

Health Connection

THE MAGAZINE OF NORTHERN
LOUISIANA MEDICAL CENTER



Thyroid disease
Tune into the
subtle signs

Fit to be untied
Tubal ligation
reversal can let you
conceive again

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staff member**

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Northern Louisiana
Medical Center

Dear friends,

Please enjoy this spring issue of Northern Louisiana Medical Center's (NLMC) *Health Connection* newsletter with our compliments. Thank you for taking time to learn more about the new and exciting healthcare advancements being made to better serve your needs and those of your loved ones in northern Louisiana.

GROWING FOR YOU

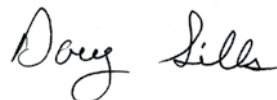
In 2008, the healthcare community of Lincoln Parish became much stronger and more convenient. NLMC added several qualified physicians to its medical staff, new technologies like digital mammography and 4-D ultrasound and new services like a Level II Nursery staffed with 24/7 nurse practitioners and neonatologists.

NLMC takes its role as a healthcare leader seriously. That's why we're working harder than ever to improve the quality of healthcare available locally—with the ultimate

goal for you to have no need to go anywhere else. If you're looking for choices, you'll be excited about the upcoming growth and development of the hospital this year. Look for improvements to local healthcare to come quickly, as we strive every day to find more and more ways to accommodate your medical needs.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of serving you.

With gratitude,



DOUG SILLS
Chief Executive Officer
Northern Louisiana Medical Center



Doug Sills
Chief Executive Officer

Christmas bike drive a success!

The 2008 Christmas bike drive was a great success: 25 bikes were donated and distributed, giving children a very merry Christmas! Thank you to everyone who participated:



- Deborah Baston
- Patsy Bayne
- Justin Bell
- Kristi Bell
- Heather Blount
- Alex Bridges
- Flora Cockerham
- Laura Cooper
- Steve Danklefsen
- Glynis Haifley
- Ronda Lewis
- Joe McKeithen
- Tom Morris, M.D.
- Curtis Newton
- Amber Ryals
- Amy Ryals
- Curt Ryals
- Diane Woods
- Brenda Young

Explore two programs at NLMC

Northern Louisiana Medical Center offers



two programs for the health of our



community. Healthy Woman is a free program that empowers women with resources like monthly presentations for a healthy mind, body and spirit.

Senior Circle promotes a healthy and active lifestyle for seniors by providing programs that encourage continued learning, wellness, health and volunteering, coupled with social activities. For just \$15 a year, you'll have access to a generous menu of discounts, events and services.

To join either program, call (318) 254-2492 or visit www.northernlouisianamedicalcenter.com today.

The thyroid gland

How this tiny titan impacts your health



By Stacy Conville, M.D.
Board Certified in Family Medicine

Chances are you've never thought about your thyroid, a tiny, butterfly-shaped gland located in your throat in front of your windpipe.

But this small gland can have a big impact on your health.

Thyroid problems are common health conditions: More than 27 million Americans—primarily women and older adults—struggle with thyroid disorders, says the National Institutes of Health. Yet because thyroid problems share symptoms with other disorders, they're frequently misdiagnosed or go unnoticed and untreated. Many people blame other causes for symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety, depression, unexplained weight gain or weight loss, carpal tunnel syndrome, bowel habit or menstrual cycle changes and difficulty concentrating.

WHEN BALANCE IS OFF

The thyroid produces hormones that regulate the speed of the body's metabolic functions. Thyroid hormones affect many vital bodily functions, including heart and respiratory rate, the rate at which calories are burned, skin maintenance, muscle strength and brain and nervous system functioning. When your thyroid produces too little

or too much of these hormones, your body's balance can be thrown off kilter. Left untreated, thyroid disease can increase your risk of cardiovascular disease, infertility, osteoporosis, diabetes, obesity, anemia, arthritis, autoimmune disorders and intestinal problems.

Thyroid problems can arise from infections, recent childbirth, a family history of thyroid disorders, inadequate nutrition, cancerous or noncancerous tumor growth and excessive radiation exposure.

The most common thyroid conditions are hypothyroidism (when the thyroid doesn't produce enough thyroid hormone) and hyperthyroidism (when the thyroid becomes overactive and produces too much thyroid hormone).

See your physician for regularly scheduled physicals. If you're experiencing symptoms (see "*Signs of a troubled thyroid*"), ask for a simple thyroid blood test. Some endocrinologists suggest thyroid testing at age 35 and every few years thereafter. The good news is thyroid problems are treatable, and options include medication, radioiodine therapy or surgery.

Signs of a troubled thyroid

- fatigue, exhaustion
- depression
- difficulty concentrating or brain fog
- unexplained or excessive weight gain or loss
- dry, coarse or itchy skin
- dry, coarse or thinning hair
- feeling cold, especially in the extremities
- bowel habit changes
- muscle cramps
- menstrual cycle changes
- infertility or having had a miscarriage
- nervousness, irritability
- increased perspiration
- muscle weakness, especially in the upper arms and thighs
- shaky hands
- insomnia
- racing heart

! Tune into your thyroid health!

Your thyroid can greatly affect your health and quality of life. Conditions are treatable, so prompt attention is key. To learn more about keeping your thyroid healthy, call Stacy Conville, M.D., at (318) 251-8232 today.

Oh, that aching ear!

Common sense for a childhood ailment



**By Brenda McIntyre, M.D.
Board Certified in Pediatrics**

Small children often get earaches. In fact, 90 percent of children have had an ear (or middle ear) infection, usually between ages 6 months and 4 years.

Children are more prone to earaches and ear infections because their ear passages are narrower and angled differently than adults'—making it easier for germs to reach the middle ear and for fluid to accumulate.

