

living well

spring 2009

Information

+rmc

know how

free screenings help
detect heart disease

sleep well

it's more important
than you think

get focused

improve your vision
through cataract surgery

cover up

skin cancer is
summer's hot topic

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the Regional Medical Center





HeartAware™

online assessment increases awareness of heart disease risk.

Do you know someone who has suffered a heart attack or lives with heart disease? Chances are that you do.

Heart disease impacts our community every day. In fact, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's Bureau of Community Health and Chronic Disease Prevention attributed 239 deaths in Calhoun and Orangeburg counties to heart disease in 2006.

Even more telling, DHEC data shows that many people in both counties have multiple risk factors that put them at risk for developing heart disease. These include smoking, being overweight, having high cholesterol and living a sedentary lifestyle. And, that's not

even taking into account one of the biggest risk factors: having a family history of heart disease.

In other words, many people in our community are in danger and either ignore their risk or simply don't know about it.

This is why the Regional Medical Center now offers HeartAware. This online early detection program can help people identify their potential risk of developing heart disease, hopefully before there's irreversible or long-term damage, or a cardiac event.

"Finding heart disease early means we often can prevent heart attacks," explains board-certified cardiologist John Hutto, MD, one of five cardiologists on staff at the Regional Medical Center.

HeartAware's simple online risk assessment quiz can help people quickly identify their risk for developing heart disease, empowering them to take action now. By identifying those who may one day have a problem, Dr. Hutto hopes the program will help prevent heart disease and related deaths.

Dr. Hutto urges everyone to go online and take the test, whether they're experiencing symptoms or not. And the reason why may surprise you.

Only 50 percent of the people who arrive in the Emergency Department with a heart attack have had symptoms prior to the heart attack.

— Dr. John Hutto, Cardiologist



HeartAware: Online Risk Assessment

To take the test, visit www.trmchealth.org. The test only takes about five minutes. So, find out your level of risk for developing heart disease today.

"Part of the issue with cardiovascular disease is that it can be silent. Only 50 percent of the people who arrive in the Emergency Department with a heart attack have had symptoms prior to the heart attack," he says.

"It doesn't hurt to take this test. And it means people are more aware of their potential for heart disease. We're helping people recognize health problems before they cause major problems. And that's a major service to the community," Dr. Hutto says.

Become Heart-aware

The quiz itself only takes about five to seven minutes. If you appear to be at risk, the Regional Medical Center's community outreach department will schedule a series of free tests to measure your cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure and body mass index (BMI). Then, they'll give those results to you so you can discuss them with your physician.

With your doctor's help, you may be able to reduce your heart disease risk by making lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, eating right and getting more exercise. If your risk level requires more immediate intervention, your doctor may refer you to one of our area's board-certified cardiologists.

The Regional Medical Center's cardiology team, George E. Castro, MD; John O. Hutto, MD; Samuel V. King, MD; Mark J. Krzyston, MD; and James L. Wells, Jr., MD, specializes in the treatment of heart disease. They can help you manage complex cardiac conditions such as heart attacks and life-threatening abnormal heartbeat rhythms. But first, you have to know your risk.

Become more aware of your risk for developing heart disease. Visit www.trmchealth.org and take the HeartAware assessment today.

John O. Hutto, MD, is a board-certified cardiologist and member of the medical staff at the Regional Medical Center.



From L to R: Mark J. Krzyston, MD; George E. Castro, MD; Samuel V. King, MD; John O. Hutto, MD; and James L. Wells, Jr., MD

Hospital News Corner

You might not have heard of Press Ganey, but the results of Press Ganey surveys help shape continuous quality improvement at the Regional Medical Center. Press Ganey is a service more than 7,000 of the highest-quality healthcare facilities use to measure stakeholder perception and facility evaluation to drive improvements in delivery and patient care.

So far this year, seven hospital departments and three affiliated physician practices have successfully maintained rankings at or above the 96th percentile nationally. We'd like to recognize: Her Place, Santee Express Health Care, the Breast Center, Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation, the Brickle Street Lab, the Vascular Center and Santee HealthPlex, as well as Orangeburg Surgical Associates, Dr. Brunson's practice and Dr. O'Quinn's practice for their success.

