

Health Connection

THE MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ARIZONA
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER



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The facts about fibroids

You're constantly running to the restroom, your back hurts and your periods are particularly painful. What's going on? You might be dealing with uterine fibroids, noncancerous tumors that grow out of uterine tissue.

Physicians aren't sure why some women develop fibroids, but if you're overweight or African-American or an immediate family member has fibroids, you're at increased risk.

WHAT DO FIBROIDS FEEL LIKE?

In most cases, you won't even know that you have fibroids. But consult your physician if you experience any of these signs:

- heavy or painful periods
- bleeding between periods
- constant pelvic pain
- a feeling of fullness in the lower abdomen
- an increased need to urinate
- pain during sex
- lower back pain
- reproductive problems, including infertility, multiple miscarriages or preterm labor

WHAT'S NEXT?

Your physician will do a pelvic exam to see whether your uterus is enlarged or misshapen. If he or she spots abnormalities, an imaging exam, such as an ultrasound, can confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment depends on your symptoms' severity, the



fibroids' size and location, your age and whether you want children:

- If you don't have symptoms, treatment is usually unnecessary.
- If you're approaching menopause, you may be advised to do nothing, as fibroids tend to stop growing or even shrink when hormone levels drop.
- If you have occasional discomfort, try an over-the-counter pain reliever, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen.
- If you're bleeding heavily, your physician may recommend hormonal treatments to lighten your flow or an iron supplement to prevent anemia.
- If your fibroids are large, your physician may suggest hormones to temporarily stop menstruation and shrink the growths. These hormones are sometimes prescribed before surgery to make it easier to remove the fibroids.
- If your fibroids are growing quickly or causing excessive blood loss, your physician may present several surgical options. Myomectomy (removing the fibroids while leaving the uterus intact) is the best option for women who wish to have children. Myolysis (freezing or using an electric current to destroy growths) and hysterectomy (removing the uterus) are other possible treatments.

Take our survey and win a \$50 Wal-Mart gift card!

{ www.healthconnectionmag.com }

We need your input! We'd like to know what you think about our publication so we can better serve your needs. Please take a few minutes to complete our online survey. Your responses will be used to improve our services to the community and to enhance our publication.

Filling out the online survey is easy: Simply go to www.healthconnectionmag.com and complete the survey.

By completing our survey, you'll be automatically entered in a random drawing to win one of five gift cards.

All surveys must be completed online by June 1, 2009, to be eligible to win. One entry per person, please. Thank you for your time and assistance.

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. We do not sell, rent or give away your e-mail address.

Gut check

Could it be appendicitis?

What's tiny and useless but can cause a whole lot of pain if it's unhappy? Your appendix, a finger-shaped pouch attached to your lower intestine. And if your appendix ever becomes inflamed and fills with pus, you'll have a raging case of appendicitis, a potentially life-threatening illness.

WHO'S AT RISK?

Though anyone can get appendicitis, it often strikes between ages 10 and 30. It usually happens when the appendix is blocked by fecal matter or a swollen lymph node following a digestive tract infection. A small number of people are diagnosed following traumatic abdominal injury, while others are genetically predisposed. In all, about 280,000 appendectomies are performed each year in the United States, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

NOT JUST A BELLYACHE

A hundred different ailments can cause stomach pain, but your appendix might be the culprit if you have:

- pain that starts around the belly button and moves to the lower right of the abdomen and gets worse when you move, take deep breaths, sneeze or cough
- abdominal swelling
- loss of appetite
- nausea and vomiting
- constipation or diarrhea
- an inability to pass gas
- a low-grade fever

TIME TO TAKE IT OUT?

This isn't a wait-and-see kind of problem. Removal is the only effective treatment for appendicitis, so if you're having symptoms, head to the emergency room, stat. Once there, a physician will check for pain location and ten-



derness, run a blood test for infection and send you for a computed tomography (CT) scan to confirm the diagnosis. He or she will also look to rule out other possibilities for your symptoms, including ectopic pregnancy, ovarian cysts, kidney stones and Crohn's disease. If you *do* have appendicitis, your appendix will be surgically removed before it can rupture. It may be done laparoscopically (the surgeon makes a few small incisions in your abdomen) or with traditional open surgery (the surgeon makes one large incision). Since experts have been unable to pinpoint the appendix's function, it's unlikely that you'll suffer any long-term effects.

Delay treatment and your appendix will likely rupture. If that happens, chances are good that you'll develop an infection of the abdominal cavity called peritonitis and then pain will take over and your entire abdomen will swell. Fever, thirst and low urine output will likely follow. This infection can cause organ failure, infertility and even death if not adequately contained with an abdominal cavity cleaning and intravenous (IV) antibiotics.

Where does it hurt?

