

HEALTHY LIVING

C A R I N G F O R Y O U A N D Y O U R F A M I L Y ● S P R I N G 2 0 0 6

LifeLink



GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE.

Currently, more than 90,000 Americans are awaiting a second chance at life through organ transplantation. Of these, more than 1,600 live in Georgia.

While many lives are saved or improved as a result of organ and tissue donation, the need for transplantable organs far outpaces the supply. Every day, 13 people are added to the waiting lists and 17 Americans die while waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant. LifeLink of Georgia is a nonprofit community service organization that educates the public and facilitates the donation process.

"The No. 1 barrier to donation is misinformation," says Gloria Dossett, LifeLink public relations coordinator. "There are so many myths floating around out there about organ donation. For instance, contrary to myth, no cost for the donation passes to the donor family. Also, donation does not disfigure the body or delay funeral planning. And, of course, physicians do work just as hard to save the lives of their patients who are donors."

Georgians should know that even if "organ donor" is noted on their driver's license, they must tell family members about their intentions. Regardless of written intentions, the family's consent is part of the donation process.

For more information about organ and tissue donation, call **1-800-544-6667** or visit www.lifelinkfound.org.

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

DON'T LET IT CREEP UP ON YOU

USUALLY WHEN YOU'RE SICK, YOUR BODY SENDS YOU SIGNALS—YOU'RE WEAK OR NAUSEATED OR IN PAIN. SOMEHOW YOU JUST KNOW SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. ♦ BUT

there's at least one potentially serious condition that usually has no symptoms at all: high blood pressure.

High blood pressure simply means that blood is moving through your arteries at an elevated pressure. As a result, the walls of your arteries become stiff and inflexible, and your heart works too hard.

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, increases your risks for heart disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.

SPOTTING A PROBLEM

The best way to know whether your blood pressure is high is to have it tested by a medical professional.

The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends a blood pressure check at least once every two years. Your doctor may suggest more frequent checks if you've had high blood pressure in the past or if the condition runs in your family.

KNOW THE NUMBERS

When you get your blood pressure checked, you'll be presented with two numbers. The first number, called systolic pressure, is measured when the heart beats. The second number, the diastolic pressure, is measured when the heart rests. Blood pres-

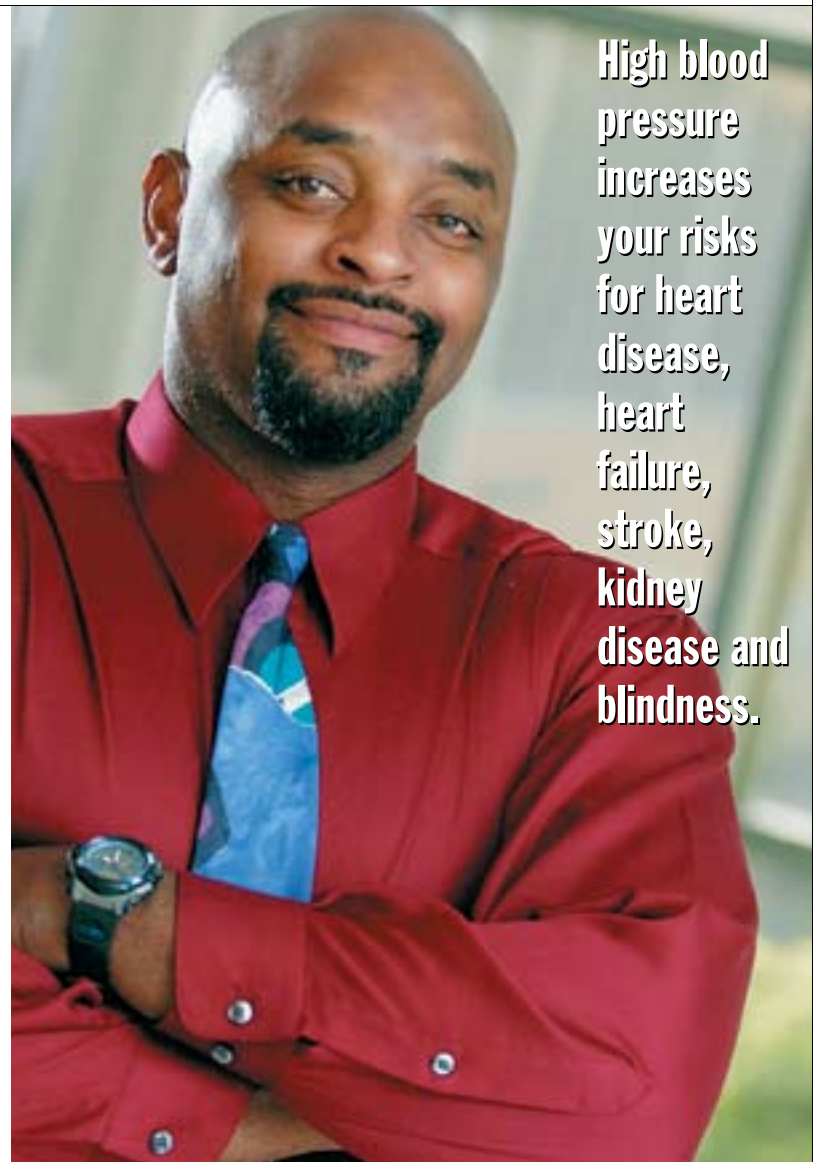
sure is measured in millimeters of mercury, or mm Hg.

