

# Health Connection



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THE MAGAZINE OF ALTA VISTA REGIONAL HOSPITAL

## ALTA VISTA REGIONAL HOSPITAL launches a new program just for women

To improve the emotional, physical and fiscal well-being of women and their loved ones, Alta Vista Regional Hospital (AVRH) is launching Healthy Woman, a free community resource that will provide monthly programs and interactive events.

"We're inviting women to join us for the Healthy Woman kick-off on Thursday, February 7, to be part of the fun from the start," says Diane Moore, a member of the Healthy Woman advisory council and local city councilwoman. "Our mission is to empower women of Las Vegas with the knowledge and confidence to make informed healthcare and well-being decisions for themselves and their loved ones."

### THE KICK-OFF DETAILS

Healthy Woman will kick off at the Night Owl, known to locals as the former Las Vegas Civic Center. Events include a free Women's Expo and Health Fair from 4 to 6 p.m., followed by music and a dinner featuring nationally noted motivational speaker, Suzanne Metzger, Ph.D., who will address women's health and life balance issues. Dr. Metzger has captivated audiences with her humorous, yet provocative speeches for more than 15 years. The dinner presentation is \$10 per person, but table sponsorships are available. More good news? The expo and health fair and Healthy Woman membership are free!

"Even if you're unable to attend the dinner, we encourage you to sign up for a free Healthy Woman membership," says Mathew Martinez, AVRH marketing director. "As a member, you'll get advance



Suzanne Metzger, Ph.D.



e-mails about upcoming free Healthy Woman events and you'll be eligible for special considerations from local partners."

After the kick-off is over, Healthy Woman will offer free monthly events, covering health, relationship, communication and life balance issues.

### ! RSVP and join today!

For more information about joining Healthy Woman and attending the Women's Expo and Health Fair, or to purchase tickets for the dinner presentation, visit [www.altavistaregionalhospital.com](http://www.altavistaregionalhospital.com) or call (505) 426-3930. RSVP by Friday, February 1.

# Minimally invasive surgery

## Less pain, faster recovery

**M**inimally invasive surgery (MIS) is the buzzword in healthcare right now. And with good reason.

With advancing technology and surgical techniques, patients now have the benefit of undergoing procedures that require just a few small incisions. In years past, those same procedures would have required large cuts and left equally large scars.

### HOW IT WORKS

MIS—sometimes referred to as laparoscopic surgery—mirrors the techniques of traditional surgery but decreases the patient's surgical trauma. Because surgeons using MIS lose some visibility with smaller incisions, they have to create a larger workspace. They do this by making a small cut in the skin, then gently expanding the body cavity with a gas (such as carbon dioxide). A small camera (laparoscope) is then inserted through the incision and into the newly expanded space to help surgeons see where to operate.

While MIS isn't suited for all types of surgery, it has been used for such procedures as appendectomies, hernia repair, gallbladder surgery, hysterectomies, brain tumors, herniated spinal discs, knee and hip replacements, sinus surgery and certain types of heart procedures.

### MINIMAL TRAUMA, MAXIMUM BENEFITS

The goal of MIS is to treat patients with the least amount of trauma. In addition to minimized scarring, this type of surgery also:

- **Minimizes bleeding.** Decreased blood loss means a decreased chance of blood transfusion.



- **Lessens pain.** Small incisions reduce trauma to the skin and underlying muscles, meaning less postoperative pain.
- **Reduces infections.** Unlike a traditional operation, where the body is wide open, tissue isn't exposed to the air for extended periods during MIS.
- **Shortens hospital stays.** Reducing bleeding, pain and the chance for infection means you'll get to walk out of the hospital sooner.
- **Hastens recovery.** MIS can dramatically reduce recuperation time—in some cases, by half.

## Other minimally invasive procedures

**E**ndoscopic surgery is similar to laparoscopic surgery because it also requires a small camera. However, the equipment (endoscope) passes through an existing opening such as the mouth, anus or urethra.

Robotic laparoscopic surgery uses techniques identical to laparoscopic surgery but allows surgeons to use robotic arms to perform the procedure.

Ablation targets and destroys diseases, such as kidney and prostate cancer, with high-frequency energy, leaving normal tissue nearby intact. It's also been used to correct benign heart arrhythmias.

## WAITING TO INHALE

# Breathing problems you shouldn't ignore

**T**ake a deep breath." The command sounds easy, but for some people it's not so simple.

Being unable to breathe deeply or feeling short of breath may be a sign of a serious condition.

If you have any of the following symptoms, get them checked out by a physician:

- inability to take a deep breath
- shortness of breath without exertion
- shortness of breath after mild exertion, such as climbing a short flight of stairs
- wheezing
- tightness in the chest
- pain or discomfort when inhaling and exhaling
- a chronic cough or clearing of the throat
- difficulty breathing when you lie down
- a lack of energy
- coughing up blood or mucus

Difficulty breathing shouldn't be taken lightly. Lung disease is the number three killer in the United States.

