

healthy you

NEWS FROM UNITED REGIONAL

WWW.UNITEDREGIONAL.ORG

Expert Lifesaving Care

WHEN YOU NEED IT

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our calendar
of events
on page 7.

SPRING 2011

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- 6 NIP SEASONAL ALLERGIES IN THE BUD**


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Introducing the **SYMPTOM CHECKER**

available at
www.unitedregional.org

If you have an illness or
minor injury, get reliable medical
advice from the comfort of your
own home.
Log on today.



Suspect a Stroke? Act FAST

Strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Sometimes called brain attacks, strokes also give rise to significant disability. Even so, too many people remain unaware of stroke's risk factors, warning signs, and the importance of getting rapid help.

- Keep your blood pressure in check
- Control your diabetes, if necessary
- Quit smoking, if you smoke
- Exercise every day to promote circulation and a healthy weight

PRIMARY STROKE CENTER CERTIFICATION

United Regional is proud to have its Stroke Center recently certified as a Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission. The two-year certification recognizes centers that make exceptional efforts to foster better outcomes for stroke care.

Achievement of certification signifies that the services we provide have the critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes. It is the best signal to our community that the quality care we provide is effectively managed to meet the unique and specialized needs of stroke patients.

United Regional treats about 400 stroke patients annually and serves as the hub of the area's Stroke Network.

Why speed matters

Most strokes result when blood clots cut off circulation to the brain. To reduce post-stroke disability, clot-busting drugs such as tPA, or tissue plasminogen activator, must be given within three hours after symptoms appear.

How to act FAST

To move FAST, remember these symptoms and plan of rapid action:
F = Face numbness or weakness, especially on one side

A = Arm numbness or weakness, especially on one side of the body

S = Speech slurring or difficulty speaking or understanding

T = Time to call **911**, if these symptoms occur suddenly or accompany vision problems, loss of balance, dizziness, or a sudden, severe headache

Treat these symptoms as a **911** emergency, even if they disappear after a few minutes.

Who experiences stroke?

Most strokes happen to people age 65 or older. But a stroke can happen at any age. And a woman faces extra risks. In addition to or instead of the symptoms listed above, a woman having a stroke may experience sudden hiccups, nausea, fatigue, chest pain, shortness of breath, and a racing heartbeat.

Cutting your risk

Take the following steps to lower your risk for stroke:

AWARDS FOR STROKE AND HEART DISEASE CARE

United Regional has been recognized for achievement in using evidence-based guidelines to provide the best care possible to patients through the American Heart Association's (AHA) and American Stroke Association's (ASA) *Get With The Guidelines*® program. United Regional earned the AHA/ASA's Gold Performance Achievement Award for stroke care by maintaining core standard levels of care for 24 consecutive months, and the Silver and Bronze Performance Achievement Awards





Chest Pain: When Is It a Heart Attack?

Many people know that chest pain could signal a heart attack. But chest pain can also indicate other health problems. When should you worry?

Prolonged chest pain is considered the telltale symptom of a heart attack. But it's not always simple to tell when a heart attack occurs.

Heart attacks vary

Some heart attack patients report severe chest pain, while others only feel some chest discomfort. And about one-third of those having a heart attack do not feel any chest pain at all.

Other symptoms besides chest pain are also common during heart attacks. These include:

- Left arm pain
- Pain that radiates down one or both arms
- Back, neck, jaw, or stomach pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or fainting
- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Severe headache—especially in older adults
- Anxiety, weakness, or a strong feeling of doom

Women, younger and older adults, and people who have diabetes or high blood pressure are more likely than others to have heart attack symptoms other than chest pain.

Heart attack mimics

Several other conditions also cause chest pain that can feel like a heart attack:

- **Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).** Referred to as chronic heartburn, this burning chest pain tends to occur after meals and is often relieved with antacids.
- **Panic attacks.** These usually last a few seconds to a few minutes. Besides chest pain, patients report shortness of breath, dizziness, and a fear of dying. Extreme anxiety and excessive caffeine can trigger a panic attack.