The American Heart Association places blood pressure levels in these categories:

- **Normal:** Less than 120 mm Hg systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic.
 - **Prehypertension:** 120–139 systolic or 80–89 diastolic.
 - **High, Stage 1:** 140–159 systolic or 90–99 diastolic.
 - **High, Stage 2:** 160 or higher systolic, or 100 or higher diastolic.
- If you have high blood pressure, you may be able to get it under control simply by making changes in your lifestyle, such as:
- Not smoking.
 - Losing weight if you're overweight.
 - Exercising regularly.
 - Eating a healthy low-fat diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables.
 - Limiting your intake of sodium and caffeine.
 - Avoiding alcohol.
 - Learning to relax.

Your doctor can give you advice about achieving each of these changes if you have trouble accomplishing them on your own.

If lifestyle adjustments alone don't bring your blood pressure down, medication may also be needed.



High blood pressure increases your risks for heart disease, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease and blindness.

Stick with your MEDICATION

If your doctor prescribes medication to help you control high blood pressure, do yourself a favor—take it!

It's true that you may feel fine without it. But don't be fooled. Your blood pressure is lowered only when you're taking your medicine.

Eventually, you might be able to reduce the dosage of your prescription, but most people with high blood pressure need to stay on some amount of medication to keep their pressure at a healthy level, according to the American Heart Association.

Like all drugs, blood pressure medication can sometimes have side effects. If they become bothersome, your doctor may be able to prescribe a different medication. With a little time and patience, you and your doctor can find the treatment that's best for you.

High blood pressure can be controlled—but only if you follow your doctor's advice and take your medication.



Stay up-to-date with EMH! To receive our monthly e-newsletter, e-mail nseymour@emhcare.net.





Elbert Memorial Hospital CEO Mark LeNeave (right) and Foundation Chair Bill Lester (left) present four new defibrillators to (from left) Martha Noble, principal of Elbert County Middle School; Rick Higginbotham, interim principal of Elbert County Comprehensive High School; and Chuck Almond, Elbert County Emergency Services director.

Foundation makes lifesaving gifts

Schools, emergency teams get devices for restarting hearts

In the spirit of giving back to the community, The Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation recently donated more than \$7,000 to purchase four automatic external defibrillators (AEDs).

According to Chuck Almond, Elbert County Emergency Services director, "Sudden cardiac arrest is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. Time is of the essence, and the AEDs are the first line of care in treatment of sudden cardiac arrest."

The Foundation board saw a great need to have these lifesaving devices immediately accessible in the community. Board members wanted to provide AEDs to areas in Elbert County that did not already have them.

The recipients The new AEDs will be available for use in the:

- Centerville First Responders District.

- Deep Creek First Responders District.
- Elbert County Comprehensive High School.
- Elbert County Middle School.

The faculty and students at both schools will receive AED and CPR training on this equipment from Emergency Management Services personnel.

EMH says "thank you" The Foundation board unanimously approved the purchase of the AEDs at its November meeting. "The Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation made these lifesaving gifts in the 'Christmas Spirit of Thanksgiving' as a way of recognizing and honoring the many gifts that have been made to the Foundation," says Bill Lester, Foundation chair. "This is our way of saying 'thank you' to our many volunteers and supporters of the Elbert Memorial Hospital and Foundation."

Founders' Society Reception: April 18

Save the date of Tuesday, April 18, for the **2006 Founders' Society Reception** at the home of Sydonna L. Rutherford.

The **Founders' Society** of The Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation was created to honor and memorialize individuals whose vision and commitment helped provide quality health care at EMH.

Since the Planned Gifts Committee was formed in the

fall of 2003, the Foundation has established the **Founders' Endowment** and nine named endowments. To date, there are 118 **Founders' Society** members, and more than \$557,949.17 in donations, land and pledges has been received.

If you're interested in becoming a member of the **Founders' Society**, please fill out the form below.

I/We have included Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation in my/our **will**. A letter to the Foundation or a copy of the codicil naming EMHF is requested for recognition as a **Founders' Society** member (\$1,000 minimum).

