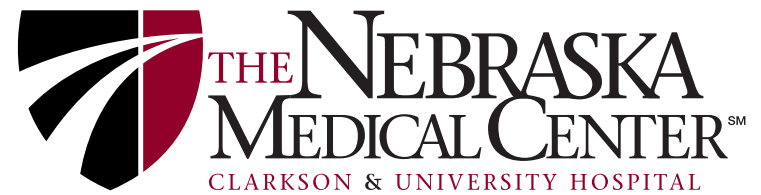


# ADVANCING HEALTH



**SERIOUS MEDICINE.** EXTRAORDINARY CARE.

WINTER 2005

## Consumers Rate Us Among the Best

**T**hank you Omaha! When it comes to quality health care, The Nebraska Medical Center is rated one of the nation's top hospitals. That's according to local consumers who, for the third time, chose The Nebraska Medical Center as having the best quality and image among our nation's hospitals.

The consumer survey was administered by the National Research Corporation (NRC) based on the nationally syndicated NRC Healthcare Market Guide study of more than 140,000 households. The Healthcare Market

Guide is the nation's largest and most comprehensive study of its kind.

"Being the recipient of the Consumer Choice Award is very gratifying," says Glenn Fosdick, hospital president and CEO. "It is a truly



meaningful award since Omaha-area consumers selected The Nebraska Medical Center as one of the best hospitals in the area. Receiving this award speaks well to our guiding principles of offering the highest quality of customer service and care to our patients."

The Consumer Choice Award reflects the growing role consumer choice is playing in the health care field. Nationally, 186 hospitals in more than 150 markets are recipients of the 2004/2005 Consumer Choice Award. The Nebraska Medical Center also won the award in 2000 and 2002. ■

**For information about quality care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## We Are Here for You 24 Hours a Day, 7 Days a Week

The Nebraska Medical Center allows you access to free health information whenever you need it and features:

- 7 days a week, 24 hours a day access
- bilingual
- physician referral
- class or seminar registration
- a "call-me-back-later" feature through our website

800-922-0000

## Hospital Recognized for Outstanding Quality Improvement Efforts

**T**he Nebraska Medical Center was recently recognized for its quality improvement efforts by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Gov. Mike Johanns recently presented the hospital with the Edgerton Award of Commitment for 2004.

The Nebraska Medical Center has had a long-standing commitment to improving quality of care throughout the hospital. "The employees of this organization should be proud," says

Stephen Smith, M.D., chief medical officer. "It is their continuous efforts in the improvement process that have bolstered this hospital's reputation for quality care."

The Edgerton Award program is administered annually by the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Any Nebraska company or organization engaged in quality improvement can apply for the award. This is the first year The Nebraska Medical Center has applied for the award.



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# UPDATE



## THE LATEST MEDICAL RESEARCH

### Research Study on Epilepsy

The effects of epilepsy medication can be puzzling. Adult epilepsy patients who are still having seizures and are on a stable antiepileptic regime that includes carbamazepine or phenytoin may be eligible for a clinical research study testing the effects of two marketed drugs. All research-related medical visits, evaluations and medications will be provided at no cost to participants. To learn more, call The Nebraska Medical Center's Clinical Trials Office at 402-552-2254.

### Pneumococcal Vaccine: It's Worth a Shot

Have you received your shot yet? Not the flu shot—we're talking pneumococcal vaccine.

Each year, the pneumococcal infection causes 60,000 deaths. "Approximately half of these deaths could potentially be prevented through immunization," says Mark Rupp, M.D., epidemiologist with The Nebraska Medical Center.

All adults age 65 and older, residents of long-term facilities and people with chronic health problems or weakened immune systems should receive the pneumonia vaccine. For more information, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).

## heart health

### Heading Off a Heart Attack

The fate of recent celebrities has heart disease on the minds of many Americans. The good news is that heart disease doesn't have to be fate—you can take action to head off a heart attack.

"Preventing heart disease is an individual self-management of risks," says John Haas, M.D., cardiologist with The Nebraska Medical Center. "It begins with understanding your risk profile and trying to change the risk factors you can control, such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, not smoking and adopting healthy habits like exercising and good nutrition."