An ear infection begins with a viral infection, such as the common cold. Fluid may accumulate behind the eardrum, or the eustachian tubes—the narrow passageways between the middle ear and the back of the nose—become swollen, blocked or infected.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Symptoms of an ear infection include:

- pulling or tugging at the ear
- skin rash
- sleep interruptions
- vomiting or diarrhea
- fever or headache
- fullness, buzzing or ringing in the ears
- excess ear fluid
- ear drainage
- irritability and crying
- cough or nasal discharge

WAIT AND SEE

Ear infections generally don't require intervention and usually clear up within one to two weeks. Treatment with prescription medicine is usually reserved for severe infections or ear infections in very young infants. Taking antibiotics may only minimally speed recovery and even contribute to the development of drug-resistant bacteria.

Many physicians recommend a 48- to 72-hour wait-and-see period as the first step to treatment. If your child has an ear infection, your pediatrician can provide medication to relieve symptoms, such as over-the-counter pain relievers or eardrops. Ibuprofen or acetaminophen can also help with pain relief. Avoid aspirin, which is dangerous for young children. Parents can also use a warm washcloth on the ear to relieve discomfort.

During the waiting period, your child should eat regularly and drink plenty of liquids; check your child's temperature often. If your child's pain increases within 48 to 72 hours; fever rises above 102° F; or your child experiences swelling around the ear, has pain or stiffness in the neck area or becomes lethargic, take him or her to a physician who may prescribe antibiotics.

In some cases, your physician may recommend surgical insertion of small tubes in your child's ear(s) to drain fluid. The tube is usually a last resort if your child suffers from recurrent problems and pain from frequent ear infections.



Prevent ear infections

While many ear infections are unavoidable, you can create a healthy environment for your child: Avoid smoking and exercise good hygiene, including frequent hand washing.

! I can hear you now!

To learn more about childhood ear infections, call Brenda McIntyre, M.D., at (318) 255-4112.

Tubal reversal

An option to conceive again



By Landon Smith, M.D.
Obstetrics/Gynecology

Each year, more than 650,000 women in the United States have a procedure to prevent the birth of more children.

Called tubal ligation, this procedure closes the fallopian tubes and is usually intended to be permanent. But what happens if a woman changes her mind and wants to have another baby? This scenario is becoming more and more common, ranging from 2 percent to 26 percent in some studies—usually with patients younger than age 30 at the time of tubal ligation, changes in marital status and, unfortunately, the death of a child. In my practice, I've seen regret parallel divorce: Many women will undergo sterilization, get divorced, remarry and wish to have a baby with their new spouse.

YOUR CHOICES

The good news is that women who've had a tubal ligation have reversal options. In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a process in which a woman is hormonally regulated and eggs are retrieved and then fertilized by sperm outside of her body. If adequate embryos are generated, they're placed back into the uterus to implant themselves and continue as a successful pregnancy. Drawbacks for IVF include hormonal regulation intolerance, multiple births and the expense. The average cost of one cycle ranges from \$10,000 to \$12,000. Success depends on many variables and usually requires more than one cycle.

Another option available for women who've had the procedure is tubal ligation reversal—a surgery that rejoins the two remaining sections of the fallopian tubes. Success of tubal ligation reversal depends on the type of tubal ligation originally performed, the patient's age, damage from the original procedure, her partner's sperm, her overall health and any prior surgeries.

Tubal ligation reversal can often be performed through a small incision, so some patients can go home the same day and recover faster. Success rates for tubal ligation reversal are as high as 90 percent, with about a 70 percent pregnancy rate. Cost of tubal ligation reversal varies but is usually a fraction of the total cost for IVF. Major risks of tubal ligation reversal include failure of the procedure and ectopic pregnancy (that develops outside of the uterus, usually in the fallopian tube). Ectopic pregnancies occur in about 5 percent to 8 percent of women who undergo reversal.



! Ready to conceive again?

Women have options at NLMC. To learn more about tubal ligation reversal, call Landon Smith, M.D., at Ruston Women's Specialty Center at (318) 255-9414.

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The information contained in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have medical concerns, please consult your healthcare provider.

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Spring 2009



PHYSICIAN SPOTLIGHT

The experienced, dedicated medical staff of Northern Louisiana Medical Center can help keep your family healthy. We'd like to introduce one of them to you.



BRENDA McINTYRE, M.D.
Board Certified in Pediatrics

Ruston Pediatric Associates
1003 White St.
Ruston
(318) 255-4112

Brenda McIntyre, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician, joined the medical staff at Northern Louisiana Medical Center in 2008. Dr. McIntyre's main interest is pediatric health education. She focuses on nutrition and healthy living to prevent or lessen some of our young community's chronic illnesses, such as food allergies, obesity, seasonal allergies, asthma, anxiety and stress as it relates to learning, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Dr. McIntyre received her first licensed practical nurse credential in 1975 from Brewster Adult Training School in Tampa, Fla. In 1980, she earned her associate of art's degree and associate's degree in nursing from Hillsborough Community College. By 1993, she completed her bachelor's degree in microbiology at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla., and her master's degree in environmental chemistry at the University of South Florida. She then taught briefly in 1993 as an adjunct professor at Saint Leo University in Saint Leo, Fla. Dr. McIntyre received her medical degree from St. George's University School of Medicine in Grenada, West Indies, in 1997. She completed her pediatric residency at St. Luke's–Roosevelt Hospital in New York City in 2001.

Her hobbies include reading, hiking, bicycling, camping and teaching meditation. Dr. McIntyre enjoys spending time with her three children, Michael, Christina and Julian.

To make an appointment for your child with Ruston Pediatric Associates, call **(318) 255-4112** today.