▶ **63**

Ninety minutes or less is the national standard for door-to-balloon time, the time when a heart attack patient arrives in the ER to when a “balloon” is inflated into the blocked artery. In 2010, United Regional met this standard every time with our average door-to-balloon time significantly better at 63 minutes.

- **Angina.** The pain from this condition feels like pressure or squeezing. Angina chest pain can result from physical effort, stress, temperature extremes, or a heavy meal.

Don't wait to act

It's vital to get prompt treatment for a heart attack. Whenever you or a loved one experiences heart attack symptoms, use the following steps as a guideline:

- Chew an uncoated aspirin tablet as a protective step against heart damage.
- If the symptoms stop after a short time, call your doctor. He or she will tell you what action to take.
- If symptoms continue for more than 15 minutes, call emergency medical services right away.



for our outstanding care of patients with coronary artery disease and heart failure, respectively. *U.S. News & World Report* acknowledged our achievements in its July 2009 “America’s Best Hospitals” section.

This means that patients with stroke, coronary artery disease, and heart failure can be confident that the care they get at United Regional will exceed the national guidelines for program quality.



UNITED REGIONAL'S EMERGENCY ROOM

Expert Lifesaving Care When You Need It

The number of patients visiting hospital emergency rooms is steadily rising in the United States, leading to longer wait times and higher patient dissatisfaction. Many patients leave without receiving treatment.

But visit the Emergency Room (ER) at United Regional and you'll get a different story. Patients are getting in and out of the ER faster—leading to higher patient satisfaction.

"We renovated part of the Emergency Room to support the improved way we triage patients," says Kim Stringfellow, R.N., ER director. "We are always looking for opportunities to serve our patients better, and reducing wait times has had a very favorable impact on patient satisfaction."

One of the greatest improvements is the "rapid admission" screening. Previously,

patients had to provide a lot of information about their health history, prescriptions, and other medical issues, which would take a considerable amount of time. Now they only answer two or three critical questions before care begins.

There is also a secondary seating area for patients who are not critically ill, which reduces their wait time between 20 to 60 minutes. Once patients have been seen by a physician, they are then sent to a RAP room, or "results-are-pending" room, instead of having to wait in an examination room for a diagnosis. This frees up crucial treatment rooms and allows more patients to be seen in shorter periods of time.

"The entire process of admitting patients is more efficient than in years past, with a constant flow of patients through the Emergency Room," says John Hilmi, M.D.,



John Hilmi, M.D.
Emergency Room,
Medical Director



Kim Stringfellow, R.N.
Emergency Room,
Director

ER medical director. "We are now able to serve more patients and provide treatment to them sooner."

For more information about United Regional's ER, visit us online at www.unitedregional.org.

help us
help you!



YOU CAN PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY. United Regional serves as the lead Level III trauma center for the region. We treat patients with a variety of medical problems—from those with cuts, sprains, and flu symptoms to those with severe injuries and life-threatening conditions, such as a stroke or heart attack.

Even though you never know when an emergency will occur, there are things you can do ahead of time to prepare and to help make the experience better for you and your loved ones. In our booklet *A Trip to the Emergency Room*, you will find tips for what to bring with you and information that you can complete ahead of time and leave in your vehicle, so you are never without it.

You can find these tips, forms, and a copy of the booklet on our website at www.unitedregional.org under **Medical Services**, and then click on **Emergency Services**. Or you may request a copy by contacting Call-A-Nurse at 800-982-9799.

United Regional's average door-to-doctor time in 2009 was 124 minutes. In 2010, several improvements in patient flow were made, reducing the current average to **30 minutes**.

70,000

70,000 patients visited our Emergency Room in 2010.

YOUR TIME IS VALUABLE!

Our door-to-discharge time—the time it takes a patient arriving in the ER to leave the ER after treatment—averages two hours and 15 minutes. The average for Texas ERs is four hours and six minutes, and the national average is four hours.



TAKE A LOOK INSIDE

From our electronic medical records (photo on left) to our triage rooms (top photo on right) to our rapid admission process starting at the registration desk (bottom photo on right), our renovated Emergency Room helps you get in and out faster.