Blood Assurance Program

Did you know one of S.C.'s few community-based blood donor programs has been operating at the Regional Medical Center since 1970? While most hospitals rely on other sources for blood, the Blood Assurance Program provides our community with its own American Association of Blood Banks-certified blood bank.

Donors can contribute blood every 56 days or about six times a year. Donations can be made in the name of family members or friends needing blood while at the Regional Medical Center. This also helps lower their healthcare costs. Donors can give at the Regional Medical Center's Blood Donor Center, off-site at the traveling blood mobile and at community blood drives. Give for your community today! Call 803-395-2419 for more information.

Celebrate

Better Sleep Month with Better Sleep



If you're like most people, you have a bout of sleeplessness every now and then. It usually passes and you catch up on good quality sleep in no time. But a big chunk of the population starts most days feeling unrefreshed and tired and there's a medical reason why.

According to George Augustine, MD, board-certified internal medicine and pulmonary medicine physician, and medical director of The Sleep Lab at the Regional Medical Center, obstructive sleep apnea is a very common health problem that's being diagnosed with greater frequency.

"Snoring has been associated with obstructive sleep apnea but the snoring is actually not the main

culprit. When you have pauses between snores where you actually quit breathing, that's the problem," he says.

Normally, the upper throat muscles keep the airway open and allow air



George Augustine, MD

flow to the lungs. If someone has a narrow throat, deep relaxing sleep can cause the passage to close. When air can't get

to the lungs, labored breathing occurs – not to mention that painful elbow in the side or well-placed kick from a weary spouse.

Apnea episodes occur when a sleeper's breathing actually stops for ten seconds or longer. The sudden

10 Sleep Disorder Signs

- 1 Abnormal daytime sleepiness
- 2 Falling asleep at inappropriate times
- 3 Awakening unrefreshed in the morning
- 4 Lethargy
- 5 Loud snoring
- 6 Memory difficulties
- 7 Morning headaches
- 8 Personality changes
- 9 Poor concentration
- 10 Restless sleep

Source: National Institutes of Health

attempt to breathe that follows an episode is a jump to a lighter stage of sleep. The back and forth often leads to restless, fragmented sleep and daytime drowsiness.

"Untreated apnea can lead to complications such as coronary disease, heart attack and stroke. And recently, there's been a connection made between diabetes, insulin resistance and sleep apnea. The surges in epinephrine during sleep apnea can lead to uncontrolled hypertension," says Dr. Augustine.

Dr. Augustine also points out that you spend about half of your life sleeping so a disruption of the many restorative features of sleep can wreak havoc on day-to-day activities as well as cause or aggravate serious health problems.

"We are finding that if people have heart failure and sleep apnea, the apnea can make their heart problem worse. You have to treat the sleep apnea along with the heart problem," he says.

If you're suffering from sleepless nights or unrefreshing sleep, note the problems you're having and make an appointment to talk to your physician.

While everyone enjoys a good night's sleep, your body is a little pickier. Its internal clock demands rest and if you don't supply it, there will be consequences.

George Augustine, MD, is a board-certified pulmonologist at Orangeburg Lung Associates and medical director of The Sleep Lab at the Regional Medical Center. For more information about The Sleep Lab visit www.trmchealth.org or call 803-395-2322.

A Matter of Trust

If you've visited the Regional Medical Center's information desk, you've probably seen Marjorie Pough. A former high school math teacher, Marjorie is a life-long member of the Orangeburg community and long-time, active hospital volunteer since 1996.

After teaching in the Edisto School District for 32 years and for another five years at Claflin University, Marjorie finds volunteer work a breeze compared to her former career. "When I leave the hospital," she laughs, "I don't have to grade papers or take anything home with me!"

But ask about her recent experience at the hospital and she's all business.

