lead to recreational water illness (RWI). Touching or swallowing water in pools, lakes, spas, rivers and oceans can lead to gastrointestinal, outer ear, eye, skin, respiratory and neurologic infections—and children, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk.

# Be a fruit-and-veggie role model

**W**hether you're driving the car or stepping into high heels, your little ones want to be just like you. So why not use your power for good?

Follow these tips, and the eating habits your children copy will positively influence their health—and yours—for years to come:

**1 Restock the pantry.** Keep healthy snacks around. Say goodbye to cookies loaded with high-fructose corn syrup and bright orange cheese puffs and hello to baked veggie chips and sugar-free applesauce.

**2 Drink right.** Switch out your super-acidic, high-sugar soda for water and 100 percent juice—little teeth and waistlines will thank you.

**3 Start the day right.** No time to sit down to breakfast? Send your kids off with a banana and a baggie filled with dry whole-grain cereal. Studies show that breakfast eaters boast improved math grades, less incidence of hyperactivity and better school attendance. And teen-

agers who eat first thing tend to weigh less, exercise more and generally have a healthier diet than their breakfast-skipping pals.

**4 Turn off the tube.** People who eat in front of the television are more likely to eat unhealthy foods.

**5 Eat together.** Children who dine with their parents tend to consume more fruits and veggies and fewer unhealthy snacks.

**6 Pack a lunch for everyone.** You'll save cash while making sure the whole family is eating well. Be sure to include a lean protein, low-fat dairy, grains, a vegetable and a piece of fruit (try sliced turkey and low-fat cheese on whole-wheat bread with carrot sticks and an apple).





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70GHS

## Gateway programs excel

### Mammography and diabetes education recognized

**G**ateway Medical Center is dedicated to continual healthcare advancement and improvement. We're pleased to announce that our mammography and diabetes education programs have recently been honored for excellence.

Gateway's mammography program has passed two critical surveys (with no citations): The American College of Radiology accreditation and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Mammography Quality Standards Act survey. "These accreditations help to ensure that patients receive quality service performed by qualified and experienced staff," says Chris Beasley, Gateway's director of diagnostic imaging. Gateway's Breast Health Center is designed to make care convenient, comfortable and reassuring. Licensed and specially trained radiologic technologists operate the advanced digital mammography equipment.

Gateway's diabetes education program also was recognized by the American Diabetes Association (ADA). The ADA Education Recognition effort is a voluntary process that assures approved education programs have met national standards for diabetes self-management education programs. Programs that achieve recognition status have a staff of knowledgeable health professionals who can provide advanced diabetes management information.



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

**F**or more information about Gateway's mammography or diabetes education programs, visit [www.todaysgateway.com](http://www.todaysgateway.com).

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—Chris Beasley,  
Gateway's director of diagnostic imaging