When to Go to the ER

The Emergency Room (ER) at United Regional is open around the clock to treat patients with all types of medical problems. From heart attacks and strokes to ankle sprains and fevers, our dedicated staff of board-certified physicians, nurses, and technicians is here to provide high-quality care.

If you believe you are experiencing a serious, life-threatening problem, you should call **911** and proceed immediately to the Emergency Room. Symptoms that require an urgent evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- Chest pain
- Trouble breathing
- Severe headache
- Prolonged, high fevers

- Loss of consciousness
- Accidental or intentional poisoning
- Slurred speech, extremity weakness, or numbness and tingling
- Severe abdominal pain
- Head injuries



HELP YOURSELF WITH OUR SYMPTOM CHECKER AND CARE GUIDE

If you're thinking about going to the Emergency Room for a non-life-threatening condition, first visit our website at www.unitedregional.org to access our brand-new symptom checker and care guide. This feature makes it easier for you to access reliable care advice that you can manage safely at home. By going to the site before running to the doctor or ER, you can help determine the appropriate care that you or a family member needs for common health symptoms and minor injuries.



TAMING ALLERGIES

With the right medicine and preventive strategies, you can reclaim the season—and your well-being.

FIND RELIEF

Nip Seasonal Allergies in the Bud

The flowers and trees may still be budding in spring, but allergies are in full bloom. For the 60 million Americans who cope with seasonal allergies, the symptoms are more than annoying. They can disrupt everyday activities and even lead to painful sinus and ear infections.

Defensive maneuvers

In springtime, airborne pollen from grasses, trees, weeds, and flowering plants can trigger an allergic reaction, causing mucous membranes to become inflamed. Symptoms may include red, itchy, watery eyes; sneezing, congestion, and a runny nose; and itchiness in the throat, roof of the mouth, and ears.

It's impossible to avoid airborne pollen completely, but you can lessen your

exposure by taking steps to shut drifting pollen out of your home and car. Keep windows and doors closed. An air conditioner can help filter and dry the air you breathe. It's also helpful to know when it's safest to venture outside. Limit your time outdoors when pollen counts are particularly high—especially on dry, windy days.

Helpful tools

Taming symptoms with medication is easier once you understand the types of allergy drugs available. Many are available over the counter, but some require a prescription. Certain drugs may cause unwanted side effects, such as extreme sleepiness or jitteriness. Consult your doctor for guidance on which of the following medications to try:

- **Antihistamines** curtail mucus production and relieve sneezing, runny nose, itchiness, and rashes.
- **Decongestants** shrink swollen nasal tissues to allow easier breathing.
- **Antihistamine/decongestants** combine the benefits of two medicines in a single product.
- **Corticosteroid and cromolyn sodium nose sprays** reduce nasal swelling.
- **Allergy eyedrops** relieve itching, redness, and tearing.
- **Immunotherapy** (allergy shots) helps reduce your reaction to allergens.

Don't suffer through another spring. With the right medicine and preventive strategies, you can reclaim the season—and your well-being.

HAVE ALLERGIES? WE CAN HELP. Many times, sniffles, coughs, congestion, and watery eyes are just symptoms of a nagging cold. But if these symptoms don't ease up after a week or two, you may have allergies. Call **940-764-8570** to find a physician who can diagnose and develop a treatment plan. Learn how to manage your condition by visiting our brand-new Health Information section at www.unitedregional.org.

SPRING 2011

COMMUNITY HEALTH CLASSES AND EVENTS

To register for any course, call our referral line at 940-764-8570.

FOR YOUR HEALTH

Diabetes Support Group

Mondays, April 25 and July 25
6 to 7:30 p.m.

Breathsavers Pulmonary Support Group

This group teaches adults with pulmonary diseases (COPD, asthma, emphysema, and chronic bronchitis) self-care skills for a more active life.
Tuesdays, May 10 and July 12
noon to 1 p.m.



Becoming Smoke-Free

Learn strategies necessary to stop smoking. Participants receive free nicotine-replacement therapy during the course. Cost: \$25 per person.
Tuesdays and Thursdays, June 7 to 16
6:30 to 8 p.m.

