

# Pioneers HealthNews

PIONEERS  
MEMORIAL  
*Healthcare District*

Summer 2010

## New imaging system now available

**P**ioneers Memorial Healthcare District (PMHD) now offers a positron emission tomography/computed tomography (PET/CT) imaging system through a recently completed agreement with Alliance Imaging. This system integrates a PET scanner with a multislice CT scanner and is capable of 2-D and 3-D imaging. It has a larger bore that can accommodate all patient studies or sizes. This state-of-the-art PET/CT system provides physicians with more imaging sensitivity, speed, resolution and diagnostic confidence when treating people who have cancer and other patients.

"Bringing new technologies to the valley has always been an integral part of our role as healthcare leaders," says Leo Haggarty, Chair of the PMHD Board of Directors. "We're pleased that our patients will now have access to services that currently aren't available in the valley." "Less time on the table means faster results and greater patient comfort," says Greg Gilbert, Director of Imaging Services.

### A COMPLETE VIEW

PET is a tool that uses special imaging cameras and a radioactive type of sugar to produce pictures of the function  
(continued on page 5)



**Help for  
heartburn  
sufferers**

**After your  
ER visit**

**Golfer, beware**  
Avoid 4 common injuries

### Laboratory services: New location

197 W. Legion Road, Brawley  
8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and  
1:30–5 p.m., Monday–Friday  
**760-351-3714**

# Do you have diabetes?

**D**iabetes doesn't seem like the kind of disease you could have without realizing it, but about 6 million Americans are in the dark about their status. Symptoms develop gradually, so many people don't realize that there's a problem. But untreated diabetes can lead to heart disease, kidney failure, blindness, foot amputations and other complications. If you're unsure whether you've got diabetes, consider these warning signs:

## YOU MAY HAVE TYPE 1 OR TYPE 2 DIABETES IF:

- you're always thirsty or very hungry, especially if you also have unexplained weight loss
- you constantly feel tired and irritable
- you urinate more often than everyone else

## YOU MAY HAVE TYPE 2 DIABETES IF:

- you're obese or overweight
- you've ever been diagnosed with pre-diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance
- your cuts and bruises take a long time to heal, or you get infections frequently

You can't prevent type 1 diabetes, which develops when the body doesn't produce enough insulin. But you can reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes, or help keep it under control. How?

- If you're overweight, lose 5 percent to 10 percent of your body weight. That's 10 to 20 pounds for a 200-pound person.
- Exercise at moderate intensity for 30 minutes a day, at least five days a week.
- Cut back on junk food and eat small portions of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and nonfat dairy products. ●

People diagnosed with diabetes before **age 65** have a **125%** increased risk of developing **Alzheimer's disease.** —*Diabetes*



## > The final word on sugar

### Doctors used to tell

people with diabetes to avoid all sugar. But today, people who have diabetes can include small portions of sweets in their diets on occasion and still keep their blood-glucose levels safe.

Sugar is a carbohydrate, and recent research shows that it's the total number of carbohydrates consumed, not just sugar, that affects blood-glucose levels. So if you want to treat yourself to something sugary, you'll need to reduce other carb-containing foods from a meal. For example, if you're out to dinner, skip the pre-dinner bread and split a small dessert. Experts recommend doing this infrequently to ensure that you maintain a healthy diet. Your healthcare provider can explain how to read food nutrition labels so you can make proper substitutions.

# Test your heartburn knowledge

**Y**ou eat a greasy burger and fries and chase it down with a big soda. Soon, you feel the burning pain in your chest known as heartburn. If you have heartburn or acid indigestion more than twice a week, it's known as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). The condition occurs when the sphincter muscle separating the esophagus from the stomach doesn't close properly, allowing stomach contents (including acid) to rise up into the esophagus, causing a burning sensation in the chest or a bitter taste in the mouth. If left untreated, GERD can lead to more serious conditions, including esophageal cancer. Test your knowledge about this common, treatable condition:

## 1 Which of the following is not regularly confused with GERD?

- A. stiff neck    B. asthma    C. laryngitis    D. chest pain

**ANSWER: A.** GERD is common in people with asthma and can even worsen their condition. Frequent acid reflux can cause sore throats or laryngitis. And some GERD sufferers mistake the surge of acid reflux in the esophagus for angina or heart-related chest pain.

## 2 What can you do at home to help alleviate your GERD symptoms?

- A. wash your hands frequently    C. maintain a healthy weight  
B. eat softer foods    D. go to sleep early

**ANSWER: C.** Being overweight places excess pressure on your abdomen, which causes stomach acid to back up into the esophagus. Don't try squeezing into too-tight jeans—the pressure on your stomach can push acid into the esophagus. Extra sleep can't cure GERD, and getting into bed within three hours of eating can make the condition worse. Elevating the head of your bed 6 inches can help, though; you'll use gravity to keep your stomach contents out of your esophagus.



