NEW SPINE CARE CENTER
Feel the healing power of being well-informed

Habits for a healthier back
Yes, exercise is one of them!

Visit us on the web at www.peacehealth.org
Monthly mentions

January—National Blood Donor Month
Observed throughout the first month of the year, National Blood Donor Month provides an opportunity for people to donate blood or pledge to give blood at a time of the year when it is typically in short supply.

By the numbers: In one year, 234 caregivers at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center donated 192 units of blood—enough to touch 576 lives.

February—American Heart Month (See page 13)
This month, the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women movement works to defeat heart disease, the No. 1 killer of women. Each year, cardiovascular diseases claim the lives of nearly half a million women—almost one per minute. Show support for the women in your life by wearing red on National Wear Red Day, Feb. 4, and join the thousands of women who are choosing to reduce their personal risk for heart disease.

March—National Nutrition Month (See page 12)
National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign held each year to focus attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

April—Healthcare Volunteer Week, April 15–21
National Healthcare Volunteer Week recognizes the support that volunteers and auxiliary members provide to hospital staff, their patients, family members and the community. For more information, contact Marci Scott, Director of Volunteer and Auxiliary Services, PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, at 738-6324 or mscott@peacehealth.org.

By the numbers: 400 volunteers work at more than 50 locations throughout PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center, PeaceHealth Medical Group clinics, and on committees. Last year they donated over 53,000 hours, a value of more than $1.1 million.

Volunteer profile: Gail Pappacostas, Harp Therapist
Volunteers are vital and expand the scope of care at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center. Marci Scott, Director of Volunteer and Auxiliary Services, said volunteers enhance a patient’s experience by providing kindness and comfort.

Some volunteers wait with a patient’s loved one during surgery. Others escort patients to their procedures or to transportation afterward. Some read to children, cuddle newborns or provide coaching for Joint Center patients.

Volunteer Gail Pappacostas, a Celtic harpist, offers harp therapy in some patient hallways, the Emergency Department and Childbirth Center.

Pappacostas is a graduate and certified music practitioner of Music for Healing and Transition, a national organization that prepares musicians to serve the ill or those in hospice care by providing live music.

“It provides comfort, reduces anxiety and agitation, and distracts and lifts the depressed state,” said Pappacostas. “Music also has demonstrated effectiveness in regulating patient’s respiration, blood pressure and heart rate.”

A side benefit? Her music also helps to reduce stress for visitors and caregivers in the Medical Center.
inside this issue

Feature stories

Before and after. The experts at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Spine Care Center understand that, for patients, education before surgery is one of the keys to a great outcome after surgery.

Cold or flu? Check out this handy chart that compares winter’s best-known bugs symptom-by-symptom.

It could happen to you. Think you’re too young and healthy to care about PeaceHealth’s new Cancer Center? Talk to Emily Nelson.

Keeping informed

Mom was right. Washing your hands regularly is one of the simplest health habits—and one that does more good than you might think. page 6

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

What’s happening? PeaceHealth St. Joseph staff members are an active part of our community. Find out what they’re up to—from awards and honors to a new surgical breakthrough. page 15

Facing the challenges of aging

A series of lectures for caregivers discusses how best to support people as they age. The next lecture, on Jan. 19, is titled “Depression and the Elderly and Family Caregivers.” See page 9 for more details.

For more information, call 788-6410.
FOUR OUT OF FIVE of us experience back pain. That’s the bad news.

The good news? PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center recently opened a Center of Excellence for Spine Care, modeled after the hospital’s successful Joint Replacement Center. The Spine Care Center addresses an ongoing, widespread need with a new way of delivering care aimed at improving each patient’s experience and outcome.

According to Barry Landau, MD, of Bellingham’s Fourth Corner Neurosurgery, one of several surgeons participating in the new Spine Care Center, patients will be better informed about their care and become active.

SPINE CARE CENTER

Getting back to what patients want

You twist it, bend it, stretch it and sleep on it. Still, you probably take your back for granted—until it starts to hurt.

