ACHOO!
Nasal allergies are nothing to sneeze at

Sun smarts
You can protect your skin and still have fun

Visit us on the web at www.peacehealth.org
You’re in Emergency—what’s next?

**ONE MINUTE** you’re in your vehicle headed to work, unaware that another car is racing to beat a red light. The next thing you know, you’re looking up at the ceiling in the emergency department (ED) at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center.

“What happened?” is the first question, but it’s followed quickly by “what’s happening now?” ED caregivers ease that anxiety as part of caring for each patient’s physical needs.

“We want to make sure patients understand each step of their care,” said Janie Carter, ED RN. “We are encouraging them to ask.”

What test am I getting? How long will it take? Who will be taking care of me? Will I need to be admitted to the hospital?

“Caregiver buttons that say ‘Ask Me What’s Next’ are one way we’re working to improve each patient’s experience,” said Laura Schlenker, ED manager.

Do you want to know what’s next? Please ask.

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**Family sun smarts**

*SUNSHINE ON* your body may feel good. But too much exposure to the sun’s powerful ultraviolet (UV) rays can do damage, ranging from aging skin prematurely to causing skin cancer—even in young people.

That’s why it’s important for everyone in the family to practice sun safety. Here’s how:

**Slather up.** Use a sunscreen and a lip balm with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 or higher, the American Cancer Society advises. For youngsters, choose a waterproof sunscreen with a label indicating that it’s recommended for children.

Before applying sunscreen to a child, rub a small amount on his or her back to check for an allergic reaction. If no reaction occurs, spread sunscreen evenly over all uncovered skin, including the ears and lips, the tops of feet and hands, and the backs of knees (if they are exposed).

Be careful applying sunscreen around the eyes, and be sure to avoid the eyelids.

You can use a lip balm instead of sunscreen on the lips if you prefer.

Everyone should apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors. Reapply after swimming or excessive sweating.

Use sunscreen all the time—even when you think you might not need it, such as on overcast days. Radiation from the sun can pass through clouds. It can also pass through glass, which means you’re still susceptible to the dangers of the sun when in a vehicle.

**Dress for protection.** Dress your child (and yourself) in lightweight, tightly woven clothing that covers the arms and legs, and put on a hat with a brim to shade the face, scalp, ears and neck. Children and adults should wear wrap-around sunglasses that provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays.

**Play safely.** Encourage children to play in the shade as much as possible, and keep them indoors when the sun’s rays are strongest, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

American Academy of Dermatology; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Learn more

For more information about sun safety, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Go to [www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin).

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Tanja Reiss, RN, Emergency Department nurse
Feature stories

Make the connection.
PatientConnection, PeaceHealth Medical Group’s patient portal, is now better than ever. Learn how it can help make your life easier.

Emergencies. When it comes to little ones, emergencies are a big deal. Keep this list handy so you can act fast in case of a medical emergency.

Care when you need it most. Whatcom Hospice House has cared for a record number of patients since opening in September.

Keeping informed

Be prepared. Filling out these forms in advance can save you a lot of stress in an emergency. page 6

Mark your calendar! PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center offer a variety of health classes, support groups and other events to meet the community’s needs. page 7

Brain tumors. If you have any of the symptoms listed, you should schedule an appointment to discuss them with your doctor. page 11
Collaborating on cardiac care

Bill Lombardi, MD, of North Cascade Cardiology and medical director of PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories, hosted fellow leading interventional cardiologists from major heart centers in the U.S., Canada, Sweden and England for an intense collaborative education summit on clearing chronic total occlusions (CTO). Dr. Lombardi is one of the nation’s top specialists in this procedure and was invited to present a live case from his CTO Summit at the annual convention of the American College of Cardiology.

The transforming power of art

The PeaceHealth St. Joseph Foundation Healing through Art program was honored by the 32nd annual Bellingham Mayor’s Arts Awards for significantly contributing to the arts in our community. The goal of the rotating exhibits of work by regional artists is to create a healing environment, transforming long, blank hospital walls into a healing gallery of fine art. It enriches the patient experience and makes the hospital a pleasant place to visit.

Care on San Juan Island

Groundbreaking for PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center, scheduled to open in late 2012 on San Juan Island, is July 23. The San Juan Island Community Foundation funded the purchase of the 22-acre site for the 10-bed critical access hospital and will provide a total of $10,000,000 in philanthropic support. The hospital, proposed by the San Juan Community Hospital Committee, will provide comprehensive medical care, including a 24-hour emergency room, an expanded primary care and specialty clinic, an outpatient surgery center, a cancer care center, and an expanded diagnostic services center.

