



# Health Matters



AT ASPEN VALLEY HOSPITAL

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*In this issue of Health Matters, we offer information about what actions an untrained Good Samaritan should take in an emergency, as well as tips for staying safe while driving. We'll also introduce you to our new Pulmonary Rehabilitation service and a new group of orthopaedic residents. Plus, find the latest update on Aspen Valley Hospital's Master Plan for the future.*

## First, Do No Harm *Helping accident victims requires proper training*

Injuries can happen anytime, anywhere, to anyone. Would you know what to do — and what not to do — if you were the first person available to help?

"First, do no harm" is the motto of medical professionals and a good rule of thumb for Good Samaritans. The first thing to do is assess the situation and call 911. Too often, people try to help without thinking, and they make the situation worse.

According to local paramedic Flint Smith, "When you call 911, have as much information as possible, such as the number of people injured. Then we can get the right emergency personnel and equipment to the scene as quickly as possible."

"You should never move any accident victim unless there is immediate danger, such as a fire or building collapse," adds Bill Rodman, MD,

Trauma Director at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH). "If you are not properly trained, moving a victim with a neck or spinal cord injury can cause paralysis or death. Even moving someone with a broken bone can be dangerous.

"Also, don't put yourself in danger trying to help someone else. Instead of being a hero, you might become another victim," warns Dr. Rodman.

Knowing CPR can save lives, but according to Flint, "An untrained person should not try to perform CPR. If you don't do it right, it won't do much good, and you may cause additional injuries. It's better to find someone who knows how to do it properly."



*Emergency personnel will be on-scene as quickly as possible.*

With training, you can be ready to help in an emergency. Everyone should take a course in CPR to prepare for everyday situations. Aspen Valley Hospital conducts CPR classes for the public on the second Wednesday of each month, from 8 a.m. to noon. For more information or to register for a class, call the Cardiopulmonary Department at 544-1264.

## Medical Briefs

### Healthy sites for young Web surfers.

The federal government is talking to children and teenagers about health in a medium they use frequently: the Internet. Encourage your early adolescents to log on to [www.BAM.gov](http://www.BAM.gov), an interactive Body and Mind site that provides up-to-date information and encouragement to help kids increase physical activity and establish lifelong fitness habits. BAM! is created by the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention and is designed for youngsters between the ages of 9 and 13. For younger kids, there's an interactive site called VERB ([www.VERBNow.com](http://www.VERBNow.com)) that's packed with fun ideas on how to become physically active. VERB is part of an overall youth media campaign by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For adults, AVH's Web site offers physician-reviewed information on health topics.

Go to [www.avhaspen.org](http://www.avhaspen.org) and click on the Healthvision icon.

**In sickness and in health.** A good marriage may be good for your health, says a study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine. The study of 413 middle-aged women found that those who were divorced or said they had an unhappy marriage had a three-fold increase in the rate of metabolic syndrome, a major risk factor for

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# Springtime is the season for allergies

Approximately 50 million Americans are allergic to certain foods, plants, or other substances. One of the most common allergens – especially in springtime – is pollen, the microscopic grains plants produce in order to reproduce.

Allergic rhinitis (hay fever) is perhaps the best-known allergy. Many people associate this type of allergy primarily with outdoor exposure to pollen. However, you may also experience significant levels of pollen in your



home, and these exposures can also trigger hay fever symptoms.

That's because most pollens are windborne and can travel hundreds of miles and through open windows and doors. Interestingly, the types of pollen that most commonly cause allergic reactions are produced by the plain-looking trees, grasses, and weeds that do not have showy flowers.

Reducing exposure to allergens can help control allergy symptoms. Pollen is so common, however, that avoiding it completely may be impossible. Still, there are several ways you can minimize the impact of a pollen allergy. Here are some ideas you might try:

- ◆ At home or in your car, keep the windows closed and run the air conditioner.
- ◆ Dry clothes in an automatic dryer, instead of hanging them outdoors where pollen can collect on them.
- ◆ Plan outdoor activities for late afternoon, when pollen levels are generally lower.