Whatever your risk, don't underestimate the power of lifestyle changes. "Coronary artery disease is a lifelong process that evolves over many years," says Dr. Haas. "The sooner you begin making lifestyle changes, the sooner you can make a difference in preventing a coronary event."



Risk factors that carry a genetic predisposition can be identified very early on, notes Dr. Haas. These include family history, cholesterol, diabetes and hypertension.

For individuals with high cholesterol, powerful cholesterol-lowering medications like statins can cut cholesterol levels by one-third. A combination of statins and the drug Ezetimibe, which blocks the resorption of cholesterol, can produce even greater results.

Even individuals with acceptable cholesterol levels, but who have diabetes or an existing heart disease, should be taking statins, which may have additional heart-protective effects, notes Dr. Haas.

Consider a daily regimen of low-dose adult aspirin (81 mg, compared to the standard 325-mg dose). Aspirin can reduce your risk of suffering a fatal blood clot, but it also can cause intestinal bleeding, so discuss it with your physician first.

For a clearer picture of your heart disease risk, schedule a physical with your physician, as well as an EKG and stress test. "These tests may be just what you need to motivate yourself to take personal action," notes Dr. Haas, "and may indicate the need for more aggressive medical intervention." ■

**For information about cardiac care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

### What Tests Can Tell You About Your Risk

So you know your blood pressure and cholesterol levels, but do these really provide a true picture of your heart disease risk? "These are a good start," says Atul Ramachandran, M.D., cardiologist with The Nebraska Medical Center. But there are other important diagnostic tests that can unmask the development of coronary artery disease. Your physician can help you determine which tests are appropriate for you.

A lipid profile, which provides a breakdown of LDL, HDL and triglycerides, is a must for everyone, notes Dr. Ramachandran. "LDL plays a significant role in increasing one's risk of experiencing a cardiac event," he says, "and maintaining a healthy HDL level is especially significant for women." In addition, blood sugar levels should be tested on an annual basis—a primary indicator for diabetes. Some individuals also might benefit from a hemoglobin A1c test, which provides an estimate of average blood sugar levels over a month to 120 days.

Inflammation is another indicator of cardiovascular problems. Those with two or more risk factors may want to consider a C-reactive protein or CRP test, which can reveal

a greater risk for heart attack and stroke.

Individuals with many risk factors or chest pain may be candidates for a stress (treadmill) test in combination with an EKG, which can reveal impaired blood flow to the heart. Other imaging techniques include an electrocardiogram—an ultrasound that shows a picture of the heart in motion to detect damaged heart valves or heart murmurs—and nuclear imaging, which shows blood flow through the heart muscle.

**Call 800-922-0000 to receive your free brochure "High Cholesterol: What You Need to Know." For more information about cardiac care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**





**Q** I always feel down when the days get shorter. How can I ease my winter blues?

**A** Seasonal affective disorder—known as SAD—is a depression that occurs in the winter, when there are fewer hours of daylight.

If you think you may have SAD, try these self-care tips:

- 1 Add exercise, a natural antidepressant, to your daily routine.
- 2 Try to confide in someone and spend time with other people.
- 3 Take part in enjoyable activities, such as going to a movie or attending social or religious events. Try to postpone major decisions until the depression lifts.
- 4 Set priorities. Break large tasks into smaller ones.
- 5 Feeling better takes time. Be patient about progress.

If these tips do not help relieve your depression, your doctor may prescribe light therapy. This entails using a light box at least 30 minutes a day through the fall and winter.



**Douglas Wheatley, M.D.**  
Family Practitioner

**Q** My asthma gets worse when I exercise. What can I do to keep my workouts on track?

**A** Exercise-induced asthma is a chronic condition that you can manage. Your doctor may prescribe pre-exercise medication, such as short-acting beta-2 agonists, to prevent symptoms. It's also important to check your asthma with your peak-flow meter before you exercise.

The best control of exercise-induced asthma is often accomplished by optimizing your asthma treatment overall. This would include the use of anti-inflammatory medications to prevent symptoms at rest and with exercise. Persistent asthma symptoms with exercise can be a sign of suboptimal control of asthma in general.

You also should avoid working out when your symptoms are not under control or when you have a



**Tony Floreani, M.D.**  
Pulmonologist

cold or other respiratory tract infection. In addition, warming up for several minutes by stretching and running in place may help. It's best to exercise indoors in cold weather. But if you do exercise outdoors, breathe through your nose and cover your face with a mask.