## 3 What treatment is often recommended for new GERD patients?

- A. antacids    C. antidepressants  
B. proton pump inhibitors    D. surgery

**ANSWER: B.** Over-the-counter antacids are OK for infrequent heartburn, but for GERD, doctors often prescribe proton pump inhibitors, which can decrease the flow of stomach contents to the esophagus and simultaneously heal esophageal damage caused by stomach acid. Your doctor may also prescribe pro-motility drugs, which help move food from the stomach and remove acid from the esophagus. If medication doesn't help control the condition, surgery is an option.

## 4 True or false: Chewing gum makes heartburn worse.

**ANSWER: FALSE.** Chewing gum or sucking on hard candies forces you to make more saliva, which acts as a natural barrier to acid, helping to ease the burn. Just avoid peppermint—it can make the problem worse. ●

### > Top trigger foods

Alleviate GERD by steering clear of these common culprits:

- alcohol
- caffeine
- chocolate
- cigarettes
- citrus fruits
- fried foods
- garlic
- mint
- onion



# HealthExtra

{ WELLNESS NEWS FROM THE WORLD OVER }

## > The skinny on skinny girlfriends

We all have that thin friend who can eat and eat and somehow never gain a pound. As it turns out, dining in her company may be dangerous for your diet. According to a study published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, watching a thin friend overindulge makes us feel we can do the same. But when we eat in the company of heavier friends who overeat, we're likely to exercise more self-control. Researchers had 210 female college students watch a movie with a woman who sometimes appeared as her normal thin self



and other times in a fat suit. The students ate more of the snacks offered when their thin companion took a large portion than when their obese companion took a similarly large portion. The study highlights how much social pressures affect our eating habits. The next time you make dinner plans with that skinny friend, don't keep up with her excessive eating.

## > Depression is bad for your bones

You may have heard that depression is linked to insomnia, weight gain, even heart disease. But new research suggests the condition is also bad for your bones. In their review of 23 studies,

Kids and teens spend a whopping **7 hours and 38 minutes** a day in front of the TV, computer or other media.

—Kaiser Family Foundation

researchers from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem compared the bone density of 2,327 people suffering from depression to that of 21,141 healthy people and found that those who were depressed had much lower bone density than nondepressed people. Low bone density puts you at risk for osteoporosis. The association between depression and weak bones was stronger in women than men, and premenopausal women were at especially high risk, say the researchers, whose work was published in the journal *Biological Psychiatry*. Both conditions are treatable, so if you're suffering from depression, ask your healthcare provider about your risk factors for osteoporosis and do what you can to ward off the disease.

## > Cancer doesn't sleep

Add insomnia to the list of health problems people with cancer must face. In a study published online in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, researchers examined questionnaires filled out by



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823 cancer patients after undergoing their first two chemotherapy treatments. The findings: Thirty-seven percent suffered from sleep problems such as occasional trouble falling and staying asleep, and another 43 percent had insomnia at least three nights a week. Luckily, sleep disorders are very treatable. If you're suffering from cancer-related insomnia, talk with your healthcare provider about the problem. You need your rest to help fight this disease.



## > Squeeze out excess sugar

We're taking in way too much added sugar and, according to the American Heart Association (AHA), we need to cut back. The AHA's new guidelines say that most women should consume no more than 100 calories (about 6 teaspoons) of sugar a day, and most men should consume no more than 150 calories (about 9 teaspoons). The average person takes in about 22 teaspoons, or 355 calories, of sugar a day, mostly from soft drinks and other sugar-sweetened drinks (one can of soda has some 130 calories and 8 teaspoons of sugar). High intake of sugar seems to be related to the nationwide rise in obesity, which is linked to an increase in high blood pressure, high triglyceride levels and other risk factors for heart disease and stroke. An easy way to reduce your sugar intake? Swap out those sweetened beverages for water with a twist of lemon or lime.

**1,610:** number of calories in a medium movie theater popcorn and soda combo.

—Center for Science in the Public Interest



## New imaging system now available

(continued from page 1)

and metabolism of cells in the body. CT is an X-ray technology that generates a detailed view of the anatomy or structure of organs and tissues in the body. The CT scan can show the dimensions of blood vessels, lymph nodes and organ systems. Together, a PET/CT scan uses both technologies while using a single machine. It provides a picture of function (PET), a picture of anatomy (CT) and a merged picture of the body's metabolism and structure.