- ◆ When you work outdoors, wear an appropriate pollen-filtering mask.
- ◆ Be aware that pollen can be carried into your home, such as on people or pets.

Over-the-counter medications – such as antihistamines and nasal decongestants – can provide relief. But if symptoms continue or worsen, contact your doctor. He or she may prescribe stronger medications and other treatment strategies for severe reactions.

Allergy skin testing is available at Aspen Valley Hospital with a physician's referral. For more information, or to schedule an appointment, call 544-1511. And, if a specialist is needed, allergy/immunology doctor Richard Weber, MD, sees patients in Aspen on a monthly basis. Dr. Weber is associated with the National Jewish Medical Center in Denver. Appointments can be made by calling (888) 797-0627.

## Welcome Cleveland Orthopaedists

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) has been the training ground for many orthopaedic specialists over the years. Well-known surgeons John Freeman, Mark Purnell, and Tom Pevny all did their fellowship training here – in 1977, 1985, and 1996 respectively. The fellowship program continues today through the Aspen Foundation for Sports Medicine, Education, and Research (AFSMER), with two fellows per year completing their subspecialty training at AVH.

Starting this year, orthopaedic surgery residents from the Cleveland Clinic are also participating in a training program for sports medicine. Mike DeFranco, MD, is a fifth-year orthopaedic resident

who spent much of January and February in Aspen. "It's been a unique opportunity. I've spent most of my time with Dr. Bill Clancy, one of the 'fathers' of sports medicine in the U.S.," said Dr. DeFranco. "To work alongside him, in a world-renowned practice, has been really special."

As a senior resident from the Cleveland Clinic, Dr. DeFranco participated in all aspects of patient care at the Orthopaedic Associates offices in Aspen and Basalt, as well as at the hospital. "It's been a great experience," he said. "In addition to the training, I've enjoyed the community and am impressed by the focus on an active lifestyle and good health. It's great to see people in their 70s still skiing."



*Dr. Bill Clancy (right) discusses a patient's knee problem with Dr. Mike DeFranco, orthopaedic resident.*

Dr. DeFranco returned to his residency in Cleveland after leaving Aspen, but will come back to Aspen for another month of training in his sixth year of residency. After that, he plans to complete a fellowship program at Rush University in Chicago.

# The Most Important Safety Feature in Your Vehicle is Behind the Wheel

Automobile manufacturers build vehicles with many features that help keep us safe, such as seat belts, airbags, and anti-lock brakes. However, the most important safety feature is something no manufacturer can provide — a conscientious, cautious, attentive driver.

The widening of Highway 82 between Glenwood Springs and Aspen has made driving that route easier and, possibly, more dangerous. Pitkin County Sheriff's Deputy Brad Gibson says, "People think a wider road means higher speeds, but actually speed limits on parts of Highway 82 have decreased and may decrease even more after a safety study is completed.

"It's especially important for westbound drivers to slow down at the entrance to

Snowmass Canyon," adds Brad. "The speed limit drops from 55 to 50 mph at mile marker 30, but some people don't pay attention, and we're seeing far too many accidents there. Of course, drivers should always adjust their speed to compensate for weather and road conditions like ice and snow."

Another hazard is the deer, elk, or other wildlife that may jump out into the road. "Driving more slowly gives you time to react to the unexpected, whether it's an animal or another driver," advises Brad.

With some people driving faster and changing lanes more often, we all need to be especially careful on Highway 82. Follow the defensive driving guidelines on this page to protect yourself and your family.