And sooner or later, it probably will. About 80 percent of us will suffer at least one bout of back pain in our lives.

“That makes an aching back one of the most common reasons for trips to the doctor and missed days of work,” said Hubert Gooch, MD, speaking for the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

What’s making your back ache?

THREE POSSIBLE CULPRITS

Back pain can be triggered by a number of things. But three frequent causes are muscle strain, herniated disk and lumbar spinal stenosis.

Muscle strain. This is the most common cause of acute low back pain, said Barry Landau, MD, of Fourth Corner Neurosurgery. Symptoms usually resolve within a few weeks—the important thing is to keep moving. This kind of pain can be prevented with exercises to strengthen your back and abdominal core muscles.

Herniated, or slipped, disk. Your disks are shock-absorbing pads between the bones—or vertebrae—that stack up to form your spine. A herniated disk occurs when the soft, jelly-like center of a disk leaks and pushes out through a crack in the disk’s tough outer coating.

Not every herniated disk hurts. But one in your lower back can pressure sensitive spinal nerves and cause pain, numbness or weakness in one or both legs.

Lumbar spinal stenosis. In this
participants in their recovery. “I’ve come to realize that how well my patient recovers depends only in part on how the surgery goes,” said Dr. Landau. “All the other parts—before and after surgery—are just as important in how well the patient does.”

Through the Spine Care Center, each patient scheduled for surgery receives a guidebook with information about the spine and the surgery, answers to common questions, a checklist of what to do before surgery and what to expect after surgery, as well as a guide to exercises and activities that enhance recovery.

Spine Care Center Program Manager Shevaun Rudkin-Clark, RN, has seen how effective that preparation can be for patients in the Joint Replacement Center, which she also manages. “When patients receive information and education before surgery, it really calms their fear,” said Rudkin-Clark. “It lets them know what they can expect from us as nurses, physical therapists and surgeons—and makes them more understanding of the expectations we have for them.”

The team approach is key. Previously, surgeons used different approaches, nurses changed throughout a patient’s stay, and therapists’ work varied depending on each surgeon’s approach. Now that team performs within a standardized system, which means patients receive care that is more seamless and coordinated.

“We’ve agreed on our treatment protocols—nursing, physical therapy, medications, all of that,” said Dr. Landau.

Using a single system of best-practice care means that it will be easier to measure outcomes of that care—and make improvements, if necessary. Another way to ensure that care is the best it can be is to ask those who know: the patients. That’s why every three months, Spine Care Center alumni are invited to a postsurgery reunion. “Having an hour and a half to share your story with your surgeon, that’s empowering,” he said.

Dr. Landau also appreciates that feedback. “We need to hear from patients what their experience was like, so we can improve,” said Dr. Landau. “Those patients are giving a gift to future patients by doing that.”

A few good habits for a happy back

Certain habits can make it far less likely that you will wind up wincing with an aching back. Among them:

- Stand tall. Keep your head up and your shoulders back.
- Sit up straight. Keep your back against the back of your chair and both feet flat on the floor. Keep your knees slightly higher than your hips.
- Stay on the level. Adjust your computer monitor so you look straight at it.
- Lift correctly. When picking up something heavy, get close to the object, keep your back straight and bend your knees.
- Watch the way you move. Try not to bend and twist at the same time.
- Try to stay within 10 pounds of your ideal weight. Extra pounds strain your back.
- Exercise. Ask your doctor to suggest some back-strengthening exercises.
- Ditch the cigarettes. Nicotine restricts blood flow to the disks that cushion the bones in your spine.

Whatcom County residents can have surgery and post-op care close to friends and family members for support.

which she also manages.

Nonsurgical measures such as these can frequently calm pain from a herniated disk or spinal stenosis:

- Anti-inflammatory medicines.
- Physical therapy.
- Epidural steroid injections to reduce local inflammation.

UP NEXT: SURGERY?

If nonsurgical treatments fail, pain is constant or you find it hard to function, surgery may be appropriate.

You can learn more about back pain at www.spineuniverse.com.