I/We wish to create my/our own or a family **endowment** with a gift of \$_____. (A gift of \$10,000 or more may be pledged over five years. If you plan to use stock to fund your endowment, please discuss this with the Foundation staff before taking such action.)

I/We wish to invest in a **charitable gift annuity** with a gift of \$_____. (Foundation staff will prepare a proposal defining the interest you will receive and the amount of your tax deduction. If you plan to use appreciated stock to fund your charitable gift annuity, please discuss this with the Foundation staff before taking any action.)

I/We wish to contribute \$1,000 or more to the **Founders' Endowment**. Enclosed with this contribution/pledge form is my/our gift of \$1,000. Or I/we wish to pay \$_____ now and the balance of \$_____ in 2007.

(print your name and telephone number) _____

(sign and date) _____

Complete, clip and mail to: Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation, 4 Medical Drive, Elberton, GA 30635



2005 FUNDRAISING

Annual Campaign tops \$67,000

The Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation is most grateful for the many donors who contributed to this year's Annual Campaign. According to Bill Lester, Foundation chair, "This was our greatest Annual Campaign to date. A total of \$60,000 in designated contributions was received and \$7,115 in unrestricted funds. We would like to thank all the businesses and individuals who helped make our Annual Campaign the best ever."

2005 campaign contributors

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A LETTER OF THANKS

'THEN A MIRACLE... YOU SAVED MY LIFE'

The following is an open letter to Elbert Memorial Hospital, J. Howard Barton, M.D., registered nurse Glenda Webb, Emergency Room staff and emergency medical technicians:

"Thank you" are two very inadequate words for what all of you did for me on Tuesday, Nov. 1, when I had a stroke. I was treated with care and concern and was told what to expect even before arriving at Elbert Memorial Hospital.

I was told about a new procedure that had been activated in connection with the Medical College of Georgia [MCG] in Augusta to help save the lives of stroke and heart attack victims.

I was definitely one of those victims. I had no use of my right leg, very little control of my right arm, droopy facial muscles on my right side and slurred speech.

Then a miracle happened. A computer hook-up between MCG and Dr. Hess in Augusta and Elbert Memorial Hospital in Elberton guided Dr. Barton and the Emergency Room staff in giving me a drug called "clot buster." The results were almost immediate; I could move my paralyzed limbs.

Thank you, Elbert Memorial, my small-town hospital, for having big-town ideas and making them a reality. You saved my life, and I am forever grateful.

God bless you,
Mary Jane Stansell



Mary Jane Stansell (center), J. Howard Barton, M.D., and Angela Pierce, R.N., Emergency Services and Intensive Care Unit director, are pictured in the Emergency Room with the REACH Program computer. It provides immediate intervention to stroke patients at Elbert Memorial Hospital, in partnership with the Medical College of Georgia.

Better stroke care is within your REACH

Elbert Memorial Hospital (EMH) is now partnering with the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) Department of Neurology to provide immediate intervention to stroke patients in our community. A stroke program called REACH (remote evaluation for acute ischemic stroke) makes an MCG stroke team instantly available to examine patients at EMH around the clock. This is possible through a remote Internet connection. EMH has neurologists on the medical staff available to work with the REACH stroke team.

With REACH, EMH health care providers are equipped with a video camera and wireless computer. They can communicate directly with the MCG team 24 hours a day. This means that they can determine whether a patient should receive tissue plasminogen activator, a drug that can minimize brain damage.

Time is a critical factor in treating stroke, but valuable time can be lost because of transportation problems, according to David Hess, M.D., chairman of the MCG Department of Neurology. He says that treatment is most beneficial within two hours of symptom onset.

Having this remote evaluation provides specialty consultation in a timely manner while the patient is being treated in ER. The benefit of this fast treatment is that it can potentially reverse or limit the neurological damage strokes can cause.

Learn the SYMPTOMS of stroke now

A brain is a terrible thing to waste. But that's what you might be doing if you ignore the symptoms of a stroke.

A stroke is like a heart attack, except the organ under attack is your brain. Within minutes of a stroke's onset, cells in the affected area of the brain begin dying from lack of oxygen.

Medications and other treatments can lessen the damage of a stroke, but they're most effective when started quickly. Learning the symptoms of a stroke now can save you precious time later.

Immediately call 911 if you or someone else has any of the following symptoms, even if the symptoms disappear within a few minutes:

- Sudden weakness or numbness in the face, arm or leg, especially on just one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, loss of memory or loss of consciousness.
- Trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Unexplained dizziness, drowsiness or lack of coordination.
- Sudden nausea or vomiting, especially with any of the above symptoms.

Sources: American Stroke Association and Johns Hopkins University

HOW TO LOWER YOUR RISK FOR A STROKE

A stroke happens suddenly and often without warning. One minute you're fine. The next minute you're not.