Reducing our environmental impact

Health Today is published at a facility with an emission system that uses up to 50 percent less natural gas than conventional methods and a chiller that saves more than 426,000 kilowatts of electricity over the previous system. The Health Today publisher recycles all paper waste and uses Soy Seal ink, which is nontoxic and comes from renewable resources.

Honoring excellent physicians

The PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Staff's Physicians of Excellence for 2011 are Ian Thompson, MD, and Hull "Cactus" Cook, MD. Dr. Thompson served 28 years as chair of the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center multidisciplinary Tumor Board, or cancer conference, which helps determine appropriate treatment and follow-up options to improve cancer care and survival rates. Dr. Cook, who will retire on 11/11/11, was recognized for delivering perhaps the most babies in PeaceHealth St. Joseph history—an average of 230 per year since 1981.

What’s happening

Congratulations, Denise Asdal!

Denise Asdal, a medical care unit registered nurse, received top honors as Nurse of the Year at the annual Nursing Excellence Awards ceremony. Seven other nurses were recognized for categories of excellence. The program honors the legacy of nursing at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center and acknowledges the contributions of nurses to the patients, families and community. The awards are displayed in a main public area that features a commissioned mural titled “Healing Garden,” which serves as an enduring tribute to nurses’ passion, gifts and compassionate service.

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SHIRLEY WALKER of Bellingham is pleased that PeaceHealth Medical Group (PHMG) has upgraded its web-based tool for patients, PatientConnection, to provide greater interactivity.

PatientConnection is a free, password-protected patient portal to some PeaceHealth test results and information. PHMG patients can use PatientConnection to track their PeaceHealth-provided care.

Walker, a retired customer service manager, appreciates that the web tool allows PeaceHealth patients to access certain personal health information and to email their providers, no matter the day or time. She especially likes the time-saving feature of PatientConnection.

“Not having to call to make an appointment with my physician, not having to wait for test results, and the timeliness of information,” says Walker, are all valuable for busy people or those who are eager to know their test results.

Time is on your side
Being able to see your results may not replace having your primary care physician explain the results, but it does help ensure you have time to review the information and prepare for your doctor’s appointment. Walker says that’s important for both the patient and physician.

“PatientConnection will give the doctor quicker access to information about the patient and clear ability to communicate well in the short time they have together,” Walker says.

Peter Valenzuela, MD, medical director for PHMG, agrees that PatientConnection can enhance the doctor-patient relationship and points out a number of other benefits and conveniences of the web portal.

“Patients can use the portal to reschedule—or request—an appointment,” says Dr. Valenzuela. “They can also print out their medications and immunization history, or request referral to a specialist.”

But perhaps the most important benefit of PatientConnection, according to Dr. Valenzuela, is that it enables people to become better informed and more engaged in their own healthcare.

“In the past, we used to sit with patients and decide what we, as physicians, felt was best for them,” Dr. Valenzuela says. “Now we talk with them about different options available and ask what they feel would be the most appropriate based on their circumstances.”

Walker says she is from a generation that has traditionally been deferential to their physicians; however, she loves the idea of being a more active partner in her healthcare.

“It makes patients feel much more in control of their own care,” says Walker. And not having to sit around and wait for a phone call with test results?

“That’s just wonderful!”

Know the differences
Shared Care Plan is also available to help you better understand and manage your health information.

While both PatientConnection (www.patientconnection.org) and Shared Care Plan (www.SharedCarePlan.org) provide patients secure access to their information, they function differently.

Shared Care Plan contains health information, such as allergies and immunization history, as entered by the patient and imported from electronic medical records, lab systems and the state immunization registry. It is a good way to track lifetime health records, regardless of whether you receive care at PeaceHealth or elsewhere.

For more information, see page 9.

More control in your hands
With PatientConnection, PeaceHealth Medical Group patients can:
✓ Get real-time access to test results
✓ Connect with caregivers without making an appointment
✓ Request, reschedule or cancel appointments
✓ Request and view specialty referrals
✓ Review medication lists and submit changes
✓ View allergy lists and submit changes
✓ View and print immunization lists and submit changes

www.peacehealth.org • Health Today 5
Kids and emergencies: What you should do

If your child is badly injured or becomes seriously ill without warning, it is a medical emergency.

Timely treatment can prevent a severe injury or illness from getting worse and permanently harming your child.