After your workout, do not stop suddenly. Instead, cool down gradually for several minutes by stretching and jogging.

Use quick-acting medication your doctor has prescribed if your asthma worsens. You don't have to miss out on the health benefits of an active lifestyle. Be sure to talk to your doctor about activities that are best for you—and your asthma.

**Q** Help—my teenage daughter has mono. How can I help her get better?

**A** Unfortunately, there is no specific treatment for mono. Instead, most people focus on easing the severity of their symptoms, which usually last one to four weeks.

To help soothe mono symptoms until they fade, your daughter should:

- Get lots of rest. This usually means staying in bed for a few days and limiting your activities until the fever and other symptoms decrease.
- Drink plenty of liquids. Cold drinks or warm tea with honey may feel good on a sore throat.
- Take an OTC pain reliever—such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen—to help combat the fever and any pain. Children and teens shouldn't take aspirin, which is associated with a rare, but serious, disease called Reye's syndrome.

Call your doctor if your teen has breath-



**Mark Rupp, M.D.**  
Epidemiologist

ing problems. This affects some with mono who get a swollen throat. Before resuming strenuous activities such as contact sports, check with your doctor. Infectious mononucleosis can cause splenic enlargement, which can lead to splenic rupture and internal bleeding.

**Q** My knee pain makes it difficult for me to do everyday activities. Could I be a candidate for knee replacement surgery?

**A** Most people who undergo knee replacement have severe arthritis or other major knee problems, such as a tumor.

Surgery is only a consideration after other treatments—such as exercise and medicine—have failed. Other factors also weigh into knee replacement surgery:

- Your age. The operation is performed on people of all ages. But artificial knees last about 10 to 15 years. A person age 65 or older can expect to have it for a lifetime. But a younger person may need to undergo a second surgery.
- Your health. Heart disease and other conditions should be under control before surgery. Obese adults may need to lose weight before surgery.
- Your commitment to recovery. For successful rehabilitation, you will need to follow a strict exercise schedule for several weeks.



**Josh Urban, M.D.**  
Orthopedic Surgeon



## Our Doctors Could Be Your Doctors.

To find a physician,  
call us at **800-922-0000**  
or visit us on the Web at:

[www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com)

## What's New on the Web?

- Facts about the flu
- The pneumococcal vaccine
- New blood pressure guidelines
- Health and wellness interactive tool
- New neonatal intensive care unit
- Guide to common diagnostic and surgical tests and procedures

Also at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com):

- Confidential physician referral
- Health risk assessments
- Educational programs
- Answers to health questions
- Medical atlas
- Employment information
- Maps and virtual tours
- Free e-mail newsletter

[www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com)

## cancer care

# Cancer Support Groups Provide Knowledge, Hope and Inspiration

Jennifer Forbes-Baily is an 18-year survivor of breast cancer, but she still blocks out the first Tuesday of each month to attend a cancer survivorship support group. “I serve as an advocate and a role model for other cancer survivors,” says Forbes-Baily. “Even after 18 years, it is still empowering to attend these meetings. As a survivor, you always live with the fear that it may come back. These meetings empower you with the information, confidence and will to survive.”

The Nebraska Medical Center offers several cancer support groups that provide education, support, hope and camaraderie for cancer survivors, their families and other support network members. These groups serve several purposes, says Susan Stensland, social worker with The Nebraska Medical Center. “One of the most important of these is providing information, which is one of the most significant coping skills for cancer patients because with more knowledge comes a greater sense of

control,” she says. Monthly sessions provide education on topics such as new cancer treatments, side effects, complementary treatments, long-term issues, stress and depression.

“These groups also serve as a forum to share concerns, experiences and to offer support,” notes Stensland. “Being able to talk to someone and share experiences can ease the sense of isolation and provide a sense of belonging.”

Forbes-Baily says she also comes back to offer hope, inspiration and to be inspired. “It’s so inspiring to see the courage of others and their will to survive,” she says. “As an 18-year survivor, I want to provide new patients with the confidence that they can survive too.”