Perhaps it's that swift onset that makes some people think that you can't prevent a stroke. Of course, there's nothing you can do that guarantees you will never have a stroke. But there are a number of steps you can take to reduce your risks for one.

Control blood pressure. High blood pressure is thought to play a role in more than two-thirds of all strokes. If you

have high blood pressure, talk to your doctor about ways you can lower it.

Don't smoke. "The single biggest thing you can do to improve your health is to quit smoking," says Lawrence Brass, M.D., spokesman for the American Heart Association. It's an especially important step if you've been told that you have a risk factor for stroke, such as narrowing in the carotid arteries. As an added bonus, notes Dr. Brass, quitting smoking reduces your risk for many other serious diseases too.

Control diabetes. Diabetes damages blood vessels, including those in the brain. Controlling your blood sugar level can help you avoid complications that raise the risk of stroke.

Lose weight, or maintain a healthy weight. Obesity significantly increases your risk of stroke.

Be physically active. Regular physical activity can lower your risk of stroke, as well as help you control high blood pressure and your weight.

Ask your doctor for specific advice on how you can lower your chances of having a stroke.



Make this spring your healthiest yet
with our **free fitness booklet.**

E-mail nseymour@emhcare.net

or call **(706) 213-2558.**



Midlife MAKEOVER

NEARING MIDDLE AGE? THERE'S STILL TIME TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

YOU KNOW YOU'RE APPROACHING MIDLIFE WHEN YOU: ♦ LISTEN TO SONGS ON YOUR MP3 PLAYER THAT YOU FIRST HEARD ON EIGHT-TRACK TAPES. ♦ GO TO YOUR HIGH SCHOOL REUNION AND WONDER WHO

all the old people are. ♦ Miss your hair.

And maybe—for the first time ever—you start worrying about your health.

Many of us midlifers wake up to find ourselves out of shape, a little (or a lot) overweight, stressed out and eating less-than-ideal diets. We figure we should change, but we fear that maybe it's too late to make a difference.

Guess what? It's not.

Studies show that when we adopt good health habits, even in midlife or later, we reap plenty of benefits.

HOW TO BEGIN Concerns about health are a normal, even inevitable, part of growing older, says Timothy Komoto, M.D., a spokesman for the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

At some point, mortality sinks in and you realize taking care of yourself really is important.

"Maybe you have a friend or family member who gets ill, and you start wondering if you're at risk," Dr. Komoto says. "Or you have children or grandchildren, and you want to stay healthy for them."

No matter what the reasons, deciding to become more health-conscious is a good thing.

To get a handle on your health, there's only one place to start: your doctor's office. If you don't have a doctor or haven't seen one in a

long time, you need to get busy.

"You need a medical home," says Donna Sweet, M.D., board of regents chairwoman for the American College of Physicians. "You need a physician, someone who understands the importance of health maintenance and someone who can follow you over time."

This doctor becomes your partner in good health, adds Dr. Komoto. He or she will ensure that you get the checkups and health screenings you need, and can advise you on maintaining and improving your health.

GET SCREENED Basic health screenings are a big part of maintaining your health, particularly as you get older. Screenings can detect problems early, when it's often easiest to do something about them. You may need tests for:

High blood pressure. Pressure that's too high contributes to heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

High blood pressure is most common after age 45, but it usually can be controlled with exercise and a healthful diet. A doctor can also prescribe blood pressure medicines, if needed. Optimal blood pressure is less than 120 mm Hg systolic and less than 80 mm Hg diastolic, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Cholesterol. High levels of bad cholesterol (there's a good type too) put you at



risk for heart disease. After you reach age 20, your levels should be checked at least once every five years. Men older than 45 and women older than 55 should have levels tested more often, advises the American Medical Association.

High cholesterol usually can be controlled with exercise and diet, but medicine also may be needed.

Colorectal cancer. Both men and women should be screened starting at age 50, advises the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). There are different types of tests available. Talk to your doctor about which ones are most appropriate for you.

Breast cancer. Women should have mammograms every one or two years starting at age 40, according to the AAFP. They should also have their breasts examined by a medical professional.

Cervical cancer. Unless the uterus has been completely removed, women should continue having Pap tests at least once every three years.

Prostate cancer. Men 50 and older should ask a physician about the pros and cons of screening.

Diabetes. Type 2 diabetes affects many people when they reach middle age. The disease boosts the risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and blindness. Your doctor may advise screening if you have risk factors such as a family history of the disease or if you're overweight.

CHANGING HABITS According to the CDC, nearly 40 percent of deaths in the United States are the result of poor health behaviors, such as smoking, physical inactivity and poor diet.

But no matter what your age, you can protect and improve your health by:

- Staying active. The couch potato in you won't want to hear this, but exercising regularly is good for seemingly everything.