Signs of an emergency in a child include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Chest or upper abdominal pain or pressure.
- Fainting or sudden dizziness or weakness.
- Changes in vision.
- Confusion or changes in mental status.
- Sudden or severe pain.
- Uncontrolled bleeding.
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea.
- Coughing up or vomiting blood.
- Excessive sleepiness.

If your child shows any of these signs, call 911 right away.

Meantime, stay calm, start rescue breathing or CPR if your child isn’t breathing, apply continuous pressure to any bleeding wounds your child might have, and stay with your child until help arrives.

American Academy of Pediatrics; American College of Emergency Physicians

Medical forms are essential

SPENDING JUST A FEW minutes filling out some forms is one of the best ways to prepare for an emergency. Forms that contain medical information about you and your family can be vital.

The American College of Emergency Physicians recommends that you complete the following forms for yourself and your children:

- Medical history, which contains a list of your prescription medications, medical conditions, surgeries, family medical history and emergency contacts.
- Consent-to-treat—available in both English and Spanish—which lets you designate someone (such as a relative, babysitter, neighbor or school nurse) to make medical decisions for your child in your absence.
- Emergency information for children with special health needs (chronic medical illnesses or disabilities), which lists all prior medical procedures, allergies, and medications or foods to avoid.

Make copies of all your medical forms, and let others know where to find them. Also give a copy to your doctor.

Update all of the forms regularly. And if you have a medical condition, wear some type of medical ID jewelry or carry a medical ID card in your purse or wallet.
**Community CALENDAR**

*Summer 2011*

**HEALTH SCREENINGS**

‘Take Heart’ Screening
This 45-minute screening provides a detailed analysis of your risk for heart disease. Dates and times vary. To learn more or to make an appointment, call LifeQuest at 788-6720. $55 (scholarships available for qualifying women)

Blood Pressure and Glucose Checks
Offered once a month. Blood pressure check is free; $5 for finger stick glucose screening.

- Fourth Thursday of the month, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Second Saturday of the month

**WELLNESS EDUCATION**

**Filling Your Tank**
Are you running on empty? Do you know what rewarding experiences and activities it takes to fill your energy reservoir? At this single-session class, you will learn ways to “fill your tank.” Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $25

**M.V.P. (My Vascular Profile)**
This one-hour screening is designed for people with risk factors that may increase their chances of peripheral vascular disease and stroke. To participate, you must be 55 or older with one or more of the following: high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, smoking or family history of cardiovascular disease. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to make an appointment. $85

**Brain Boosters**
To keep our brains sharp and alert, we need to engage in new, stimulating activities. This two-hour interactive class includes 10 steps to boost your brain and covers “how to use it so you don’t lose it” techniques. The brain boosters learned in this class can be practiced at any time and will benefit people of all ages. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $25

**Building Better Bones**
Does your family history put you at risk for bone disease? Have you been diagnosed with osteoporosis? During these three sessions, learn about risk factors for osteoporosis; which exercises make bones denser; and the role calcium, vitamin D and magnesium play. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $48

**Eight Ways to Boost Your Metabolism**
Metabolism can be confusing, and focusing on diet alone can actually lower your metabolism. This single-session class teaches eight ways to boost your metabolism, with a focus on exercise. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $25

**Location key**

Classes and events are at the following locations, unless otherwise noted.

- = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Main Campus, 2901 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham
- = St. Luke’s Community Health Education Center, 3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham
- = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center South Campus, 809 E. Chestnut, Bellingham
- = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center, 3217 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham

For a 10 percent discount, have a physician referral.

Payment plans available.

Refunds or rescheduling will be provided for cancellations received by 10 a.m. one business day before the start of the program.

LifeQuest reserves the right to cancel any program due to insufficient registration.

No discounts are available for screenings.

www.peacehealth.org • Health Today
A place of caring and warmth

PeaceHealth St. Joseph Adult Day Health Center (ADHC) provides engaging activities, nursing services, therapeutic exercise and support to family caregivers in order to enable adults with chronic illness, disability or memory loss to remain safe and healthy where they live. It is a place of caring and warmth, where meaningful relationships are created through shared experiences and stories.

Caregivers provide support and information about chronic illness care, fall risk screening, range-of-motion and balance exercises, as well as strength training. The ADHC also provides resources for caregivers—regardless of whether the person in their care attends Adult Day Health Center—including caregiver support groups and lectures on topics related to challenges that caregivers face.

For more information about our services, please call 788-6410.

Fit Fitness In

We are bombarded with the message that exercise is essential for health and well-being, yet 80 percent of us do not exercise. The majority of those who don’t exercise say their daily schedule does not allow time for exercise. Attend this class to learn ways to incorporate exercise into a busy schedule. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $25

NUTRITION EDUCATION

Diet and Cancer: What’s the Connection?