A decade ago, Marjorie had surgery at the Regional Medical Center to clear a blockage from her right carotid artery, one of the arteries that supplies blood to the brain. Then, last year, board-certified vascular surgeon Julius W. Babb, MD, of Orangeburg Surgical Associates, said what she knew would one day come. It was time for another surgery; this time to clear blockages in the carotid artery on the left side.

"When Dr. Babb said I needed surgery, I was a little hesitant but I trust Dr. Babb so it was a no-brainer. I think he's a fine surgeon and gentleman. If he tells me it's time to have it done, it's time to have it done," she says.

And her hospital of choice? Another no-brainer.

"As a volunteer at the Regional Medical Center, I've gotten to know the staff and nurses. I've seen the care they give patients, and I could not think of any place I'd rather go for surgery," she says.

Marjorie found the care to be just as excellent as she expected, and her surgery was so advanced, she spent just one night in the hospital.



Marjorie Pough

To Marjorie, the Regional Medical Center is "a place where you can go and know that you're going to get the best care." Here at the Regional Medical Center, we know that's true because of everything our doctors, nurses and staff do to make this a special place.

And, of course, we thank our lucky stars for special volunteers like Marjorie.

Read other stories like Marjorie's at www.myRMCstory.com.

Summer Skin Care

Ah, that summer sun-kissed skin. The look is so popular it's fueled an entire sub-category of cosmetics that helps us get a golden glow without the danger of overexposure to skin-punishing UV rays.

But what's the harm in too much sun? Turns out there's plenty, according to Chris Brunson, MD, hematologist/oncologist with the Mabry Center for Cancer Care at the Regional Medical Center.

"Whether it's sunburn or excessive exposure to the sun, UV exposure – mainly UVB – causes DNA

damage in skin cells. If the body can't repair the damage, then cancer develops," she says.

But that's not all. Cumulative exposure can cause basal and squamous cell carcinomas. And severe sunburns and sun exposure – particularly in those under the age of 18 – put one at risk of developing malignant melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer.

So now that you know the danger, how can you protect yourself and the ones you love? First, arm yourself with information. And that means brushing up on a few UV basics.

The sun emits two types of rays. The UVA rays are responsible for the aging effect. The dangerous UVB rays are responsible for sunburns. For the best defense, choose a sunscreen that protects you from both.

And if your skin is very dark, can you forgo sunscreen? No way, says Dr. Brunson.

"People with fair or freckled skin that burns easily and those with

blond or red hair are at greatest risk. Darker skinned individuals have more melanin, but melanin is not completely protective as African-Americans, Native Americans and Asians can and do develop skin cancer," she says.

And, whatever the season, Dr. Brunson recommends staying on top of any changes in freckles, moles and other marks on the skin.



Chris Brunson, MD "The stage at which a cancer is diagnosed correlates with survival. The lower the stage at diagnosis, the better the survival rate," she says.

There's a lot more at stake than simply having good-looking skin. So maybe it's time to start catching those rays, the safe way: from a bottle.

Chris Brunson, MD, is a board-certified hematologist/oncologist with the Mabry Center for Cancer Care and member of the medical staff at the Regional Medical Center.

ABCD's of Melanoma

Another defense Dr. Brunson suggests is to learn the signs of melanoma and do a monthly self-exam of your skin. Learn how at www.skin-cancer.org/Self-Examination. If you have a suspicious mole, contact your dermatologist.

- A** Asymmetry. One half of the mole doesn't match the other half. Melanoma tend to be irregular.
- B** Border irregularity. Non-dangerous moles have smooth edges unlike melanoma which tend to have irregular edges.
- C** Color. If the color of a mole is intensely black, possibly with a bluish tint, or uneven across the mole, it could be melanoma.
- D** Diameter. If the mole is greater than 6 mm (about the size of a pea), then there is a greater chance that it is malignant.



Cataract Surgery Clears the Clouds

The bad news about cataracts is they are an unavoidable side effect of the natural aging process. While there's nothing you can really do to prevent or slow cataract growth, board-certified ophthalmologist Jack F. Johnson, Jr., MD, of Orangeburg Eye Center, says there is an upside to cataract surgery.

