

# Health Connection



ALTA VISTA™  
Regional Hospital

PREMIERE ISSUE!

THE MAGAZINE OF ALTA VISTA REGIONAL HOSPITAL

## Better health is just a click away

Everyone's been there: You're concerned about a bad cough or scratchy throat, or perhaps your friend has been diagnosed with an illness you know nothing about. Where can you turn to find complete and accurate answers to your healthcare questions? Alta Vista Regional Hospital's Web site, [www.altavistaregionalhospital.com](http://www.altavistaregionalhospital.com). There, you'll find the 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, created by the company that owns the Discovery Channel, consists of more than 7,500 pages of health-related articles and interactive tools.

"At Alta Vista Regional Hospital, we strive to serve our community by providing quality and comprehensive healthcare services, including health information," says Brian Gibbons, chief executive officer at Alta Vista Regional Hospital. "There's no doubt that the health tools we're providing through Discovery Hospital enhance our service to patients and help them manage their health. This fast and easy portal provides people with the information and tools they need to keep their family healthy. It's a wonderful benefit to our community."

### INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The Discovery Hospital link features numerous educational and interactive components, including a medical library on various diseases and conditions, an anatomy explorer, a body mass calculator, explanations of various procedures and tests, nutrition information, a symptom explanation module, health centers and more.

### THE INTERNET ADVANTAGE

"By using digital assets from across our services on cable television as well as the Internet, we're able to provide an important educational service to patients using



this Web site," says Mark Irwin, vice president of operations at Discovery Interactive Media. "Thanks to partnerships like we have with Alta Vista Regional Hospital, we can deliver Discovery's reliable health information to patients and allow them to gain a greater understanding of health issues they may be confronting."



Visit us online!

Find health information, risk assessments and more at [www.altavistaregionalhospital.com](http://www.altavistaregionalhospital.com).



# 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.

**W**ith 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

# The right care, right away

## Program speeds test registration and results



**P**atients having tests at Alta Vista Regional Hospital can look forward to speedy registration and prompt results, thanks to a new computer system. The system, called Efileshare, is part of our ongoing efforts to improve hospital operations and the quality of service to our patients.

### BETTER COMMUNICATION

Efileshare is a service that streamlines the exchange of medical information between healthcare facilities and physician offices. It allows physicians or designated office staff to visit a secure online portal and enter orders for outpatient tests such as X-rays, lab work or physical therapy. The orders can then be transferred electronically to the correct department. For example, if a patient requires a physician order for a computed tomography (CT) scan, the physician can place the order using Efileshare, and it will be sent to the hospital's diagnostic staff immediately. Once they receive it, they have the information they need to call the patient and schedule an appointment for the scan.

### YOUR PRIVACY IS OUR PRIORITY

"Providing quality care and maintaining the privacy of our patients is integral to maintaining our mission

of improving the health of Las Vegas and northeastern New Mexico residents," says Brian Gibbons, chief executive officer at Alta Vista Regional Hospital. "We feel we have a solution in Efileshare that will increase efficiency and decrease delays for patients and their physicians without risk to patient confidentiality."

### EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

By using Efileshare, we're hoping to eliminate problems associated with lost orders and referrals, fax transmissions and follow-up phone calls to track order status and test results. "It provides a paper trail, confirms receipt of orders and ensures follow-through," says George Garcia, director of patient services and customer relations. "Hospital staff in our outpatient areas spend a lot of time tracking down patient information so that physician orders are properly carried out. Efileshare is going to help us streamline the process on our end and make the scheduling and registration processes much more convenient for our patients." The system also will allow hospital schedulers to simplify the registration process because patient information regarding insurance, allergies and medications will be more organized.

**Learn more!**

**To find out how Efileshare can benefit you, call (505) 426-3588.**

# Helping hearts heal

Advanced cardiac care, close to home

**A**lta Vista Regional Hospital's digital cardiac catheterization lab offers the latest in cardiac care, close to home. Thanks to our partnership with the New Mexico Heart Institute, we also have a full-time cardiologist, Niranjan Seshadri, M.D., on staff.

## ACCURATE DIAGNOSIS

The cardiac catheterization lab provides diagnostic and interventional services to adult patients. Cardiac catheterization, also known as cardiac angiography, uses a catheter to inject a dye into the coronary arteries, then takes X-ray "movies" of the coronary arteries. This allows the cardiologist to see if coronary arteries are diseased or narrowing. Angiography also allows physicians to examine blood vessels in other parts of the body. The cardiac catheterization lab can help diagnose coronary artery disease, defective heart valves and peripheral vascular disease.

## THE LATEST TREATMENTS

The lab is also equipped to perform a variety of interventional procedures, including peripheral atherectomy, peripheral stent implantation and peripheral angioplasty—also called percutaneous transluminal angioplasty.

During angioplasty, a catheter with a small inflatable balloon on the end is placed in the narrowed section of the artery. The balloon catheter is inflated, causing it to push outward against the narrowing and the surrounding wall of the artery. This process reduces the narrowing until it no longer interferes with blood flow. The balloon is then deflated and removed.

Many patients who have angioplasty also have stent implantation. A stent is a small, latticed metal scaffold



that's introduced into a blood vessel on a balloon catheter. The doctor maneuvers the catheter into the blocked artery and inflates the balloon. The stent expands against the vessel wall as the balloon is inflated. Once the balloon has been deflated and withdrawn, the stent stays in place permanently, holding the blood vessel open and improving blood flow.

During a peripheral atherectomy, a catheter with a small, mechanically driven cutter shaves the plaque from the arteries and stores it in a collection chamber. The plaque is removed from the artery when the device is withdrawn from the artery.

## Learn more!

**C**ardiac catheterization lab services require a doctor's order.  
For information, call (505) 426-3546.

## 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

**W**hen 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

**D**ifferent 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

**I**f 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.

#### 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-



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.

## MEET OUR NEW DOCTORS

The experienced, dedicated physicians of Alta Vista Regional Hospital can help your family stay healthy. We'd like to introduce you to our two new doctors specializing in obstetrics, the care of women during pregnancy, and during and after childbirth, and gynecology, the study and care of the female reproductive system.



**JESSICA ROBERTS, D.O.**  
Obstetrics/Gynecology

**Rio Vista OB-GYN**  
105 Mills Ave., Suite 100  
Las Vegas  
(505) 425-3569

Dr. Roberts attended medical school at the Philadelphia College of

Osteopathic Medicine in Pennsylvania. She completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's medical school. She's board eligible in obstetrics and gynecology. "I look forward to providing comprehensive care for women," Dr. Roberts says. "I'm excited about practicing here in Las Vegas."

Dr. Roberts is currently accepting new patients. Call (505) 425-3569 for an appointment.



**ANTONIO SANCHEZ, M.D.**  
Obstetrics/Gynecology

**Women's Healthcare Institute**  
624 University Ave., Suite 300  
Las Vegas  
(505) 454-9155

Dr. Sanchez attended medical school at the University of El Salvador,

School of Medicine. He completed his residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Johns Hopkins, School of Medicine in Baltimore, Md. He's board certified in obstetrics and gynecology. "I'm excited to be part of the community of Las Vegas," Dr. Sanchez says. "I look forward to promoting and maintaining women's health."

Dr. Sanchez is currently accepting new patients. Call (505) 454-9155 for an appointment.

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# Health Connection

*Health Connection* is published as a community service of Alta Vista Regional Hospital. There is no fee to subscribe.

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