It protects you from heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. It keeps your bones and muscles strong and joints limber. It helps you manage your weight, reduce stress and sleep better. It also contributes to a general sense of well-being.

Sorry! But if you want to stay—and feel—healthy, exercising regularly is a must.

Strive for 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week. Even moderate physical activities—such as brisk walking, raking leaves or cleaning house—count toward your daily total.

You also might consider returning to an activity you haven't done in a while, such as tennis or another sport.

Just be sure to choose activities you enjoy, advises Dr. Komoto. "People aren't going to stick with something they don't like," he says.

- Cutting out tobacco. "If you smoke, quitting will give you the most bang for your

buck in terms of health improvement and reducing risks," Dr. Komoto says.

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States, reports the CDC.

Quitting automatically reduces your risk for heart disease and cancer. To help you quit, your doctor can prescribe medicines and refer you to stop-smoking programs.

If you have a hard time quitting, don't stop trying. According to the AHRQ, most people make several attempts before they stop smoking for good.

- Managing your weight. Being overweight boosts your risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers. Too much weight also puts stress on your bones and joints that can contribute to arthritis.

Exercising regularly and eating healthfully, however, can help you take off those extra pounds.

Need further incentive to trim that belly? Then consider this: If you're overweight, losing just 10 to 20 pounds reduces your risk for type 2 diabetes, improves cholesterol levels and lowers blood pressure.

- Eating well. Choosing the right foods, in the right amounts, helps protect you from heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, according to the AHRQ.

For a more healthful diet, cut back on high-fat dairy products, high-fat meats and fatty oils such as palm and coconut

oils. Strive to eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily. And don't super-size portions.

Don't worry about changing your eating habits overnight. Try to make improvements a little at a time.

"From the standpoint of eating, there are some simple, small steps you can take to improve nutrition and diet, whether it's cutting out fast food at lunch or not having a snack at bedtime," Dr. Komoto says.

- Taming stress. You can't avoid getting stressed out; real life will see to that. But you can take steps to manage stress.

Some tips: Break big projects into small chunks so that they're less intimidating. Make time for hobbies and relaxation. Exercise regularly, and try to get plenty of sleep.

Too much stress can bring on headaches, sleep disorders, depression and other health problems.

DON'T BE SCARED! The above may seem like the biggest, most impossible to-do list you've ever seen. But don't fret: You needn't change your entire life overnight.

"Making changes like this takes time," says Dr. Sweet. "You can't do everything at once. That's a recipe for disaster. This isn't a short-term fix; it's a long-term adventure."

So go for it. By making changes slowly but steadily, you can make this next chapter of your life a healthy one.

SIGN UP for a class at the Wellness Center!

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in stepping it up and trying a new exercise program, we have the class for you. Elbert Memorial Hospital's Wellness Center offers several different classes for you to enjoy with your friends. See the schedule below for class times and instructors. Go online to access our monthly group fitness schedule and other Elbert Memorial Hospital news at www.emhcare.net.

POWER DOWN

This low-impact combo class uses the step, weights, bands and resist-a-balls to improve cardiovascular fitness and muscular strength. It is a great beginner class but is challenging even for those who have been exercising for years. All fitness levels can benefit from Power Down.

POWER PUMP

Want to define your body, sculpt your muscles and build the body you've always wanted? Join Power Pump, a power-packed weightlifting class designed to benefit men and women, young and old, fit and unfit. The upper body, lower body and core muscle group will be challenged in this class.

POWER FLOW

Yoga is an effective form of exercise that brings peace to the mind and tone to the body. It improves muscular strength, flexibility, balance and coordination, as well as increases mental development and self-sufficiency. Anybody, no matter his or her age, can benefit from yoga. Re-educate your body—start practicing yoga today!

POWER COMBO

This is the ultimate cardio-pumping, muscle-defining workout. It focuses on interval training using steps, body balls, bands and weights. This workout provides a range of benefits, including muscle toning, calorie burning and total body muscle definition. Get lean, have fun and feel great!

SHOTOKAN KARATE

This traditional Japanese karate benefits both your mind and your body. It improves self-discipline, decreases stress, and increases muscular strength and tone. It also improves self-defense skills, balance and coordination. Shotokan Karate is a form of fitness that will benefit you for a lifetime.