NONSURGICAL OPTIONS

The reassuring news about each of these conditions is that surgery typically isn’t necessary, Dr. Gooch said.

condition, the spinal canal—the cavity surrounding the spinal cord—becomes narrowed. Often, this narrowing results from an overgrowth of bone or soft tissue brought on by arthritis.

This narrowing can irritate nerves and trigger pain or numbness in the back and legs. Usually, this pain develops after a few minutes of walking or doing some other activity.

North American Spine Society
IF YOU DON’T want to get sick—and who does?—there’s a very easy and effective way to help you stay well: Wash your hands. Wash them well. And wash them often.

Handwashing is one of the best ways to stop germs from spreading.

Good times to wash your hands are:

BEFORE

➜ Preparing food.
➜ Eating food.
➜ Caring for someone who’s ill.
➜ Touching a cut or wound.

AFTER

➜ Preparing food.
➜ Using the bathroom.
➜ Changing diapers.
➜ Sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
➜ Caring for someone who’s ill.
➜ Touching an animal or its toys.

Handwashing is a simple and effective way to help you stay well. Five steps to follow
To make sure your hands are well-scrubbed:
1. Wet your hands under running water.
2. Apply soap, and work up a lather by rubbing your hands together.
3. Scrub well for at least 20 seconds. Don’t forget to get the back of your hands and under your nails.
4. Rinse.
5. Dry your hands with a clean towel or under an air dryer.

Hand sanitizers are OK if soap and water isn’t an option. Look for one that is at least 60 percent alcohol. Rub it all over your hands—just like you would with soap—until your hands are dry.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Keeping healthy: Six tips for men and women

THERE AREN’T many guarantees in life. But here’s something that comes close: these six safeguards to help you stay as healthy as possible.

1. Get screened. Testing can detect some serious medical problems before they cause symptoms, when treatment is often most effective. Key screenings include tests for:
   ➜ High cholesterol, a major risk factor for heart disease. Starting at age 20, this test is vital if you use tobacco; are obese; or have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or blocked arteries. Testing is also advised at 20 if a man in your family had a heart attack before age 50 or a woman had one before 60. Otherwise, ask your doctor when you should start testing.
   ➜ High blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart attacks, strokes and kidney disease. Starting at age 18, have your blood pressure checked at least every two years.
   ➜ Diabetes, which can cause problems with your heart, brain, eyes, feet, kidneys, nerves and more. Get screened if your blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if you take medicine for high blood pressure.
   ➜ Colorectal cancer. Most adults should start testing at age 50. Ask your doctor which test is best for you.
   ➜ If you’re a woman, ask your doctor when and how often you should be screened for breast cancer, cervical cancer and osteoporosis.
   ➜ If you’re a man between ages 65 and 75 and have ever smoked, ask your doctor about being screened for an abdominal aortic aneurysm.

2. If you’re a man 45 or older, ask your doctor if you should use aspirin to help prevent heart disease. If you’re a woman over 55, ask if you should take aspirin to avoid a stroke.

3. Roll up your sleeve. Protect yourself from complications of the flu by getting a yearly flu shot. Ask your doctor what other vaccinations you might need—such as a pneumonia shot if you’re 65 or older.

4. Move more. Try to be active for at least 2½ hours every week. Include activities that raise your breathing and heart rates and strengthen muscles.

5. Know the risks of drinking alcohol. If there’s any chance that alcohol may be hurting your health, ask for help.

6. Don’t smoke. If you’ve tried unsuccessfully to quit in the past, don’t be discouraged. It may take several attempts to quit for good.