But Forbes-Baily says she leaves with something even greater. “There’s a sense of healing in the air,” she says. “I always feel reenergized when



I leave. I believe there’s a protective benefit to attending. In fact, I’ve seen studies that say cancer survivors who attend support groups actually live longer. I guess you could say I’m living proof.” ■

**Call 800-922-0000 to receive your free brochure about area cancer support groups. For more information about cancer support groups at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## Lauritzen Receives First Star of Courage Award



Five years ago, Omahan Kimball Bowles Lauritzen checked into the hospital for routine surgery. She checked out with news that she had fallopian tube cancer. With the expert guidance and medical care provided by health care professionals at The Nebraska Medical Center, today Lauritzen is a doting grandmother of six grandchildren.

The Nebraska Medical Center recently presented its first Star of

Courage Award to Lauritzen in recognition of her valiant struggle against cancer and continued perseverance in the face of adversity. Her courage and resolve serve as a shining example to all those in our community living with cancer.

Not only has Lauritzen overcome cancer, but she also stands out for the remarkable impact her volunteer work has made in the areas of health care, education and the

arts, for which she has received numerous awards.

“I represent every person who has survived this disease and I want to celebrate with them that we’re still here and encourage them to take one day at a time,” says Lauritzen. ■

**For information about cancer care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

# HealthLink

YOUR SOURCE FOR CLASSES AND SUPPORT GROUPS

## Special Events

### Blood Pressure Screenings

Second Friday of the month,  
Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11,  
8:30 to 9:45 a.m.

Oakview Mall, JC Penney Wing  
Free blood pressure checks performed by nurses from The Nebraska Medical Center and the Nebraska Heart Institute

### Check Out the Company Store

Looking for something to perk up your winter wardrobe? Then you've come to the right place. Just in at the Company Store—a variety of high-

quality apparel items for this winter, including boxy crew sweatshirts in an array of colors, fleece-lined all-weather jackets in four bold colors, as well as long-sleeved cotton shirts, sweaters and discounted holiday sweatshirts. Our assorted accessories make great gifts too, including pens, travel mugs, tote bags, license plate holders and coolers. You'll also enjoy the convenience of our secure online ordering process and prompt home delivery. To visit the Company Store online, go to [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com) and click on Company Store.

### Renew, Refresh, Revive

Saturday, March 19,  
7 a.m. to noon

Holiday Inn Convention Center  
72nd and Grover Streets

**Complimentary Refreshments**

**Door Prizes • Giveaways**

**Health Screenings • Exhibits**

Attend this one-day health conference designed to help educate you about some of today's primary health issues presented by leading experts in the field. To register, call **800-922-0000**.



## Health & Wellness Club

### AARP Driver Safety Class

Saturday, Jan. 29,  
8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.  
(with one-hour lunch break)  
The Nebraska Medical Center,  
Storz Pavilion  
Fee: \$10 payable to AARP  
To register, call **800-922-0000**.

### Tai Chi

Tuesdays, Jan. 18 to Feb. 22,  
1 to 2 p.m.  
Bloomfield Forum,  
Theater Room,  
9804 Nicholas St.,  
behind Westroads Mall  
Fee: \$30  
To register, call **402-559-2030**

### Third Thursdays Art Encounter Club

Third Thursdays, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.  
Free to Joslyn members; H&W Club members pay museum admission. Enjoy guided tours of Joslyn's permanent collection and special exhibitions. Newcomers are welcome to join this informal group at any time. For more information, please call Joslyn Art Museum at **402-342-3300**.

Jan. 20: Movements & Metaphors:  
The Modern Arts

Feb. 17: Renaissance to Rococo:  
19th-Century French Art and  
Women in Art

March 17: Around the World in  
60 Minutes

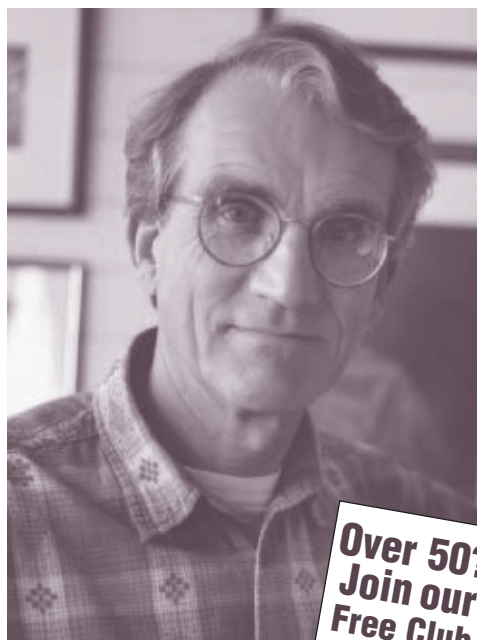
### Henry Doorly Zoo Walking Club

Every Friday morning, 9 a.m.;  
meet at the Main Gate  
Must be a zoo member.