GET THE LATEST NEWS ABOUT EMH IN AN E-NEWSLETTER EVERY MONTH! TO SIGN UP, E-MAIL nseymour@emhcare.net

Wellness Center group fitness schedule					
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5:30 a.m. Power Combo (Susan)		5:30 a.m. Power Combo (Susan)		5:30 a.m. Power Combo (Susan)	
8:30 a.m. Power Down (Lindsay)	8:30 a.m. Power Flow (Lindsay)	8:30 a.m. Power Down (Kim)	8:30 a.m. Power Flow (Lindsay)	8:30 a.m. Power Down (Kim)	9 a.m. Instructor's Choice (Martha)
Noon Power Pump—upper body and abs (Lindsay)	Noon Power Pump—lower body and obliques (Lindsay)	Noon Power Pump—upper body and back (Lindsay)	Noon Power Pump—lower body and abs (Lindsay)		
			4:30 p.m. Power Flow (Susan)	4 p.m. Shotokan Karate—ages 4 to 7 (Sandro)	
5:30 p.m. Power Combo (Tracy)	5:30 p.m. Power Pump (Rhonda)		5:30 p.m. Power Pump (Tracy)	5 p.m. Shotokan Karate—ages 8+ (Sandro)	
	6:15 p.m. Power Combo (Martha)		6:15 p.m. Power Combo (Tracy)		
4 Medical Drive Elberton, GA 30635 (706) 283-6831			Hours: Monday through Thursday • 5:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Fridays • 5:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays • 8 to 11 a.m.		



Watch for these symptoms of ALZHEIMER'S

Could this be the first sign of Alzheimer's disease? That's a question many of us ask when an aging parent or spouse seems particularly forgetful.

What's worth remembering in moments like these is that all of us experience changes in memory as we grow older and that the symptoms of Alzheimer's are more severe than everyday forgetfulness. What follows is a list of true Alzheimer's warning signs. If you recognize any of them in a loved one, let a doctor know.

- **Notable memory loss, especially of recent or important events.**
- **Difficulty performing familiar tasks, such as making a sandwich.**
- **Problems with language.** Someone with Alzheimer's often forgets commonplace words and might say, "Hand me that thing I drink from," rather than, "Hand me that cup."
- **Disorientation.** Those with Alzheimer's may become so disoriented that they can't find their way home on their own street.
- **Unusually poor judgment.** For example, a person might wear several shirts on a hot day or store an iron in the freezer—actions that seem silly.
- **Mood swings.** The person has rapid mood swings for no obvious reason.

Source: Alzheimer's Association

SHOULD MOM OR DAD STILL BE DRIVING?

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED AND TAKE ACTION

Once it was your parents who worried about how well you drove. But now you may be the one with concerns—the one wrestling with this question: Is it still safe for mom or dad to drive?

Such a concern about aging drivers is legitimate, even though statistics show most older adults are safe drivers who typically don't speed or take unnecessary chances.

Still, reflexes slow and the risk of vision, hearing and other health problems all increase as we grow older. And so, perhaps not surprisingly, the oldest drivers among us—those 75 and older—are nearly as likely to be involved in collisions as young drivers, according to the AARP.

This vulnerability is why "each family must ask, 'Is my

older relative safe?'" says Maureen Mohyde, M.A., an authority on older drivers and director of corporate gerontology for The Hartford Financial Services Group.

You can answer that question by periodically observing your parent's driving. Watch for these signs of trouble:

- A change in driving ability. "It's not a red flag if your father rolls through a stop sign and he's done it for years. But it is concerning if he suddenly starts doing it," says Mohyde.
- Multiple signs. Everyone makes occasional mistakes while driving. What you're looking for are repeated indications of unsafe driving, such as incorrect signaling, failure to notice traffic signs, confusion at exits or near misses.

Be particularly wary if your parent tends to get lost in familiar places when driving. This may be a red flag of Alzheimer's disease, a progressive brain disorder that can seriously affect driving ability.

ACT NOW If you are troubled by your parent's driving, it's time for a frank discussion. The conversation may be a sensitive one, so you want to do everything you can to make it go as smoothly as possible. Here are some tips:

- Know your goal. Some older adults may stay safe merely by limiting their driving—for instance, by not driving at night or on busy highways. Others may need to give up driving completely.
- Pick the right messenger. Married drivers often like

to hear about driving concerns from their spouses, says Mohyde. Single adults often prefer to be approached by their children or their doctors. If your parent would be receptive to a doctor's feedback, call the doctor and ask for help.

- Find an opening. Car accidents, close calls and even a change in your parent's health are opportunities to voice concerns.

Get quick and easy info about Alzheimer's at www.emhcare.net. Go to "Fast Health" and search for your topic.

- Use the right appeals. Concern for others is a strong motivator to change risky behavior. "Tell your parent you know he or she would feel terrible if someone was hurt because of your parent's driving," suggests Mohyde.
- Be supportive. Reassure your parent that you'll help find alternative means of transportation—such as friends or relatives who can provide rides.
- Finally, be firm. If a high-risk driver refuses to stop driving, as a last resort you may need to disable the car—or even take it away.

For more information on older drivers, go to www.thehartford.com/talkwitholderdrivers.