If you have any concerns about your health—not just those mentioned here—talk to your doctor.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HEALTH SCREENINGS

‘Take Heart’ Screening
This cardiovascular-risk screening service includes electrocardiogram, cholesterol, blood glucose, body composition and blood pressure measurements. Cost includes a consultation with a cardiovascular wellness and rehabilitation team member. Call 788-6720 to schedule an appointment. $75

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, 10 a.m. to noon

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 788-6720 for more information. $85

Know Your Numbers Screening
This preventive screening includes cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure and BMI assessments. The cost includes consultation with a member of the cardiovascular wellness and rehabilitation team. Call 788-6720 to schedule an appointment. $40

Exercise Consultation
A physician’s referral is required for this 1½-hour session with a cardiovascular health specialist, who will assess your exercise and flexibility capacity and work with you on specific health goals to design an individualized program. Call 788-6720 for more information. $85

Location key
Classes and events are at the following locations, unless otherwise noted.
■ = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Main Campus, 2901 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham
◆ = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center South Campus, 809 E. Chestnut, Bellingham
▲ = PeaceHealth St. Luke’s Community Health Education Center, 3333 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham
● = PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center, 3217 Squalicum Parkway, Bellingham

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**CHILDBIRTH**
Classes are held at the Health Education Center or in the conference rooms off the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Main Campus cafeteria unless otherwise noted.

**FREE** At Our Baby’s Birth
This class is designed to help parents and children make decisions about participating in the birth. Call 788-6363 for a schedule. By appointment only.

**FREE** Cesarean Delivery
For families anticipating a cesarean delivery, this class explains hospital admitting, birth preparation, options and expectations and includes a short film. Call 788-6363 for a schedule. By appointment only.

**FREE** VBAC Delivery
This class explains vaginal birth after cesarean (VBAC). It is an opportunity for women to explore their feelings and strengths to enable them to succeed with a VBAC delivery. Bring your labor partner. Call 788-6363 for a schedule. By appointment only.

**FREE** 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/st-joseph/services/womens-and-childrens-services/chilbirth-center/tours/Pages/Default.aspx to schedule a visit.

**FREE** Childbirth Preparation
Several classes are offered, including HypnoBirth (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.

**FREE** 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/st-joseph/services/womens-and-childrens-services/chilbirth-center/tours/Pages/Default.aspx.

- **Every other weekend**
- **Wednesdays**
- **The Childbirth Center**

**FREE** Breastfeeding Basics and Beyond
This quarterly one-session class is co-sponsored by Bellingham Technical College. Call 752-8350 or visit www.btc.ctc.edu. $25

**FREE** 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.

**SUPPORT GROUPS**

**FREE** 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.

**FREE** Sjogren’s Syndrome Support Group
Contact Linda Hughes at 676-1926 or linda927@earthlink.net for more information.

**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** Bellingham MS Self-Help Group
A self-help group for people living with MS, their significant others, and support system. Call Amy at 650-9255 to learn about the day group; phone Keith at 739-5905 about the evening group. Or email bellinghamms@yahoo.com.

- **Second Wednesday of each month**, noon to 2 p.m.
- **Second Thursday of each month**, 6 to 8 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.

**FREE** Rehab Conference Room
Feb. 14: Karla Hall, RN, CCM, “Know Before You Go,” preparation before, during and after a hospitalization
March 13: Richard Gardner, MD, dermatologist, “Prevention and Treatment of Skin Problems in the Elderly”
April 10: Nanette Davis, PhD, author, educator, researcher, “The Emotions of Caregiving”
May 8: Michelle Moulds, occupational therapist, “Home Safety Tips”

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.

Staff 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, call 788-6410.
FREE Spinal Cord Injury Support Network
For information, call 332-8684.
- First Monday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

FREE Peripheral Neuropathy Support Group
For 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 Evergreen Al-Anon
For information, call 734-2825.
- Mondays, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

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

FREE Fibromyalgia Support Group
Call Natalie at 360-920-0490 or email windhorse20@hotmail.com for information.
- First and third Tuesday of each month, 7 to 9 p.m.