Does what we eat really make a difference? When it comes to cancer prevention, absolutely! Research shows that our food choices are closely linked to our risk for certain types of cancer. This single-session class will introduce easy and simple ways to decrease your risk for different types of cancer. Call LifeQuest at 788-6720 to register. $25

Childbirth Preparation

Several classes are offered, including Hypnobirthing (five sessions), Pregnancy and Childbirth (five sessions), Preparation for Childbirth and Parenting (eight sessions), and Childbirth Preparation Weekend. Co-sponsored by Bellingham Technical College. Call 752-8350 or visit www.btc.ctc.edu.

Childbirth Center Information Tour

This one- to two-hour informational tour is offered to all individuals and families and includes information about the admission process, hospital routines and procedures and a look at the labor rooms. Registration is required and available online at www.peacehealth.org/whatcom/womenservices/CBC/tours.htm. 

Grandparenting

To help expectant grandparents be supportive in their new role. Topics include labor and delivery, basic newborn care, safety, and nutrition. May include a tour of the Childbirth Center. Call 788-6363 for a schedule. By appointment only.

Kangaroo Kapers

A program for children whose parents are expecting a baby. Children tour the postpartum and nursery areas of the hospital with their parents and puppets. Call 788-6363 or go to www.peacehealth.org/whatcom/womenservices/CBC/tours.htm to schedule a visit.

Support Groups

Pulmonary Hypertension Support Group

Living with a rare illness such as this can be isolating and frightening, but you don’t have to face your illness alone. The support, connection and information you need are available with this support group. Call Loretta at 671-2579 for more information.

Second Thursday of each month, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

Brain Injury Support Group

Call Mike Warren at 820-5021 for more information.

Second Thursday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

Third Saturday of each month, 1 to 3 p.m.

Health Support Center, 1212 Indian St.

Bellingham MS Support Group

Support and education for people with multiple sclerosis (MS). Call Jo at 752-2300 for more information.

Second Wednesday of each month, noon to 1:30 p.m.

Sjogren’s Syndrome Support Group

Contact Linda Hughes at 676-1926 or linda927@earthlink.net for more information.

VISIT US ON THE WEB

WWW.PEACEHEALTH.ORG
**FREE** Grief Support Group  
Open drop-in sessions. Call 733-5877 for more information.  
- Tuesdays, 7 to 8:30 p.m.  
- Wednesdays, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

**FREE** Spinal Cord Injury Support Network  
For more information, call 332-8484.  
- First Monday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

**FREE** Peripheral Neuropathy Support Group  
For more information, call 676-0367.  
- Third Wednesday of each month, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

**FREE** Stroke Support Group  
To learn more, call 715-6420. No registration necessary.  
- Second Thursday of each month, 2 to 3:30 p.m.

**FREE** ALS Support Group  
Call Mary Rebar at 733-5222.  
- Second Thursday of each month, noon to 1:30 p.m.

**FREE** Gluten Intolerance Support Group  
Call 332-7435 or 734-4989 for information. Also visit www.glutenfreeway.info.  
- First Tuesday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

**FREE** Diabetes Support Group  
For more information, call 303-5124.  
- Second Monday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

**FREE** Caregiver Support Group  
Open to all family caregivers. The group format rotates between a speaker and a facilitated discussion. Call 788-6410 for more information, or visit www.peacehealth.org/adultdayservices.  
- Second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, 2 to 3:30 p.m.  
- Rehab Conference Room  
  June 14: Cheryl Smith, hospice chaplain, on the work of grieving  
  July 12: Foot care with Michael Sherwin, DPM  
  Aug. 9: Family caregiver picnic

**FREE** Evergreen Al-Anon  
For more information, call 734-2825.  
- Mondays, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

**FREE** Alzheimer’s Disease Support Group  
To learn more, call 510-4523. No registration necessary.  
- First Monday of each month, 7:30 p.m.

**FREE** Diabetes Education Group  
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**FREE** Community Caregiver Support Center  
PeaceHealth St. Joseph Adult Day Health Center (ADHC) operates a caregiver resource center, which provides an array of support services for family caregivers. Enrollment provides an individual assessment to help support each person’s caregiving situation. ADHC also offers support groups and presentations on alternating Tuesdays from 2 to 3:30 p.m. in the Rehab Conference Room at South Campus. For more information, call 788-6410 or visit www.peacehealth.org/adultdayservices.