ULTRASOUND: ITS MANY USES IN MEDICINE

Just a few generations ago, parents had to wait until birth for a first glimpse of their babies. But today, that first peek usually takes place during pregnancy. In fact, proud parents-to-be may show souvenir photos of their developing babies to family and friends.

Such early pictures are possible because of ultrasound scanning, a technology that uses high-frequency sound waves to produce images.

But ultrasound is used for far more than viewing a fetus. It can create images of any organ in the body, including the heart.

Because it poses no risk from radiation, ultrasound is increasingly replacing x-rays as a way to see inside the body and diagnose health problems. Ultrasound imaging can also capture movement—which is why parents can see their babies actually kicking inside the womb.

Ultrasound also has no known side effects or risks and is considered to be very safe.

Among its many uses, ultrasound can:

- Show a beating heart and its valves and chambers. This allows doctors to diagnose a variety of heart abnormalities and assess damage after a heart attack or other illness.
- Investigate blood vessels. For example, ultrasound can detect blood clots deep inside the legs and reveal whether arteries in the neck are so clogged by fatty deposits that a stroke may be likely.
- Find the source of pain, swelling or infection.
- Evaluate vision-robbing disorders in the eyes.
- Help doctors pinpoint an abnormal area of tissue to sample during biopsies of the breast and other organs.

WHAT TO EXPECT If you're having ultrasound imaging, typically a wandlike device called a transducer will be

moved over your body above the area to be examined.

As the transducer moves, constantly changing images will appear on a computer screen. These live images are generally recorded on videotape. But one or more frames may be "frozen" for a still image.

A radiologist or other doctor experienced in ultrasound will analyze the images and interpret what's been seen.

Most ultrasound examinations are fast and painless. But you may need to have an uncomfortably full bladder in certain situations. For example, if you're in the early stages of pregnancy, a full bladder will allow your baby and womb to be seen more clearly.

Typically the exam takes less than 30 minutes—a short investment of time to yield valuable medical information.

Sources: American College of Physicians; American Medical Association; Radiological Society of North America



TICK TIME

How to remove a tick

MOST PEOPLE'S REACTION to finding a tick embedded in their skin goes something like this: "GET IT OUT! GET IT OUT NOW!" That's completely understandable. Ticks can transmit diseases such as Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Lyme disease, and the sooner you remove them, the less likely you are to be infected.

But there are good reasons to remove a tick slowly and with care.

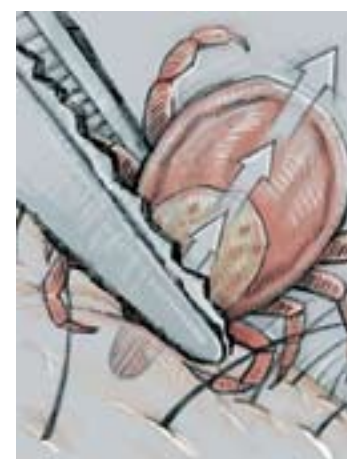
Ticks can carry a number of infectious organisms inside their bodies. These organisms can come spilling out if you squeeze too hard while pulling on a tick. And if you jerk or twist the tick too much, its body might break off while leaving parts of its mouth stuck under your skin.

So once your initial revulsion at finding a tick has subsided, grab some tweezers and:

- Grasp the tick as close to your skin's surface as possible.
- Pull it straight out with steady pressure.
- Apply antiseptic or rubbing alcohol to the bite.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

Drop the tick into a plastic bag, write the date on it and put it in your freezer. Your doctor might want to look at it if you become ill later.

Sources: American College of Physicians; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



WHEN BUGS DO MORE THAN bug YOU

SOME BUGS ARE JUST PLAIN ANNOYING. ♦ ANTS THAT FORM A CONGA LINE AROUND SPILLED SUGAR AT A PICNIC

or gnats that swarm about your face on balmy summer nights—these are tiny irritations, and relief is just a smack away.

But other insects can do more than bug you: They can literally make you sick.

In the U.S., many such bug-borne diseases are spread by mosquitoes and ticks. Luckily, the number of people who become seriously ill from such infections is relatively small, and sometimes antibiotics are the only treatment needed.

But that's not always the case. And since diagnosing these infections can depend upon recognizing symptoms, it's good to know the signs so that you can call your doctor when you see them.

MALADIES FROM MOSQUITOES

In this country, mosquito bites primarily cause itching. But they can sometimes transmit viruses that attack the nervous system, causing inflammation in the brain (encephalitis), the spinal cord (poliomyelitis) or the membranes of the brain or spinal cord (meningitis).

Since antibiotics are no help against these viruses—the virus simply has to run its course—only the symptoms can be treated, usually in a hospital.

West Nile virus. A fairly recent arrival in this country, West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes that have bitten infected birds.