FREE Mending Baby Loss Support Group
For information, call 303-6613 or email mendingbabyloss@gmail.com.
- Mondays from March 19 to May 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

FREE Falls Risk Reduction Lecture
Most falls are preventable. Learn the risk factors for falls and how to reduce them. Call 788-6420 for more information. Preregistration required.
- Tuesday, April 17, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

FREE Five Wishes—Writing Your Living Will
During this two-hour interactive workshop, participants explore ways to direct their own treatment should they become too ill to speak for themselves. A completed Five Wishes booklet is recognized as a legal advance directive, or living will, in most states. For questions, call 788-6701. No registration required; walk-ins welcome.
- Thursday, Jan. 12, 10 a.m. to noon
- Tuesday, Feb. 21, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 14, 10 a.m. to noon
- Thursday, April 9, 4 to 6 p.m.
- Thursday, May 17, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

FREE Adult Day Health Center Lecture Series: Facing the Challenges of Aging
Family and professional caregivers are invited to attend this series of lectures about how to best support people as they age. Lectures are presented by experts in the field of aging and disability on the third Thursday of alternating months.
- March 15: “Multiple Sclerosis in the Northwest,” Carolyn Taylor, MD, neurologist

FREE Health Empowerment
May 17: “Diagnosis and Treatment of Dementia,” Jody Veltkamp, PsyD, neuropsychologist 7 to 8:30 p.m.
For more information, call 788-6410.

FREE Grief Relief
This is a free, six-week structured grief support group for 6 to 10 women. It will begin in March and is now accepting applicants. Call Whatcom Hospice, 733-5877, for more information and a pre-admission interview.

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 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. You can also connect to Child Profile Immunization Registry for your family’s immunization records and to PeaceHealth Laboratories for your lab results. For more information, go to www.SharedCarePlan.org or call 671-6800, option 2.

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. For more information, call 788-6706.
- Second Tuesday of each month, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

DIABETES EDUCATION
The PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Nutrition and Diabetes Clinic is accredited by the American Diabetes Association to assist with diabetes management and education. People with new-onset diabetes or those who have had diabetes for years will benefit from the individual care provided by the clinic nurses and dietitians. The cost is covered by most insurers, including Medicare and Medicaid. Classes are offered several times monthly, and individual appointments are scheduled Monday through Friday. Call 788-6558 to register; physician referral required.
- Nutrition and Diabetes Clinic

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Cancer Transitions program to benefit local cancer survivors

In February, the first group of up to a dozen cancer survivors will begin the inaugural “Cancer Transitions: Moving Beyond Treatment” group, a six-week, evidence-based program to support and empower cancer survivors as they transition to post-treatment living.

The program is funded by a grant from the LiveStrong Foundation. PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center received one of just four grants covering Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Hawaii due to support from our community via online voting.

Cancer Transitions participants address emotional issues, cover proper nutrition ideas, participate in 30 minutes of customized exercise at each session and have an oncology doctor or nurse available to discuss medical management after cancer treatment.

The program was developed by the Cancer Support Community and LiveStrong.

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 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 788-6701.

→ Wednesdays, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Exercise and Thrive
Offered through the Whatcom Family YMCA, patients at least 90 days out of treatment can, with their doctor’s permission, participate in a 12-week fitness program to gain strength and improve long-term survival while reducing fatigue and stress. For information, contact Tammy at the YMCA, 733-8630. (There is an enrollment fee, which will include a YMCA membership.)

Brain Tumor Caregiver Group
Hosted by volunteer Marianne Brudwick, who lost her husband to a brain tumor and has navigated the journey, this group shares practical information to gain an understanding of the caregiving experience. Open to anyone who is caring for or has lost a loved one to brain cancer. For information, call 788-6706.

→ First Friday of each month, 2 to 3 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. For more information, call 788-6706.

→ 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...
Get to know the facts

CANCER CAN BE a frightening disease, and there’s a lot of misinformation, particularly on the Internet, about what causes it.

For instance, take the claims that using deodorants or talking on cell phones raises your risk of cancer. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), there is no firm evidence to back up either of these persistent claims.

So what does—and doesn’t—increase your risk? Here is the lowdown, based on scientific studies, on what is known about cancer risks.

What causes cancer

**Tobacco.** The clear cause of many cancers—accounting for about 30 percent of all cancer deaths—is using tobacco in any form. Studies have shown that smoking cigarettes or cigars or using chewing tobacco causes cancer. If you use tobacco, quitting is the best way to lower your risk.