**FREE** The Shared Care Plan: Your Personal Health Record  
The Shared Care Plan is a tool to help you better understand and manage your health information and improve the effectiveness of your conversations with healthcare providers. It’s a free, easy-to-use health record that lets you organize and store vital health information, including medications, allergies, diagnoses and family history, as well as documents such as advance directives. Now you can also connect to Child Profile Immunization Registry for your family’s immunization records and to PeaceHealth Laboratories to import your lab results. You can also have your Shared Care Plan on your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch. To find out more about drop-in information sessions or to sign up for the Shared Care Plan, visit www.SharedCarePlan.org or call 671-6800, option 2.

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CANCER CENTER PROGRAMS

The PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center offers the following programs on a continual basis unless noted. Please call 788-6701 for class times, locations and to register. All classes and programs are free.

Cancer Survivors’ Group
Open to all cancer survivors. Meet fellow cancer survivors, celebrate victories, share hopes and concerns, and provide encouragement and support. For information, call 788-6706.

➢ Third Saturday of each month, 10 a.m. to noon

Prostate Cancer Support Group—‘US TOO’
An educational forum and discussion group for men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer or who are interested in learning about it. Spouses or partners are welcome.

➢ Second Tuesday of each month, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Reach to Recovery
Trained breast cancer survivor volunteers offer support and up-to-date information, including literature for spouses, partners, children and friends. Volunteers who have survived breast cancer and live full lives serve as role models. For information about becoming a Reach to Recovery volunteer or to schedule a visit from a trained volunteer, call Carol Brumet, Reach to Recovery Coordinator, at 788-6706.

Meditation Class
Chris Stephens, certified by the Self Awareness Institute in Laguna Beach, Calif., introduces a multidisciplinary approach to reducing anxiety, mood disturbance or pain. In a study of patients with breast and prostate cancer, meditation has been shown to improve overall quality of life, stress levels and sleep quality. Call to register.

➢ Fridays, 10 to 11 a.m.

Healing Through Creativity
Cancer patients and survivors are invited to share their creative side together. The class focuses on watercolors, though other media may be introduced. No talent or training is required! This class is taught by an art instructor, and all supplies are provided. For information, call Carol Brumet at 788-6706.

➢ Wednesdays, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Women’s Cancer Support Group
Open to all women, regardless of age or cancer diagnosis. For more information, call 788-6706.

➢ Mondays, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Friends and Family Support Group
If someone you care about has been diagnosed with cancer, this group will be a place to receive support and information to help you cope with the challenges. No registration necessary.

➢ Thursdays, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

Nutrition and Cancer Management
Learn about the importance of nutrition during cancer treatment, including tips for managing treatment-related symptoms. Our registered dietitian will also discuss the role of nutrition in cancer prevention. For schedule information and to register, call 788-6701.

Fit vs. Fatigue
Fatigue is the most common symptom associated with cancer and its treatment. PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center and Bellingham Athletic Club have teamed up to help local cancer patients combat fatigue. If you are currently undergoing cancer treatment, ask your doctor for a referral to this valuable program. For more information, please call Carol Brumet at 788-6706.

Look Good... Feel Better
Offered in partnership with the American Cancer Society, designed specifically for women dealing with the effects of cancer treatment and facilitated by a trained cosmetologist, this class focuses on skin and hair care. Cosmetic samples are provided. For information, call 788-6701.

Save the date!
The annual Prostate Screening Event will be Saturday, September 24.
Watch for announcements with information about qualifications and when to register.
See your doctor right away if you notice these symptoms of a brain tumor:
✓ Headaches, which may be severe in the morning
✓ Seizures or convulsions
✓ Trouble thinking, speaking or expressing yourself
✓ Personality changes
✓ Vision or hearing changes
✓ Weakness or paralysis on one side of the body
✓ Facial numbness or tingling
✓ Dizziness or loss of balance
✓ Nausea or vomiting
✓ Loss of appetite
✓ Confusion and disorientation

Physicians may use tests, including CT, MRI and PET scans, to see whether these problems are caused by a tumor.

The exact cause of brain tumors isn’t known. Research indicates some tumors result from genetic abnormalities, while others may be caused by environmental factors.

Treatment for brain tumors may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy.

American Association of Neurological Surgeons

“In the elderly, for instance, some symptoms might be thought of as Alzheimer’s dementia, depression, or aging of the brain when it’s actually a tumor causing the symptoms,” Dr. Landau said.