### H&W Club Bowling League

Tuesdays, 9 a.m.  
Westlanes Bowling Alley,  
151 N. 72nd St.  
Fee: \$5; no reservations required.  
For more information, call  
**402-559-4996**.

To register for these programs,  
or to learn about the many  
programs we have to offer:  
Call **800-922-0000** or go to our  
website at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).



**Over 50?  
Join our  
Free Club**

Club activities are open to all interested individuals age 50 and older. Health and Wellness (H&W) Club members enjoy occasional discounts and special offerings. For more information or to register for the following activities, call **800-922-0000**.



## FITNESS AND NUTRITION

■ Epilepsy doesn't have to mean no exercise. For many patients, regular aerobic activity means better health—and fewer seizures. Simple precautions can make most activities safe. For example, always wear proper equipment, such as helmets and pads, for biking, inline skating or contact sports.

*Clinics in Sports Medicine*

■ Boost your brawn and your brain by adding a little music to your workout, suggests a recent study of women and men ages 34 to 78. Study participants performed better on a verbal test after they worked out on a treadmill—but only if they had listened to music during their workout.

*Heart and Lung*

■ Trying to lose weight to control your diabetes? Try several techniques. After a year, overweight people with type 2 diabetes who used all of these methods lowered their blood sugar and lost an average of 16 pounds:

- Nutrition counseling
  - An individualized exercise regimen
  - Eating only meal-replacement bars or shakes for one week once every two months
  - A prescription weight loss drug
- In contrast, participants who only received nutrition counseling and exercise advice lost less than 2 pounds on average.

*Diabetes Care*

## neurology

# Finding the Root Causes of Dementia

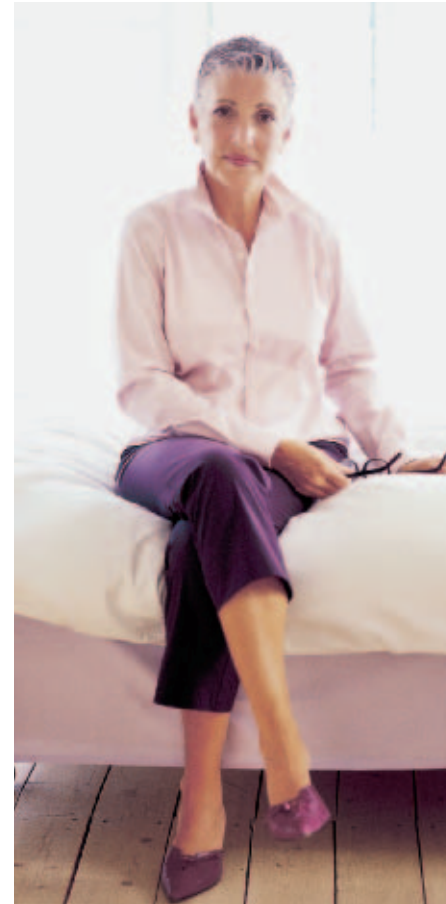
If we live a long life, a good number of us—more than 40 percent—will experience some form of dementia.

Dementia is a mental disorder that affects our ability to think, speak, reason, remember and move.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form, affects roughly 10 percent of people by age 65. However, by age 85, that number climbs to 30 to 40 percent. After Alzheimer's, vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia and Parkinson's disease with dementia are the most common. "Some types of dementia get worse with time and cannot be cured," says Daniel Murman, M.D., neurologist with The Nebraska Medical Center, who specializes in geriatric neurology. "However, the symptoms for almost all types of dementia can be improved. That's why it's so important to seek an early diagnosis and treatment. Ignoring the symptoms can compound your problems."