**Ultraviolet (UV) rays.** These come from sunlight and tanning beds. Wearing sunscreen, covering up when you’re outside and avoiding tanning beds are strategies that can help you sidestep the disease.

**Genes.** According to the ACS, about 1 out of 20 cancer cases is determined by genetics. Genetic testing is available to detect whether you’re at increased risk for certain types of the disease.

**And more.** Finally, research shows that the following factors are also strongly associated with an increase in cancer risk:

- Drinking alcohol
- Being overweight
- Not exercising
- Eating a diet high in cured, processed or red meat

What doesn’t cause cancer

**Stress.** Many studies have been done to determine whether there is a connection between stress and cancer. But regardless of the effect of stress on the immune system, there is no scientific evidence linking a stressful life to an increased risk of cancer.

**Contact with others.** You cannot catch cancer from other people. Your risk of getting some types of cancer may be higher when you’ve been infected with certain viruses or bacteria, but cancer itself is not contagious.

**Injuries.** Even though an examination of a bump or bruise by a doctor may unexpectedly reveal that someone has cancer, the disease won’t be due to the injury.

What you can do

By eating a healthy diet, getting more exercise, quitting smoking and managing your weight, you really can lower your risk for cancer.

Call 788-6706 for information about our cancer education programs.

Learn more

Visit us online for information about cancer screenings at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center.

Go to www.peacehealth.org/st-joseph/services/cancer-center
Grate addition

One way to slip more nutrition into a meal: Add grated, shredded or chopped vegetables—such as zucchini, spinach and carrots—to lasagna, meatloaf, mashed potatoes, pasta sauce and rice dishes.

American Dietetic Association

Resolved to quit smoking? There is some help at hand

So you’re kicking around the idea of kicking the habit?

Do yourself a big favor: Consider trying a stop-smoking aid. According to the National Institutes of Health, some aids could more than double your chance of success.

You might try:
✓ Nicotine replacement therapy, such as over-the-counter patches, lozenges and gums, or prescription nasal sprays and inhalers. They can ease withdrawal symptoms.
✓ Non-nicotine prescription drugs to help with withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings.
✓ Counseling, such as stop-smoking phone lines, classes or support groups.

When you’re ready to quit, pick a date and decide on a plan for quitting. Using more than one stop-smoking strategy often works best.

Your heart on herbs: Know the risks

Some herbal supplements may help promote good health. But studies have found that many popular supplements can pose serious health risks when taken with certain heart disease medications.

The use of herbal supplements can be especially dangerous for older people who have more than one health problem, take multiple medications or are already at increased risk for bleeding, according to the American College of Cardiology. When mixed, the supplements can sometimes reduce the effectiveness or increase the potency of heart disease medications. This can lead to bleeding or a greater risk for an irregular heartbeat.

Examples of herbs that may cause harm include:
✓ St. John’s wort—often used to treat depression, anxiety and sleep disorders—can contribute to an irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels when taken with heart disease drugs.
✓ Gingko—which some people use to improve circulation and sharpen the mind—can increase bleeding risk in those taking warfarin or aspirin.
✓ Garlic—which is often used to help lower blood pressure and cholesterol—can increase the risk for bleeding in those taking warfarin.
If you are a woman who cares about health, it’s crucial to embrace the health of your heart.

Think heart disease is just a man’s problem? Look at some facts:
- Each year, 1 in 4 deaths among U.S. women is from heart disease—the leading killer, reports the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.
- Heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases kill more American women each year than the next five leading causes of death combined.
- Women are less likely than men to survive a heart attack.

Of all the threats to a woman’s heart, the most common is coronary heart disease (CHD), which can lead to heart attacks. CHD results when plaque buildup narrows the heart’s arteries. Plaque is composed of fat, cholesterol, calcium and other material found in the blood. Even worse, an artery can become blocked by clots, triggering a heart attack.