"The PET/CT we selected, a General Electric Discovery ST, is another example of PMHD's commitment to innovation and technology for early disease detection, supporting physicians in improved diagnosis and treatment," says Richard Mendoza, Chief Executive Officer at PMHD. "With its larger bore size (70 cm.) and shorter tunnel length (100 cm.), physicians have more flexibility in positioning larger patients and [it] helps claustrophobic patients who find lying inside a scanner tunnel uncomfortable." It also allows for better radiation therapy planning, explains Mendoza.

The GE Discovery ST is manufactured by GE Medical Systems of Waukesha, Wis. GE Medical Systems is a global leader in medical information and technology.

To schedule a scan, call  
**1-866-533-4296.** ●

### The Wound Care Center at PMHD

8 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday

**760-351-4848**

Healing wounds. Changing lives.

# After the ER: What next?

**Y**ou've read enough about heart-attack warning signs and bagel-cutting accidents to know when you should head to the emergency room (ER). But will you know how to care for yourself when it's time to go home? Recent research has found that 78 percent of patients discharged from the ER don't fully understand the instructions that they're given by doctors. That can lead to complications. If you find yourself in the ER, consider these points:

**If you've had a heart attack ...** You'll be admitted to the hospital, not sent home. When you eventually do leave the hospital, be sure to ask the doctor how to take any prescribed medication and what dangerous symptoms to watch for that could require another visit to the ER.

**If you've been injured ...** Many people have their wounds sealed with topical skin adhesive, but others receive stitches or staples. Some stitches dissolve and don't warrant another doctor visit, but others need to be removed by a physician, so you should understand whether—and when—it's necessary to make a follow-up appointment, especially if the stitches are in an area that you can't see. Find out whether you can get the wound wet; how to clean it and change your bandages, if need be; and how it will look and feel if it gets infected (redness and a foul odor are likely signs).

## DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW UP

If the doctor gives you written instructions about taking medication or asks you to be on the lookout for symptoms that could signal infection or a relapse, make sure you understand everything before leaving. Find out what pain medication to use and whether you'll need a prescription. Ask whether to return to the ER or to your healthcare provider if your health worsens; the doctor's response will depend on your condition and the time of your visit. Many ER doctors recommend an appointment with your provider a week or two after being discharged, so ask whether this will be necessary. You probably won't need to phone your health insurance company after your ER visit, although some companies require a phone call beforehand. ●

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**Chest pain is the most common reason for adult ER visits.**

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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# Don't let golf injuries sideline you

Most people hit the links to calm the mind, but golf can be stressful on the body. Swing too hard and you can develop tendinitis. Lug your clubs around all day and you could strain your back. If you're one of the 28 million golfers nationwide, take steps to avoid these common injuries during your next outing:

▶ **GOLFER'S ELBOW** If you overemphasize your wrists while swinging or accidentally hit the ground with your club, you could develop this painful tendinitis along the inner elbow.

- **Treat it:** Your doctor may recommend rest, physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medications. If those don't help, you may need cortisone injections or surgery.
- **Prevent it:** Stretch before playing, and strengthen your forearm muscles regularly. (Try wrist curls or squeezing a tennis ball.) Developing a smooth, slow golf swing can help, too.

▶ **BACK PAIN** Whether you hunch over the ball, your golf bag is too heavy or your back just can't handle all the twisting you do while teeing off, back pain is a serious issue for golfers.

- **Treat it:** Ice the painful area for the first two to three days, then switch to heat. Try over-the-counter painkillers if necessary. Don't lie down hoping to get better; bed rest isn't recommended. At night, sleep in the fetal position.
- **Prevent it:** Warm up with a few practice swings, gradually increasing to your full range of motion. Between golf outings, use the rowing machine at the gym to strengthen your back muscles. If you prefer to walk the course, consider a wheeled golf bag.

▶ **SUNBURN** You may not instinctively reach for sunscreen, but you'll be outside for hours during the sunniest part of the day, so without protection, you risk getting burned.

- **Treat it:** Take a cool shower to soothe a burn, then apply a moisturizing lotion like aloe vera to the affected areas. Anti-inflammatory medications can help with pain and soreness.
- **Prevent it:** Liberally apply sunscreen half an hour before heading outside. Wear long sleeves and a broad-brimmed hat (though a golf visor is better than nothing).

▶ **HEAD INJURIES** Golfers suffer more than 8,000 head injuries annually. Sometimes, an errant ball is to blame. Other times, someone accidentally stands in the path of a swinging club.

- **Treat it:** See a doctor or visit the emergency room, depending on the severity of the injury and whether you've lost consciousness.
- **Prevent it:** Listen for people shouting "fore!" and stand back when someone else is swinging. ●

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great technology**  
*provided by caring and  
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Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District continues to provide the most current diagnostic technology to our physicians, patients and our community. Experienced and compassionate, the right place and the right people for your healthcare.

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**Pioneers. Here for Good.**

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