After migrating from your navel, pain from appendicitis nearly always settles at a place on your abdomen called **McBurney's Point**, named after the 19th century surgeon Charles McBurney, an authority on appendicitis. **Find it by drawing an imaginary line from your belly button to your right hip bone; you'll feel tenderness about halfway between the two points.**



Barry Schneider
Chief Executive Officer

Dear neighbors,

Happy spring! As the weather changes, so does Western Arizona Regional Medical Center (WARMC).

Some of the changes you'll see at WARMC include reduced waiting time in our emergency room by adding a fast track area, and working with our current medi-

cal staff in recruiting physicians in family medicine, internal medicine, vascular surgery, pulmonology, urology, general surgery and cardiology.

EXPANDING SERVICES

In the coming months, we'll open a second catheterization laboratory, expand our surgery department by adding an additional operating room and develop an urgent care center, wound care center and diabetes

clinic. Through all of these initiatives and more, we'll reduce the number of occasions where it's necessary to transport patients out of the area at great expense and inconvenience.

In spite of tight and challenging times, we have a lot to look forward to, and we continue to focus on better serving our community. We're up to the task and prepared to commit the resources to make this year even better.

Remember, WARMC is here for you and your family every day of the year. Thank you for making us your hospital of choice.

Sincerely,

BARRY SCHNEIDER
Chief Executive Officer
Western Arizona Regional Medical Center

MEET OUR MEDICAL STAFF

In 2009, Western Arizona Regional Medical Center (WARMC) expects to have several new physicians join our medical staff. We're pleased to welcome our newest member.



PETER SEIPEL, M.D.
Board-Certified
Orthopedic Surgeon

**Western Arizona Orthopedic
Surgery & Sports Medicine**
2755 Silver Creek Road,
Suite 111
Bullhead City
(928) 704-7173

Peter Seipel, M.D., has relocated from Clovis, N.M., to join the WARMC medical staff. Dr. Seipel received his medical degree from St. Louis University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Mo., and completed his residency in the Phoenix Orthopedic Residency Program in Phoenix.

Dr. Seipel completed fellowships in orthopedic sports medicine at the Santa Monica Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Group in Santa Monica, Calif. He offers consultations and surgical procedures for a wide variety of bone-related health problems and specializes in basic orthopedic trauma and sports injuries.

Waiting for a special delivery?

Join the Tiny Toes OB Club!



Western Arizona Regional Medical Center (WARMC) proudly introduces its new Tiny Toes OB Club, which was developed to help make your childbirth experience an even more treasured lifetime event. Tiny Toes members receive amenities and an array of exclusive discounts from participating merchants.

GIFTS AND BENEFITS

As a cherished club member, we want to celebrate your special day by showering you with gifts, such as:

- the bestselling book, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*
- a special dinner or lunch for two in your room with a choice of steak or chicken
- a digital photo of your baby posted on WARMC's Tiny Toes Web site (with your approval)
- a diaper bag filled with special baby items
- a special CD of lullabies
- a Tiny Toes bib and onesie
- a commemorative footprint birth certificate
- exclusive discounts for mommy and child goods and services from participating merchants

! Start off on the right foot!

Join Tiny Toes to start benefiting today! Ask your obstetrician/gynecologist for an enrollment form or call (928) 763-0222 to register. Visit www.warmc.com for more information.



Your baby will be here before you know it. Start off on the right foot by enrolling in WARMC's free Tiny Toes OB Club!

OUR COMMITMENT

Members are special guests at WARMC. We'll provide you with information, guidance and comprehensive care before, during and after your delivery. Rely on WARMC to provide club members with:

- a skilled and experienced staff
- a tour of our obstetrics unit
- information via our Web site's "Health Resources" link
- free birthing classes
- a special collection of keepsakes to help celebrate the birth of your child

WARMC believes that you and your newborn deserve the very best. Let us be a part of your special day by becoming a member of the Tiny Toes OB Club.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **allergies**?

Take this quiz to find out.

1 Approximately how many people suffer from allergies?

- a. 50 million
- b. 35 million
- c. 27 million
- d. 18 million

2 You're more likely to develop allergies if you:

- a. eat shellfish
- b. have a family member who has allergies
- c. had pets as a child
- d. regularly garden

3 Which does *not* aggravate allergies?

- a. cigarette smoke
- b. cockroach droppings
- c. pet saliva
- d. they all can trigger allergies

4 Where does pollen first appear in the spring?

- a. weeds
- b. trees
- c. grass
- d. mold

5 What reduces pollen allergies in the spring?

- a. not drying laundry outside on a clothesline
- b. removing your shoes before coming indoors
- c. not going outside before 10 a.m.
- d. all of the above

ANSWERS: 1. A; 2. B; 3. D; 4. B; 5. D

Get your blood pressure under control

High blood pressure truly is sinister: You can have it but not know it until you suffer a heart attack, stroke or another serious health complication.