Women, like men, can have other forms of heart disease, too, such as arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythm or rate) or heart failure (a weakened heart that can’t pump enough blood).

Several factors can increase your risk of heart disease. Among them are smoking, having high blood pressure or abnormal cholesterol levels, being overweight, or having diabetes.

If early heart disease runs in the family or you’re older than 55, your risk increases too. The age-related rise in risk is later for women than it is for men. That’s partly because estrogen gives premenopausal women some heart disease protection.

To understand your risk—and how to lower it—have a heart-to-heart with your doctor. You can also discuss other factors that may affect a woman’s heart, such as using birth control pills if you’re older than 35 and a smoker.

Recognize warnings from the heart
Indications of heart disease and heart attacks can be different for men and women. A common symptom of heart disease in everyone is chest discomfort (angina). In women, however, angina is often a sharp, burning pain that may be felt in other areas, such as the back, neck or jaw.

Pain in any of these areas can also be a heart attack—a medical emergency. Women may have other heart attack warnings as well, such as shortness of breath or nausea. Don’t ignore any of these symptoms of a possible heart attack. Call 911 within five minutes of having any of these symptoms. Even if symptoms disappear after a few minutes, get medical help.

Heart facts for women

IF YOU ARE A WOMAN who cares about health, it’s crucial to embrace the health of your heart.

Ask your doctor about these heart-friendly ideas:
- Keep blood pressure in a healthy range. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. If it needs to come down, there are ways to lower it. For instance, reduce the amount of salt you consume, eat lots of fruits and vegetables, lose excess weight, and take medicines as prescribed.
- Control cholesterol. Eat foods low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol, and stay informed about your blood cholesterol and triglyceride levels with regular testing. To help improve cholesterol levels, you may also need to take medicine.
- Keep a healthy weight. Watch your calorie intake, and be physically active to avoid excess pounds.
- Get checked for diabetes. If you have diabetes or prediabetes, follow a treatment plan to control blood sugar.
- Don’t smoke. If you do, ask your doctor about products or support groups that may help you stop smoking.
- Know the risks of drinking alcohol. Understand how drinking may affect blood pressure and other health risks.
- Handle stress healthfully. Try exercising or sharing feelings with trusted friends.

Learn more about our women’s heart services and available screenings. Call 788-6720.

Help guard your heart

American Heart Association; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Is it a cold or the flu?

It’s important to know the difference

YOU'RE SNEEZING, your nose is stuffed up and you’re tired. In other words, you’re feeling lousy.

You’re considering going to the drugstore to pick up some over-the-counter medicines to help relieve your symptoms. But before you do, you might want to ask yourself, “Do I have a cold or the flu?”

The answer to that question is important because you may want to see your doctor for a prescription medicine if you think you have the flu.

Prescription flu drugs (called antivirals) can reduce the amount of time that you’re sick. They may also reduce your risk for potentially dangerous complications from the flu, such as pneumonia. The catch is that these medications work best when taken within the first 48 hours after developing flu symptoms.

Use this chart to help figure out what’s ailing you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Cold</th>
<th>Flu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fever</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Usual, 100-102 degrees—may be higher, especially in young children; lasts 3-4 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>Rare</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General aches, pains</td>
<td>Slight</td>
<td>Usual, often severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue, weakness</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Usual, lasts up to 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Usual, at the beginning of the illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuffy nose</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneezing</td>
<td>Usual</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore throat</td>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest discomfort</td>
<td>Mild to moderate</td>
<td>Common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough</td>
<td>Common, hacking</td>
<td>Common, can become severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feel better

To treat a cold or the flu:
✓ Get plenty of rest, especially when you have a fever. Rest helps your body fight infection.
✓ Consume lots of fluids, such as water and clear soups, but avoid alcohol. Fluids help loosen mucus and help prevent dehydration.
✓ Gargle with warm salt water to ease a sore throat. Throat sprays and lozenges may also help relieve the pain.
✓ Use saline nose drops to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in your nose.
✓ Take an analgesic—such as aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen—to help relieve aches and pains and to reduce fever. Never give aspirin to children or teenagers.