Seeking medical help also can identify other medical problems that can cause symptoms similar to

Alzheimer's, he says. Approximately 5 to 10 percent of people show memory loss, confusion and other signs of dementia due to potentially reversible



illnesses such as metabolic or thyroid problems, depression, drug intoxication or vitamin deficiencies. The earlier the diagnosis, the easier it is to treat these conditions. Dementia caused by Alzheimer's, stroke or Lewy bodies cannot be cured. However, medications can reduce and slow the progression of symptoms.

Other aspects of your health also should be managed well to minimize their impact on symptoms of dementia, notes Dr. Murman. Diabetes, heart disease and hypertension can lead to additional complications.

Early symptoms of dementia include short-term memory loss that affects daily living functions like remembering people, directions, problem-solving, misplacing items or sudden mood swings. ■

**Call 800-922-0000 to receive your free brochure, "The Dementias: Hope Through Research." For more information about neurological care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## New Therapy for Brain Tumors Gives Patients Hope

Last December, Omahan Chrisie Butler, the mother of three teenage boys, received the most frightening news of her life. She was diagnosed with a schwannoma—a benign tumor on the right side of the base of her skull.

Butler's only option at diagnosis was a lengthy and dangerous surgery that could cause deafness in her right ear, paralysis on the right side of her face and swallowing and speech prob-

lems. As she prepared for surgery, her neurologist, George Greene, M.D., with The Nebraska Medical Center, called to tell her to cancel it. He had found another option—treatment with the hospital's newly acquired Novalis radiation therapy system. The Novalis shaped beam surgery delivers a carefully shaped and highly precise dose of high-energy radiation to treat tumors in the brain and other parts of the body.

Initial side effects included headaches and an occasional metallic taste in her mouth. But those soon faded. "I feel great," says Butler. "I had just three days where I didn't feel well. Only time will tell now if it works, but I'm very optimistic and so is my doctor." ■

**For information about neurological care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## Is Hysterectomy Your Only Option?

As many as 40 percent of the female population will see an obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN) with a common complaint—pain and discomfort due to uterine fibroid tumors. In severe cases, many of these women will be confronted with the decision as to whether to have a hysterectomy—removal of the uterus.

“In some cases, a hysterectomy is completely necessary,” notes Udaya Chintalapudi, M.D., interventional radiologist with The Nebraska Medical Center. However, before you make that decision, every woman should also explore the option of having an increasingly popular procedure known as uterine fibroid embolization. The noninvasive procedure can shrink tumors and serve as an alternative to hysterectomy for some women. Together, Dr. Chintalapudi and partner Anthony Adelson, M.D., radiologist, have been performing the procedure for the past five years.

Fibroid embolization works by



blocking the arteries that supply blood to the fibroids and has a 90 percent clinical success rate. Its primary advantages: a much shorter recovery time and women keep their uterus. Recent studies indicate that in both procedures, symptoms substantially improve for most patients and serious complications are infrequent.

“The long-term recurrence rate for fibroid embolization is about 10 percent,” says Dr. Chintalapudi, “and in many of these patients, the procedure can be performed again. Its biggest drawback is uncertainty about long-term implications on fertility and childbearing. While some women have become pregnant

after the procedure, these numbers are not yet well documented and pregnancy is not recommended.” Talk to your OB/GYN to determine if this procedure is right for you. ■

**For more information about women's services at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## Family-Centered Care for Infants

The Nebraska Medical Center's new Center for Clinical Excellence will unveil a newly expanded 34-bed neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) in late 2005 that will embrace a family-centered environment tailored to support the developmental needs of premature infants. The new NICU will be more than triple in size.

“The survival rates of premature infants have risen substantially over the last 20 years,” says David Bolam, M.D., neonatologist and medical director of the NICU. “Our new NICU has perfected the environmental variables and science of nursing care to provide optimal support of their needs.”

The new center will feature private rooms with dedicated family spaces as well as separate areas for education, relaxation and overnight care by parents before discharge. Each room is equipped with state-of-the-art technology and includes special features to control light and noise, which impact the infant's development.

“We are doing all we can to support the family as a unit and to create a warm environment of healing, support and hope in which infants thrive and parents take an active partnership role in their baby's care,” says Susan Adams, M.S., R.N., director of Women's and Infants' Services.