There are two general types of symptoms, according to Dr. Landau. Some symptoms result from pressure caused by the tumor—such as headaches, nausea, loss of appetite, or a change in personality or mental capacity. Other symptoms depend on the tumor’s location in the brain and generally affect only one side of the body. In both types, symptoms may develop over several months or even years. But sometimes tumor symptoms manifest as seizures.

“There are many causes of seizures in children, but if an adult has a seizure for the first time, they should have imaging done,” Dr. Landau said.

Is it brain cancer?
Cancer of the brain is one of the rarest forms of cancer, according to statistics from the American Cancer Society.

According to Dr. Landau, not all brain tumors are malignant—but of those that are, about half come from cancer elsewhere in the body.

Support for caregivers
Having a loved one with a brain tumor can be stressful. It can make caregivers feel fearful, angry or overwhelmed.

Caregivers are invited to attend a new support group to share practical information, gain understanding of the caregiving experience and discuss feelings in a safe and caring environment.

This group is hosted by Marianne Brudwick, who lost her husband to a brain tumor and has personally navigated this journey. For more information, call Carol Brumet at the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center at 360-738-6706.

Learn more
Dr. Landau recommends the American Brain Tumor Association’s website, www.abta.org, for information about brain tumors, treatment, research and the latest word on any relationship between cell phone use and brain cancer.

Another way to find out about new research, clinical trials and community care options is through a local support group, which adds to the guidance a physician provides.

“A support group helps alleviate anxiety and fear about the treatment process,” Dr. Landau said. It can also offer tips on dealing with related concerns, such as insurance, transportation and social services.
GET MOVING! A path to better health? Chances are, one runs right through your neighborhood. To find it, put one foot in front of the other. Walking just might be the perfect exercise. It offers so many benefits, yet it’s easy and cheap to do. For the most part, all you need is a good pair of walking shoes and some time throughout the week in order to reap healthy rewards.

For example, a walking program may help:

➜ Reduce your risk for chronic health problems, such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease.
➜ Rein in your blood pressure, cholesterol or blood sugar levels if they’re too high.
➜ Burn calories, an essential part of managing your weight.
➜ Tone your muscles and strengthen your bones.
➜ Reduce your stress and help you feel more energetic.

An added bonus: Walking regularly may even help you enjoy a longer life, research shows.

First steps
As a beginning exercise walker, you’ll want to start slowly. Don’t try to set a speed record or cover a lot of

Step out safely
Walking for exercise is a healthy step, but do take strides to stay safe and injury-free. Follow these pointers from experts:

Find a safe place to walk. If there are no sidewalks in your neighborhood or if you don’t feel safe walking there, explore options such as walking on trails at schools or parks or walking at a mall.

Walk with a partner. Invite friends or relatives to walk with you, or consider joining or starting a walking group.

See and be seen. If you walk in low light, such as at dusk or dawn, wear light-colored clothing or a reflective vest. Always be aware of your surroundings and traffic.

Start slowly. Injuries often occur when exercisers do too much too soon. Gradually build up your walking speed and distance over several weeks or more.

Stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise to help avoid dehydration and heat illness.

Wear the proper shoes. Well-fitting walking shoes with good arch support, a firm heel and cushioning soles are a sound investment in comfort and safety.

Warm up and cool down. Warm up for the first few minutes by walking at an easy pace, and then do some light stretches. Cool down by walking slowly again, followed by light stretches.

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons; American College of Sports Medicine; National Institutes of Health

Eight Ways to Boost Your Metabolism
This single-session class looks at increasing your metabolism with a focus on exercise. $25

Call LifeQuest at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center at 788-6720 to register.
ground—even a five-minute walk is a good start.

Find a pace that feels comfortable. As your body adjusts to being more active, work up to walking farther or for longer periods of time, and aim for a brisk pace. But if you can’t talk while walking, that’s a sign you need to slow down.

How much time should you devote to your new routine?

**Aim for at least 2½ hours of moderate aerobic exercise, like brisk walking, each week—or about 30 minutes five days a week.**

Government guidelines recommend at least 2½ hours of moderate aerobic exercise, like brisk walking, each week—or about 30 minutes five days a week.

You can break up those 30 minutes into shorter blocks of time during the day. For example, you might take a 10-minute brisk walk before breakfast and again after lunch and dinner. You’ll still get all the health benefits of a single, long walk.

To help you stay motivated once you begin walking, you might consider inviting a friend or relative to get fit with you.

**Check in**

Walking for exercise is generally a safe activity. That said, it’s a good idea to check with your doctor first before embarking on a walking program if you:

- Have an ongoing health problem, such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis or asthma.
- Experience symptoms such as chest pain, dizziness or shortness of breath.
- Are pregnant.
- Are older than 40 and haven’t exercised in a while.