It takes on many forms, including:

- Asthma, a chronic disease in which the passages that

carry air in and out of your lungs become sore and swollen. Asthma is characterized by wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble speaking.

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. In COPD, your airways and air sacs lose their shape and become floppy, like a stretched-out rubber band. Coughing up mucus is often a first sign of this disease. COPD is typically caused by cigarette smoking.
- Pneumonia, an inflammation of the lungs, usually caused by an infection. It's normally accompanied by shortness of breath and a cough or a fever.
- Lung cancer, which can take years to develop. If it's diagnosed early, before it spreads, the survival rate is almost 50 percent.

Breathing difficulties can also be a sign of heart disease or a heart disorder, such as congestive heart failure, heart arrhythmia or pulmonary hypertension.

In these or any other case of breathing distress, your physician can help you find the source of the problem with a thorough physical exam.



If you're having trouble catching your breath, it's time to see your doctor.

### When cough drops don't do the trick

**A** chronic cough—one that lasts more than three weeks—may be your body's way of telling you a problem exists. Your cough could be the result of:

- allergies, particularly postnasal drip, which often triggers coughing
- asthma
- heartburn, where acid from your stomach backs up into your throat
- medicines, including beta-blockers for high blood pressure, migraines and glaucoma and ACE inhibitors

# Boost your bone health

**W**hen it comes to your health, don't underestimate the power of prevention. That's especially true about osteoporosis, a bone thinning and weakening condition. When this occurs, a patient will have higher bone-fracture risk. Because osteoporosis is a "silent disease," you may not notice bone fragility symptoms until a fracture occurs.

## KNOW YOUR RISKS

Women who are past menopause are at higher risk for osteoporosis. Other risk factors include:

- having a family history of osteoporosis

- being Caucasian or Asian
- having a thin or small frame
- excessive alcohol or cigarette use
- having a bone broken after menopause
- taking certain medications like steroids or thyroid hormone replacement therapy

Talk to your primary care physician about how screenings can help determine your fracture risk.

## TAKE CHARGE

Women should start thinking about building strong bones in their teens and 20s, but even those who are postmenopausal can safeguard their skeletal systems. No matter what your age:

- **Be active.** Exercise makes bones stronger and denser. When performed at least 30 minutes three times a week, exercises such as walking, jogging, stair climbing and weight training can improve bone density.
- **Get your nutrients.** A calcium-rich diet is essential for healthy bones. Good sources of calcium include low-fat dairy products; fortified breads, cereals and orange juice; collard greens; and salmon with bones. Sources of vitamin D, which help the body use and absorb calcium, include fortified milk, liver, eggs and fish.
- **Don't smoke.** Smoking interferes with your body's ability to absorb calcium and speeds bone loss.

If you're a woman younger than 65 and past menopause, the National Osteoporosis Foundation recommends a bone density scan if you have either risk factors or a fracture. A bone density test is a safe, painless procedure to measure bone mass at the hip, spine and wrist. Taking this test can help you stay on top of your bone health and help you take steps to prevent broken bones.

## ! Get tested!

**C**ontact your primary care physician to learn more about osteoporosis and the benefits of a bone density scan at AVRH. For more information about our diagnostic imaging capabilities, call (505) 426-3546.



# Get 'hip' to replacement surgery

## AVRH offers new less-invasive procedure

**P**eople suffering with arthritis, hip pain, stiffness and limited hip movement now have a minimally invasive hip replacement option. Alta Vista Orthopaedic Specialists and Alta Vista Regional Hospital (AVRH) are proud to offer a new approach to hip replacement surgery, which results in quicker recovery and less pain.

Anterior hip replacement surgery allows the surgeon to reach the hip joint from the front as opposed to the lateral (side) or the posterior (back). This way, the most important muscles for hip function, the gluteal muscles that attach to the pelvis and femur, are left undisturbed and, therefore, heal quicker.

### MORE FLEXIBILITY

Conventional replacement typically requires strict precautions. Most patients must reduce hip motion for six to eight weeks after surgery. They must limit hip flexing, which complicates normal activities like sitting in a chair, putting on shoes or getting into a car. Simply climbing stairs may also be more difficult during recovery.

Anterior hip replacement allows patients to immediately bend their hip and bear full weight when comfortable, resulting in more rapid return to normal function. After surgery, patients are instructed to use their hip normally, without cumbersome restrictions.