Hence, its nickname: the silent killer. Seeing your physician regularly is the best way to determine whether you have high blood pressure—or hypertension. He or she will measure the force of blood in your arteries by looking at your systolic (the higher number) and diastolic (lower number) pressure. Elevated levels (140/90 mm Hg or more) indicate hypertension,



while numbers ranging from 120/80 to 139/89 point to prehypertension, a condition that puts you at risk for high blood pressure in the future. Normal blood pressure is under 120/80. Although hypertension has no cure, you can take steps to control it and protect your health:

- **Eat a healthy diet.**

High-fat and sugary foods contribute to high blood pressure,

so reach for foods from the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet. They include whole grains, fish and poultry, nuts, fruits and vegetables and low-fat and low-sodium foods.

- **Get moving.** Aim for 30 minutes of cardiovascular activity most days of the week. If you're short on time, break up your workout into three 10-minute segments over the course of the day. Take a walk around the block, dance to your favorite CD or work out to an exercise DVD.

- **Take your meds.** Sometimes medication is the only way to lower your blood pressure. Because hypertension drugs work only when they're regularly in your system, you should never miss a dose or stop taking them.



HOW DOES WATER GET CONTAMINATED?

When it comes to swimming pools, water parks and play fountains, most disease comes from fecal matter on the bodies of sick splashers. If chlorine and pH levels aren't carefully calibrated, other swimmers could swallow live bacteria. In hot tubs, naturally occurring germs can cause rashes and respiratory problems, ranging from the common cold to pneumonia. Large bodies of water—from rivers to the ocean—can be contaminated by sewage, animal waste, swimmers' feces and even parasites.

HOW CAN I AVOID CONTRACTING RWI?

Take these precautions to stay healthy when you swim, dive or just splash around:

- Avoid pools with murky or chemical-smelling water (properly chlorinated pools don't have an odor).
- Don't share towels, kickboards or toys.
- Keep water out of your mouth and never swallow it.
- Stay on dry land if you have open sores.
- Skip bodies of freshwater on very hot days, since bacteria flourish in warm water.
- Plug your nose when swimming in freshwater to keep parasites out.
- Shower before and after swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take children on frequent bathroom breaks and change diapers in the bathroom, not poolside.

Warding off water illness

As the weather warms up, we all look forward to swimming laps in the pool; splashing in the ocean, stream or river; or lounging in a hot tub. But those waters may mask something ominous: Contaminated water can lead to recreational water illness (RWI). Touching or swallowing water in pools, lakes, spas, rivers and oceans can lead to gastrointestinal, outer ear, eye, skin, respiratory and neurologic infections—and children, pregnant women and people with compromised immune systems are at greatest risk.

Be a fruit-and-veggie role model

Whether you're driving the car or stepping into high heels, your little ones want to be just like you. So why not use your power for good? Follow these tips, and the eating habits your children copy will positively influence their health—and yours—for years to come:

- 1 Restock the pantry.** Keep healthy snacks around. Say goodbye to cookies loaded with high-fructose corn syrup and bright orange cheese puffs and hello to baked veggie chips and sugar-free applesauce.
- 2 Drink right.** Switch out your super-acidic, high-sugar soda for water and 100 percent juice—little teeth and waistlines will thank you.
- 3 Start the day right.** No time to sit down to breakfast? Send your kids off with a banana and a baggie filled with dry whole-grain cereal. Studies show that breakfast eaters boast improved math grades, less incidence of hyperactivity and better school attendance. And teen-

agers who eat first thing tend to weigh less, exercise more and generally have a healthier diet than their breakfast-skipping pals.

4 Turn off the tube. People who eat in front of the television are more likely to eat unhealthy foods.

5 Eat together. Children who dine with their parents tend to consume more fruits and veggies and fewer unhealthy snacks.

6 Pack a lunch for everyone. You'll save cash while making sure the whole family is eating well. Be sure to include a lean protein, low-fat dairy, grains, a vegetable and a piece of fruit (try sliced turkey and low-fat cheese on whole-wheat bread with carrot sticks and an apple).



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SPRING 2009



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70WAR

Enhanced diagnostics

Digital mammography

Getting a more precise mammogram just got easier thanks to Western Arizona Regional Medical Center's (WARMC) Imaging Center and its new digital mammography unit.

THE DIGITAL DIFFERENCE

The new unit features digital technology, which enhances images, allowing radiologists to see subtle changes. "By using computer-aided detection, the radiologist gets a second set of eyes that can help point out abnormal mammograms easier than film can," says Cindy Wolff, WARMC director of diagnostic imaging.

The radiologist now has the ability to look at the images immediately versus first having to print the films, allowing for faster turnaround time for patients. Going digital has made it easier for physicians as well. "The images can be put on a disc," says Wolff, "and the physician can view them on his or her computer and see them right away versus having to wait for films.

"The unit also comes with two different sizes of breast paddles, which are better for both imaging and comfort," says Wolff.



! Don't delay your mammogram!

Remember, the earlier cancer is found, the easier it is to treat and cure. A physician order is required for a mammogram. For more information about digital mammography or to find a physician, call (928) 763-0222.



The dedicated staff at WARMC's Imaging Center