Of course, being in any of those categories doesn’t necessarily mean you can’t exercise. But it’s a good idea to make sure your activities are safe and right for you.

American College of Sports Medicine; American Council on Exercise; National Institutes of Health

**If the shoe fits**

Remember when sneakers were just sneakers?

These days, buying athletic shoes can seem as complicated as buying a car—with features like pumps, lights, reflectors, pockets of air and shock absorbers. With a dizzying array of brands and styles, it can be hard to choose what you need.

Generally, you should wear sport-specific shoes for sports you play more than three times a week, according to the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society. Well-constructed shoes can provide comfort and can help prevent injury.

**NEW SHOE REVIEW**

Sport-specific shoes are designed to protect areas of your feet that get the most stress during a particular activity.

Walking shoes should have a soft upper; smooth tread; good shock absorption; and a slightly rounded sole that encourages the natural roll of the foot during walking motion.

Jogging and running shoes need good cushioning, flexibility, lightness, traction and stability in the heel area.

Aerobic shoes should be lightweight and have extra shock absorption under the ball of the foot.

Tennis shoes should support the foot during quick side-to-side movements or shifts in weight. Shoes should provide stability on the inside and outside of the foot and flexibility in the sole under the ball of your foot.

Basketball shoes need a thick, stiff sole. High-top shoes can help prevent ankle sprains.

Cross-training shoes combine features of other types of shoes and are a good choice for a variety of sports.

**FINDING THE FIT**

Even the best-designed shoes can lead to foot problems if they don’t fit correctly. To get the best fit: ✓ Always have both feet measured. ✓ Fit shoes to the larger foot. ✓ Wear socks you normally wear to work out. ✓ Shop for shoes at the end of a workout, when your feet are largest.

Learn ways to incorporate exercise into a busy schedule with **Fit Fitness In**.

Call LifeQuest at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center at 788-6720 to register. $25.
Nothing to sneeze at

FOR PEOPLE WITH NASAL ALLERGIES, even a bad cold can seem like a better deal than the misery allergies can cause.

That’s because colds go away. Allergies, however, can hang on year-round and can take a serious toll on quality of life.

“Nasal allergies are so serious for some people that they can’t go to school or work,” says Mitchell Grayson, MD, fellow of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI).

A Sneeze for All Seasons

Nasal allergies, also known as hay fever, happen when substances called allergens touch the lining of the nose, causing the membranes to become inflamed. The result is sneezing; sinus congestion; and itchy, watery eyes.

The timing for nasal allergies depends on which vegetation is releasing pollen into the wind, according to Dr. Grayson.

“A basic timetable is trees in the spring, grass in the summer and weeds in the fall,” says Dr. Grayson.

Substances not tied to the seasons can also cause problems. Perennial allergens—such as molds, dust mites and animal dander—trigger nasal allergies for sensitive people all year long.

“Many people have both seasonal and perennial allergies,” says Dr. Grayson. “When pollens diminish in the late fall, their symptoms don’t go away.”

Take Control

Whether your allergy triggers float through the breeze or live in your house, keeping them at a distance is your first step toward avoiding symptoms.

An allergist can help you identify your triggers with a skin or blood test. Then you can put these steps from the AAAAI to work:

➜ Stay indoors when the pollen count or humidity is high. Check pollen counts in your region at www.aaaai.org.
➜ Use air conditioning, which can help reduce allergens by cleaning and drying the air.
➜ Don’t mow lawns or rake leaves, since this can stir up pollens or molds.
➜ Vacuum carpets once or twice a week. Consider replacing carpet with other types of flooring—such as wood or tile.
➜ Avoid locations where mold is likely—for example, damp basements, garages and dense forests.

Besides trying to avoid your triggers, you can treat allergy symptoms with over-the-counter medicines—such as antihistamine pills or nasal sprays. Prescription medicines may work for stubborn symptoms.

Allergists may also prescribe immunotherapy (allergy shots), which lasts three to five years. This therapy may let you reduce the amount of allergy medicine you take or stop taking it altogether.

DID YOU KNOW? Allergies trigger nearly 17 million doctor visits and 2 million lost school days each year in the U.S. Among chronic diseases, nasal allergies and asthma are the two leading causes of missed work. In fact, asthma, sinusitis and ear infections often result from untreated nasal allergies.

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology
Healthcare in hard times

4 ways to help keep medical costs down

**WHEN SPENDING** less becomes a necessity, there are some things you shouldn’t cut from the budget. Healthcare is one of them.