### ADVANCED EQUIPMENT

Paul Conescu, M.D., at Alta Vista Orthopaedic Specialists, is your qualified orthopaedic surgeon trained in anterior hip replacement. Dr. Conescu uses a technologically advanced surgical table, which allows precise positioning to minimize trauma under the skin. He can access the hip



### ANTERIOR VS. CONVENTIONAL HIP REPLACEMENT

| Potential advantages                | Anterior approach    | Conventional surgery  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Average hospital stay               | two to four days     | three to 10 days      |
| Smaller incision                    | four to five inches  | 10 to 12 inches       |
| Less muscle trauma                  | no muscle detachment | muscles cut from bone |
| Faster recovery                     | two to eight weeks   | two to four months    |
| Less pain and blood loss            |                      |                       |
| Reduced tissue healing required     |                      |                       |
| Reduced risk of dislocation         |                      |                       |
| More accurate leg length control    |                      |                       |
| Quicker return to normal activities |                      |                       |

from the front, minimizing tissue damage. The table also offers X-ray imaging during surgery to more accurately control implant placement and leg lengths.

### ! Learn more!

If you need hip replacement surgery, find out more about anterior hip replacement. Call Alta Vista Orthopaedic Specialists today at (505) 426-8010.

## HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **sleep disorders**?

Take this quiz to find out.

1

**Lack of sleep may put you at a higher risk for:**

- a. type 2 diabetes
- b. low blood pressure
- c. asthma
- d. gastric ulcers

2

**Which of the following changes in your sleep routine may be a result of an underlying heart problem?**

- a. waking up during the night to urinate
- b. waking up during the night due to shortness of breath
- c. not being able to fall asleep
- d. both a and b

3

**Restoring your body with sleep has been shown to:**

- a. improve skin tone
- b. improve red blood-cell count
- c. reduce eye strain
- d. improve reaction time and attention span

4

**Women diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea often experience these symptoms:**

- a. snoring loudly with periods of gasping or snorting
- b. waking up with a sore throat
- c. waking up with a headache
- d. all of the above

5

**The most common treatment for sleep apnea is:**

- a. antihistamine medication
- b. surgery
- c. a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) mask worn at night
- d. analgesic medication

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



## WOMEN: Is a heart attack in your future?

**A** heart attack may seem to come out of the blue. Yet your personal risk factors and lifestyle habits may hold clues to your heart's health and what your odds are of suffering from a heart attack.

### LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

High blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg and above) and high blood cholesterol (240 mg/dL and above) are significant clues that you may be developing heart blockages in the form of plaque. Being postmenopausal and having diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis can also increase heart attack risk.

Talk with your healthcare provider about what risk factors are significant for you. He or she can help you control your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and may also recommend testing for metabolic syndrome. Recent research shows this condition may be useful for detecting signs of heart disease in women who might appear healthy. The signs of metabolic syndrome include a waist size greater than 35 inches, higher-than-normal levels of triglycerides and glucose, and insufficient levels of HDL, or good cholesterol.

Also, be aware of what a heart attack might feel like for a woman, as some symptoms can differ from those of men. Chest pain or pressure; nausea; vomiting; indigestion; cold sweat; shortness of breath; light-headedness; fatigue; or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach are all possible signs.

### GO HEART SMART

- Aim for a normal weight.
- Exercise for 30 minutes every day.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Avoid foods high in saturated or trans fat and curb refined carbohydrates—cookies, white bread, sweet drinks—sometimes referred to as “high-glycemic-index” foods.



## MEET OUR NEW PHYSICIAN

Alta Vista Regional Hospital (AVRH) is pleased to announce the newest member of the medical staff, gastroenterologist Joseph Brown, M.D.



**JOSEPH BROWN, M.D.**  
Gastroenterology

**Alta Vista Surgical Specialists**  
108 Legion Drive, Suite A  
Office hours: Monday to Friday,  
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
(505) 454-9499

**D**r. Brown has dedicated skills and unique experiences in the management of gastrointestinal tract and liver diseases. To become proficient in the treatment and management of these conditions, he trained in both internal medicine and digestive tract complications. Upon completing training, he had additional specialized education.

Board certified by the American Board of Gastroenterology and the American Board of Internal Medicine, Dr. Brown completed his medical degree at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas, Texas. He finished his residency at the University of Utah Affiliated Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah, and his gastroenterology fellowship at the University of Utah Medical Center.

Dr. Brown joins Salman S. Malik, M.D., at Alta Vista Surgical Specialists.

### ABOUT GASTROENTEROLOGY

Gastroenterology is the study of the normal functioning and diseases of the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon, rectum, pancreas, gallbladder, bile ducts and liver. It includes conditions such as colon polyps and cancer, hepatitis, gastroesophageal reflux (heartburn), peptic ulcer disease, colitis, gallbladder and biliary tract disease, nutritional problems, irritable bowel syndrome and pancreatitis.

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WINTER 2008

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