Most people have no reaction to this in-

fection. However, about 20 percent of those infected develop West Nile fever, with its accompanying headache, fatigue and body aches.

Less than 1 percent of people infected develop the more severe meningitis or encephalitis, characterized by headache, high fever, stiff neck, coma and tremors.

Arboviral encephalitis. There are four major arthropod-borne viruses, or arboviruses, in the United States, all of which are spread by mosquitoes.

Again, most infections cause no symptoms in humans. Some who are infected might feel as if they have the flu.

Sudden fever or headache can signal a more serious infection.

TROUBLE WITH TICKS

The United States is host to 82 species of ticks that together can transmit nine major diseases, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians. Two common tick-borne infections are Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain spotted fever.

Lyme disease. Spread by the bite of an infected deer tick or western black-legged tick, Lyme disease has been reported in nearly every state. It can be difficult to diagnose and to treat, especially if not caught in its early phases.

Deer ticks are very tiny, so they're not easy to spot on the skin. You may not know that you've been bitten by an infected tick until you develop symptoms of Lyme disease. Those can include a red rash at the site of the bite, sometimes enlarging to a bull's-eye shape, as well as flulike symptoms of fever, headache, stiff neck, body aches and fatigue.

Without antibiotic treatment for Lyme disease, you're at risk of developing arthritis, meningitis and even heart problems.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Like Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever can also be treated with antibiotics. But its symptoms are more severe, usually requiring hospitalization, and it can be fatal.

Rocky Mountain spotted fever is spread primarily by American dog and Rocky Mountain wood ticks. Early signs of the disease include fever, nausea, vomiting, muscle pain and severe headache. In later stages it can cause abdominal pain, joint pain, diarrhea and a rash.

LEARN MORE If you would like more information on ticks, mosquitoes and the diseases they carry, go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site, www.cdc.gov.

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CANCER



MELANOMA: TAKE A LOOK

CHANGES IN YOUR SKIN MAY BE A SIGN OF THIS DEADLY CANCER

Are you taking your skin for granted? Maybe it's time to get up close and personal with your body's biggest organ.

Why? Because paying a little attention now can mean big dividends later, especially when it comes to preventing skin cancer.

About half of all cancers involve the skin, reports the American Cancer Society (ACS). Of these, melanoma is the most serious. Melanoma accounts for about 4 percent of all skin cancers but about 77 percent of all skin cancer deaths, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD.)

The ACS expects that nearly 60,000 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in the United States in 2005 and more than 7,000 people will die from it.

WHAT IS MELANOMA? Melanoma starts in the cells that give color to your skin. Unlike most other skin cancers, it can spread rapidly throughout the body. If it's caught early, however, it can be successfully treated with surgery about 95 percent of the time, says the AAD.

While anyone can get melanoma, it's more common with age. Likewise, melanoma can occur anywhere on the body. Men most often see it on their backs, chests or stomachs; for women, it's more likely to occur on the lower legs.

ARE YOU AT RISK? According to the American Academy of Family Physicians and others, your risk goes up if:

- You or anyone in your family has had cancerous moles or melanoma.
- You have many moles larger than a pencil eraser.
- You have spent a significant amount of

time in parts of the country that receive large amounts of ultraviolet radiation from the sun. For example, melanoma is more common in Texas than in Minnesota, where the sun isn't as strong.

- You had a bad sunburn that caused blisters when you were a child.
- You have fair skin that burns or freckles easily. Melanoma is less common in people with dark skin.
- You have more than 50 moles of any size.
- You use tanning booths or sunlamps.
- You have a weakened immune system, perhaps because of HIV infection or the use of certain medications.

WARNING SIGNS Talk to your doctor about any mole that bleeds, grows quickly or itches. A scaly growth or a sandpaper-rough spot on your skin should also be checked out. Melanomas are often:

- Asymmetrical—one half looks different from the other.
- Surrounded by uneven or blurry borders.
- Colored with mixed shades of tan, brown, black, red, blue or white.
- Larger than a pencil eraser.
- Raised above the skin with a rough surface.

If you notice that one of your moles has changed or if you see a new mole that looks different from the others, visit your doctor right away.

Guard against THE SUN'S harmful rays

Avoiding painful sunburns and reducing your chances of developing skin cancer are two excellent reasons to protect yourself from the sun while outdoors.

The American Cancer Society and other experts offer these tips:

- Wear a long-sleeved shirt and long pants.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face and ears.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or more. Apply it 30 minutes before going outside and reapply every two to three hours—especially after perspiring or swimming.
- Avoid the sun when it's strongest, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Stay in the shade whenever you can.

Childhood sunburns appear to be the most damaging to the skin. Never leave children younger than 6 months old in direct sunlight. Use hats, clothing and shade to protect them. Older children should use sunscreen whenever they might be exposed to the sun.

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