"Cataract surgery is one of the most common and successful operations performed on adults across the country. After surgery, 97 people out of 100 see well and don't have any significant trouble," he says.

Aging-related Vision Problem

A cataract, or clouding of the eye's lens, eventually thickens the lens so much that light is either distorted

or cannot reach the retina. According to Dr. Johnson, a cataract may eventually interfere with day-to-day activities such as driving or reading so much that surgery will be required to correct the problem. Left untreated, cataracts cause blindness.

Fast, Simple Surgery

Most cataracts are removed by a simple outpatient surgery called phacoemulsification which lasts about 20 to 30 minutes. During the fast, practically pain-free surgery the surgeon removes the old, cloudy lens and replaces it with a new artificial lens.

According to Dr. Johnson, patients who undergo cataract surgery at the Regional Medical Center can get back to most regular activities within a few days. Most healing is complete within a month.

"The latest equipment is available at the Regional Medical Center and the staff and instruments are all first class and up to date," says Dr. Johnson, who practices with board-certified ophthalmologists Fulton J. Gasper, MD; Mark C.

Cataracts 101

A cataract is a slow-developing clouding of the eye's lens that affects vision and is common in adults over age 60. In a cataract's early stages, a person may experience blurred vision, faded colors, a bad glare or poor night vision. While new glasses, brighter lighting, anti-glare sunglasses or magnifying lenses can help at first, surgery may be required as cataracts will eventually affect day-to-day life.

Source: National Institutes of Health

McGannon, MD; and Daoling Zhang, MD.

Monitor Through Eye Exams

The National Eye Institute recommends that people over the age of 60 have a comprehensive eye exam at least once every two years. In addition to checking for cataracts, your ophthalmologist can look for signs of other age-related eye conditions such as macular degeneration and glaucoma.

If you keep forgetting to make that annual eye appointment, just remember this: early treatment can save your sight.

Don't chalk up those fuzzy edges and night-time glares to getting old; call your eye doctor.

Jack Johnson, MD, is a board-certified ophthalmologist at Orangeburg Eye Center and member of the medical staff at the Regional Medical Center.



L to R: Mark C. McGannon, MD; Jack F. Johnson, Jr., MD; Fulton J. Gasper, MD; and Daoling Zhang, MD

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Contact the Regional Medical Center Marketing Department at 803-395-2319.

If you have specific concerns about your health, please contact your doctor.

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Water Safety Lessons Can Save Lives.

To watch Safe Kids' water safety videos for kids and parents, visit the Safe Kids channel on YouTube.

Watching your kids happily screaming in a cool refreshing pool seems like a safe and perfect way to beat the summer heat, right? Maybe not when you consider this data from Safe Kids, a global network of organizations dedicated to childhood injury prevention.

Safe Kids' studies have shown that water and kids can be a recipe for disaster. First, drowning is the top cause of accidental death among kids age one to four. Second, drowning is the cause in 16 percent of accidental deaths in children age 14 and under. Last and very surprising, one recent study found nearly nine in ten deaths happened when a child was under someone's supervision.

The American Red Cross offers these simple tips for water safety.

First, learn to swim. The American Red Cross and many other organizations offer swimming courses for people of all ages and swimming abilities. Second, children or inexperienced swimmers should take precautions, such as wearing a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device when around the water.

Parents should also learn these common "too"s that can signal trouble – too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity. And before that first dip in the pool, lake or ocean, parents should set clear rules for the entire family such as any inexperienced swimmer must stay in water no higher than chest deep or no diving head-first until you know that the water is deep enough.

Finally, in home pools and even shallow tide pools, never leave a child unobserved and keep a phone nearby in case of an emergency.

Safe Kids of Orangeburg, Bamberg and Calhoun Counties

The Regional Medical Center sponsors the locally-affiliated coalition of this international program, whose mission is to decrease accidental injury to children in the tri-county area. Outreach includes all safety issues related to children with emphasis on child safety seats and bicycle, gun, poison and water education.

Play it safe this summer. Spend some important time with your kids learning about water safety. It can be a life-saving lesson.