American Academy of Family Physicians

The best way to prevent the flu is to get the annual flu vaccine. To help prevent a cold, wash your hands often.
Kudos to parish nurses

PeaceHealth caregivers Jeanne Brotherton, RN, MEd, and Dotty Marston, RN, MN, have been honored for their work outside the hospital. They are co-recipients of the Parish Nurse of the Year Award. Brotherton and Marston were selected from more than 2,000 parish nurses in seven states for their work in developing, and providing leadership for, Bellingham’s Health Ministry Network.

Don Haggen leaves legacy of service

Don Haggen, who passed away at age 80, served in leadership positions on the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Foundation Board, Governing Board and Stewardship Committee. His contributions to PeaceHealth and the community were numerous and generous. He and his brother grew their family business to be the largest independent grocer in the Northwest. Over the years, Don Haggen received numerous awards evidencing his community commitment, including Distinguished Eagle Scout and the Whatcom County Lifetime Business Achievement Award.

PeaceHealth doctor chosen for healthcare reform panel

PeaceHealth Medical Group Medical Director Peter Valenzuela, MD, MBA, was appointed by Gov. Christine Gregoire to the state’s first public-private partnership to identify ways to improve the quality and affordability of healthcare. Dr. Valenzuela is among a team exploring best practice strategies to improve outcomes for certain heavily used services. Their work should help ensure that Washingtonians receive the full benefit of federal healthcare reform under the Affordable Care Act.

Dr. Johnston leads new Palliative Care team

The new hospital-based Palliative Care program (specialized medical care for people with serious illness) is led by Bree Johnston, MD, who is board-certified in internal medicine, hospice and palliative care, and geriatrics, and most recently served as Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco.

Excellence in the ICU

The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) presented a 2011 Silver Beacon Award for Excellence to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center. The award represents a significant milestone on the path to exceptional patient care and a healthy work environment. According to the AACN, the award recognizes caregivers in stellar units whose consistent use of evidence-based care improves patients’ results.

Project updates

Construction is beginning in January for a new integrated cancer center facility that will transform oncology services by providing most outpatient cancer services in a single facility. The new center will be near the present Cancer Center and oriented to maximize the healing themes of nature in the care environment.

And on San Juan Island, the PeaceHealth Peace Island Medical Center construction is on track for completion in October.
Cancer can strike at any age

LATE LAST SPRING, in the midst of preparing for her wedding, 24-year-old Emily Nelson was diagnosed with cancer. At a time when she and her fiancé, Bobby, should have been planning their honeymoon, they were suddenly faced with the overwhelming prospect of working with oncologists to plan Emily’s cancer treatment.

Emily and Bobby went forward with their June wedding, and spent their honeymoon cycling in the San Juans. When they returned, Emily began her chemotherapy treatments.

Fortunately for Emily and the 1,200 other cancer patients who will be treated at PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center this year, our cancer outcomes are equal or superior to national survival rates for the four leading cancers in Whatcom County. Emily’s prognosis is excellent, and she is already looking forward to pursuing a master’s in teacher education when she is cancer-free.

We are inspired by Emily’s spirit and proud to be able to provide her with the medical expertise and top-notch treatment that will help her follow her dreams.

We invite you to join us in helping patients like Emily by donating to the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Cancer Center. To make a contribution, return the enclosed giving envelope today, or call the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Foundation at 788-6866.

For most patients, a cancer diagnosis brings feelings of anger, disbelief and helplessness. Added to the stress of negotiating the myriad doctor’s appointments, consultations and treatments that follow, those with cancer face enormous physical challenges.

We believe there’s a better way. In January, we’ll break ground on a comprehensive cancer center that will house most outpatient cancer services in a single facility—for the first time in Whatcom County. A nurse navigator will assist patients in coping with a potentially overwhelming schedule of consultations and treatments, while a centralized facility will ensure that getting to the next appointment is as simple as walking down the hall.

Stay tuned for more information as this exciting project gets underway.