## Feeling Tired, Sluggish? It Could Be Your Thyroid

Feeling a little sluggish, tired or moody lately? If you're a woman over 40, it could be your thyroid. Thyroid imbalances occur primarily in women older than age 40 and increase with age.

Even if your symptoms are mild, don't wait to get it checked, as the severity of the symptoms doesn't always correspond with the severity of the disease, says Alain Taylon, M.D., endocrinologist with The Nebraska Medical Center. What's more, untreated thyroid disease can boost

cholesterol levels, interfere with fertility, lead to osteoporosis and even contribute to death.

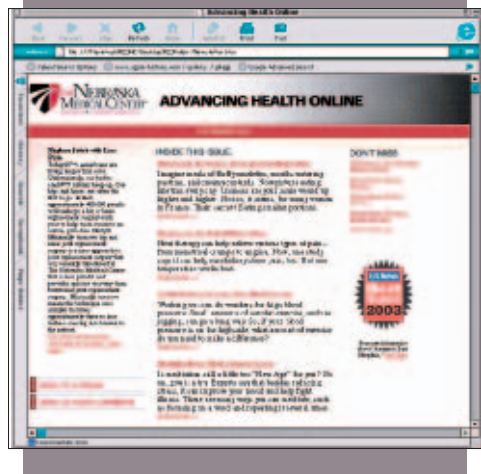
Hypothyroidism, or an underactive thyroid, is the most common type. Symptoms include fatigue, forgetfulness, mood swings, weight gain, hoarse voice, pale, dry skin and trouble swallowing. An overactive thyroid, or hyperthyroidism, is associated with irritability or nervousness, muscle weakness, irregular menstrual periods, weight loss, trouble sleeping and an enlarged thyroid or goiter.

Because symptoms vary so widely, higher-risk individuals should be screened at the first sign of possible symptoms, says Dr. Taylon. You have an increased risk for thyroid disease if a family member or close relative has thyroid disease; you have type 1 diabetes, cardiac disease, autoimmune disease or goiter by age 12; or if you have been pregnant. ■

**For more information about thyroid care at The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**

## SIGN UP TODAY FOR FREE E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS

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# What You Need to Know About Herbal Supplements

Americans are consuming more herbal supplements than ever before. Most people think they're safe because they're labeled "natural." But are they really? Herbs contain active ingredients that can alter your body functions, cause adverse reactions and can even be life threatening when they interact with prescription or over-the-counter drugs. "No one should take herbal supplements unless they are part of an overall plan recommended by your physician," says Michael Powell, director of Pharmaceutical and Nutrition Care at The Nebraska Medical Center.

If you're taking herbal supplements, your physician needs to know. Herbal supplements can be particularly risky for individuals who are pregnant or breast-feeding, are younger than 18 or older than 65, or for those having surgery. Herbal supplements can affect



the success of your surgery by causing a variety of complications, including increasing your heart rate, causing excessive bleeding, altering the effectiveness of sedative anesthesia and suppressing your body's immune system. Individuals with certain medical conditions also have an increased risk for adverse effects, especially those with high blood pressure, thyroid problems, depression, Parkinson's disease, enlarged prostate gland, blood-clotting

problems, diabetes, heart disease, epilepsy, glaucoma, history of stroke or organ transplant.

Many physicians and pharmacists are reluctant to endorse herbal remedies. Why? First, herbal supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Therefore, the information and claims listed on the label have not been substantiated by clinical research, says Powell. Secondly, there have been relatively few clinical studies done on most herbal supplements. ■

**Call 800-922-0000 to receive your free brochure, "Dietary Supplements." For more information about nutrition from The Nebraska Medical Center, visit us online at [www.NebraskaMed.com](http://www.NebraskaMed.com).**



## FREE Health Information: Take Charge of Your Health



To get your free information, call The Nebraska Medical Center at **800-922-0000** or e-mail us at [info@NebraskaMed.com](mailto:info@NebraskaMed.com):

- for the free brochure "High Cholesterol: What You Need to Know"
- for a free brochure on cancer support groups at the Nebraska Medical Center and in the Omaha area
- for the free brochure "The Dementias: Hope Through Research"
- for the free brochure "Dietary Supplements"

Get your FREE health information today!

## ADVANCING HEALTH

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**Leslie McAllister**  
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