Cutting corners on your medical care might actually cost you more in the long run. More important, it may put your health in jeopardy.

Still, as deductibles and co-pays rise and many people find themselves without health insurance, lowering out-of-pocket medical expenses may become a priority.

These steps can help you stay healthy and lower your medical costs.

1. **Practice good health habits.** Make smart choices, such as these:
   - Wash your hands often.
   - Eat well—more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and fewer foods and drinks that are high in calories, sugar, salt or fat.
   - Get rest and regular exercise.
   - Manage stress.
   - Don’t smoke, and avoid secondhand smoke.
   - Wear seat belts in vehicles and helmets on bikes.

2. **Have a primary care physician.** Seeing a doctor periodically can help you stay well. You can keep your immunizations up-to-date, which may help you avoid illnesses such as influenza and shingles.
   - Your doctor may suggest screening tests. These tests may catch health problems early, when they might be easier—and possibly less expensive—to treat.

3. **Know when to seek help.** According to the American College of Physicians, many minor medical problems, such as a cold, correct themselves or improve in a matter of days.
   - However, if you don’t get better or if you’re not sure whether you need help, do seek professional advice. And always get immediate help for a medical emergency.

4. **Ask about generic medications.** Generic drugs cost less, but have the same purity, strength and quality as their brand-name counterparts, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
   - Assistance programs may be available if you can’t afford your medications. Ask your pharmacist for details.
   - Whatever you do, don’t decide on your own to stop taking your medicine. If you’re worried about the cost—or any other aspect of your care—talk to your doctor.

Don’t wait for earthquakes

Federal disaster officials say it’s important to prepare and plan ahead of time.

Understand that most earthquake deaths and injuries are caused when heavy objects—such as building materials, bookcases or heating units—fall or collapse. Consider bolting your house to its foundation and fastening tall furniture and your water heater to the walls.

During an earthquake, don’t move more than a few steps to find safety. If you can, get under a sturdy table or desk and hold on to it. If you’re in bed, stay there and cover your head with a pillow.

Otherwise, stand or crouch in a strongly supported doorway or in a corner inside a building, and protect your head. You face the greatest danger from falling debris if you’re standing at the entrance to a building or close to its outer walls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Stay away from windows and objects that might fall, such as large or tall furniture, fireplace bricks and light fixtures. If you’re inside when an earthquake starts, stay there. If you’re outside, get clear of buildings and power lines. If you’re driving, stay in the car and try to pull over away from utility poles, overhead wires, overpasses and underpasses.

After the shaking stops, be ready for possible aftershocks—generally smaller earth movements that may cause additional damage or spark fires, landslides or dam breaks.

After a quake, if you smell gas, open windows, shut off the main gas valve, go outside and call for help. Don’t turn lights or other electrical appliances on or off.

If electric wiring is shorting out, turn off the power at the main circuit box. If water pipes are leaking, shut off the main valve. Don’t use the bathroom if sewer lines are broken.

www.peacehealth.org • Health Today
Whatcom Hospice House admits 100th patient

IN MARCH, the 100th patient arrived at Whatcom Hospice House. And since it opened in September, the Hospice House has truly become a home to patients and their families and loved ones.

Everyone who enters the Hospice House receives a warm welcome from a staff member or volunteer, who are there 24 hours a day to provide information, to listen or to simply be a quiet presence.

While some patients and visitors find comfort in the solitude of the sanctuary room, others enjoy visiting with families and loved ones over a cup of coffee and homemade cookies in the family room.

Others have greatly benefited from the availability of the chaplains and other support people who regularly visit.

Special gatherings called “leaving ceremonies” also provide a memorable occasion for Hospice House patient families. When patients die, they are covered with the beautiful handmade quilt that was on their bed during their last days. One day recently, as family and staff gathered at the front doorway, a soft chime was rung and a son placed his hand on the quilt and said a last goodbye to his beloved mother.

Sharing memories

Not all occasions are as solemn. Less than an hour after that leaving ceremony, members of a large extended family of all ages came to visit their loved one—father to some, grandfather to some and great-grandfather to others. Laughter filled the patient’s room as they shared precious memories made during their loved one’s long and eventful life. After the visit, the family gathered in the meeting area of the administration building across the parking lot to continue visits with out-of-town relatives while the children enjoyed the adjacent playground.

Just a few weeks later, a group of volunteers from Bellingham Bay Rotary Club arrived with wheelbarrows and shovels, ready to work. Now the next 100 patients and their families can enjoy landscaped grounds, as well as the private patios and walking paths around the building.