## Defensive driving guidelines

- ✓ Before starting the engine, make sure everyone is secured with a safety belt or child safety seat.
- ✓ Match your speed to the "flow of traffic" within speed limits.
- ✓ Never drive when you have consumed alcohol or other substances that impair your ability or judgment.
- ✓ Stay alert for other drivers who may be impaired or driving dangerously. Notify police if you see a motorist driving suspiciously.
- ✓ Don't follow too closely. Use the "two-second" rule. Choose a fixed object, such as a sign or overpass, and when the vehicle ahead of you passes it, start counting "one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two." You should get to two before your vehicle reaches the object. Expand the count to at least four seconds in bad weather.

## Medical Briefs

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cardiovascular disease and diabetes, compared with women who reported a satisfying marriage. Widowed women had even higher rates of the syndrome, which is marked by excessive fat tissue in and around the abdomen, high triglycerides, low HDL (good cholesterol), increased blood pressure, abnormal blood clotting, an elevated inflammatory factor (C-reactive protein) in the blood, and insulin resistance. In insulin resistance, the body cannot properly use insulin or blood sugar, so blood insulin levels increase, often setting the stage for diabetes. How did

single women fare in the study? On average, they were as healthy as the happily married women; both groups had the lowest rates of metabolic syndrome. For information about AVH's metabolic syndrome program, call 544-7394.

### Aspirin, heart attacks, and women.

Daily low doses of aspirin have been lauded for helping to prevent first heart attacks, and it's been assumed that this preventive effect is the same for men and women of all ages. However, a recent Harvard University clinical trial found that aspirin's preventive role against heart attacks may not work as well for women under 65 as it does for men of the same age. The researchers

noted that most women under 65 probably don't need daily preventive aspirin, although those with a high risk for a first heart attack may be advised to take it anyway (and it does seem to reduce the risk of first strokes caused by blood clots, even among younger women). The researchers added that men and women of any age who've already had a heart attack or stroke probably should take daily aspirin or some other blood thinner to lower the risk of a recurrence. But if you haven't had either event and you're a woman under 65, talk with your physician before taking daily aspirin "just in case."

# Breathe Easy

Most of us breathe easily without even thinking. For people with chronic lung disease, however, the simple act of breathing can be a struggle. That's when Aspen Valley Hospital's new pulmonary rehabilitation service can help.

Pulmonary rehabilitation combines exercise therapy, education, and lifestyle changes to improve the day-to-day lives of patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or interstitial lung disease (ILD).

If you suffer from chronic lung disease, pulmonary rehabilitation can help you:

- ▶ Decrease reliance on costly medical resources.
- ▶ Gain knowledge about the disease, treatments, and coping strategies.
- ▶ Improve exercise tolerance and reduce breathing difficulty.
- ▶ Make healthy lifestyle choices, such as exercising, eating right, and not smoking.

"This service is especially important in our area because patients here suffer from symptoms of decreased lung function sooner than those living at lower elevations," says Melody



*Shannon Hicks, RT, administers an oxygen saturation test to pulmonary rehab patient Kit Bulkley.*

Durham, RN, Nurse Director of Pulmonary Rehabilitation at Aspen Valley Hospital. "Our hospital uses a team approach. We involve doctors, nurses, cardiopulmonary therapists, exercise physiologists, and dietitians to improve our patients' ability to function and quality of life."

Treatment is given in three one-hour sessions each week for 12 weeks. "When a patient begins treatment, we do a six-minute walk test to measure exercise tolerance and blood oxygen saturation. Then, after six weeks, we test again," says Durham. "Even patients with severe lung disease consistently show improvement on the second test."

Ask your physician if pulmonary rehabilitation can help you, or call Melody Durham at 544-1383 for more information about the new service at AVH.



*Julie Puchkoff, Exercise Physiologist, coaches pulmonary rehab patient Kit Bulkley on weight-lifting techniques.*

## Upcoming Events

*Blood Drives*

Tuesday, April 18

Thursday, June 15

Pitkin County Senior Center

**Call (970) 244-2555 for more information**

*Community Health Fair*

Sunday, June 4

Aspen Valley Hospital

**Call 544-1296 for more information**



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HOSPITAL

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