CHILDBIRTH AND PARENTING

Prepared Childbirth

This course covers preparing for the delivery, pain management, newborn care and safety, and emotional changes during a woman's pregnancy. Cost: \$30 per couple.

Tuesdays, May 3 to 31 or July 5 to Aug. 2
7 to 9 p.m.

Prepared Childbirth—Condensed Course

This course covers the same topics as the one above, but in a one-day format. Cost: \$30 per couple.
Saturday, April 2, May 14, June 4, or July 9
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Basics of Breastfeeding

This course explores the benefits of breastfeeding and teaches the proper feeding techniques. Cost: \$20 per couple.
Tuesday, April 5, May 10, or June 7
7 to 9 p.m.

Walk Away from Joint Pain: "Advanced Surgical Techniques in Joint Replacement"

Is shoulder, hip, or knee pain interfering with your daily activities? Come hear about the latest treatment options.

Tuesday, May 3

Registration and light lunch: **11:30 a.m.**

Presentation and Q&A session: **noon**

Location: **United Regional, Bridwell Tower**

Presenter: **Michael Sheen, M.D.**

Infant/Child CPR

Participants will receive an inflatable learning mannequin along with an instructional DVD and other course materials. Cost: \$35 per couple.
Tuesday, April 12 or June 14
7 to 9 p.m.

Special Siblings

This course helps future big brothers and big sisters understand their feelings regarding the birth of a new sibling. Cost: \$10 per child.
Saturday, May 21 or July 16
10 a.m. to noon

To register for any course, contact "Call-A-Nurse" at 940-764-8570.

Participants will receive class locations when they register for any of these classes.



Coaches, athletic trainers, and parents of student athletes are invited to attend this presentation on preventing and treating sports-related injuries. Sports physicals will be provided to student athletes. Look in the next issue of *Healthy You* to find out how you can sign up for the event.

SATURDAY, JULY 23

**SPORTS PHYSICALS BEGIN AT 1 P.M.
PROGRAM BEGINS AT 2 P.M.
THE WELLINGTON CONFERENCE CENTER**



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: BILL BATES,
former defensive back for the
Dallas Cowboys (1983-1997)

United Regional Presents

Playing It Safe

cut and save



United Regional Health Care System Inc.
 1600 11th St.
 Wichita Falls, TX 76301
 940-764-7000
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Information in *Healthy You* comes from a wide range of medical experts and may not apply to your particular situation. If you have specific questions about your health, contact your personal physician. All models used for illustrative purposes only. (10433M)

Prevent Spring Stings

Spring brings warmer temperatures and longer days. But it also brings insects. The following steps can protect you and your family against bug bites:

- **Stay clear of areas that attract pests.** Stinging insects favor bushes, rotting fruit, and decaying logs or stumps. Mosquitoes breed in standing water. Bees and wasps also like garbage. So, keep your garbage outside in covered cans.
- **Consume sweet-smelling foods and drinks inside,** when possible. These attract insects. For the same reason, skip sweet-smelling colognes, soaps, and lotions when you'll be outside.
- **Avoid the patterns and textures insects favor.** These include floral prints, bright clothing, and shiny jewelry.
- **Use a mosquito repellent.** The longest-lasting repellents contain the chemical DEET. For children, stick to a 10 percent solution and never apply to a child's face, hands, or irritated skin. Avoid putting DEET on an infant. Instead, place your baby in a carriage, and cover it with mosquito netting.



- **Light candles at night.** People who lit citronella candles had 42 percent fewer bites than those who stayed in the dark. However, even regular candles reduced bites by 23 percent.
- **Design your garden to be less attractive to bees.** They seem to especially like yellow and white flowers. But they find reds less attractive than other colors.
- **If a wasp or bee threatens, move away slowly and quietly.** Avoid waving your arms, swatting, or running.



As many as **5 percent** of Americans are at risk for a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction from insect stings, according to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology.



BE SAFE. Following a severe reaction, make an appointment with an allergist or immunologist at United Regional so that you can be safe the next time around. To see one of our doctors, find a physician on our website at www.unitedregional.org or call **940-764-8570**.