

HealthTalk

Fall 2002

MORNING SICKNESS: WHAT WORKS?

Usually limited to the first three months of pregnancy, morning sickness affects at least 50 percent of pregnant women. The rapid rise of estrogen during pregnancy may be partially to blame.

While sickness often occurs in the morning, symptoms can occur at any time.

To relieve morning sickness:

- * eat several small meals
- * avoid quick posture changes
- * when bothered by strong odors, suck on a peppermint or sniff sliced lemon
- * choose bland foods
- * keep some crackers near your bed to munch on before getting up
- * try motion sickness wristbands
- * ask your doctor about gingerroot.

If nausea and vomiting are severe, talk with your doctor about other treatment measures.

St. Vincent's Family Birthing Center offers prenatal childbirth and baby care classes, hearing screenings for all newborns, and much more. If you would like to learn more about the Family Birthing Center and the new Neonatal Special Care Nursery, come visit us and take a tour. Call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

Five Factors that Affect Breast Cancer Risk

Take this self-assessment test provided by the St. Vincent's Department of Radiology to see if you are at risk for breast cancer:

1. Are you older than age 50?
 Yes No
Most cases of breast cancer occur in women older than age 50.
2. Did you begin menstruating before age 12?
 Yes No
If you had your first period at a young age, you have been exposed to the hormone estrogen for a long time. This can raise your breast cancer risk.
3. Have you ever had a breast biopsy with a diagnosis of atypical hyperplasia?
 Yes No

Your breast cancer risk may be four to five times higher than average.

4. Have you never had children, or did you have your first child after age 30?
 Yes No

You are at greater risk if you have never given birth or if you gave birth to your first child after age 30.

5. Do you have a personal or family history of breast cancer?
 Yes No

Your risk increases if you have had breast cancer, or if you have a mother, sister, or daughter who has had breast cancer.

Many women who get breast cancer do not have any of the above risk factors, says Gioia Riccio, M.D., a member of St. Vincent's Radiology Department. She recommends that you perform a monthly breast self-examination. Look for a lump in your breasts or under your arms.



Women between ages 20 and 39 should have a regular breast exam every three years. Depending on your risk, your doctor may recommend a mammogram or additional screening.

If you checked "Yes" to any of these risk factors, talk to your doctor about screenings. *

The St. Vincent's Radiology Department offers a wide range of screening and biopsy options should there be a need for further study. For information, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

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A Parent's Nightmare:

When Your Child Says, "I'm Leaving"

It's not unusual for a child—at one time or another—to threaten to run away from home. The child may hope to avoid punishment or chores. Or she may want to leave out of guilt for doing something wrong.

Whatever the reason, there are things you can do to help smooth out the problem and keep your child safely in your sights, says Susan Steneck, Ph.D., Director of Education and Community Services at Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services in Westport.

Dr. Steneck says that in most cases, children age 12 and younger who threaten to run away won't actually do it. But as a parent, it's important to take the threat seriously and talk to your child. Even if you think your child is bluffing, don't dismiss the threat. For example, don't help him pack or wish him luck on his own. This makes your youngster feel unwanted.

First, stay calm and remain in control of your emotions. Then, ask why she wants to leave. Be a good listener, and don't get defensive. Show her that you value her opinions—even if you don't agree with them. By expressing feelings, rather than acting on them, children learn to control themselves.

If your child wants to run away from a problem, reassure him that no matter how terrible it seems, it can be worked out. Remind him that you love him and that you're there to help.

If you are divorced, realize that it's common for children to threaten to run away to the other parent. Talk to your child and try to understand her point of view. At the same time, remind your child that until she is older, her parents are the best people to decide where she lives.

Dr. Steneck says that threats from teens to run away should be taken very seriously because the danger is real. More than half of runaways are ages 15 or 16. Most leave because of problems with their parents, such as fighting or poor communication. In teens, running away also may signal depression or thoughts of suicide.

If your child or teen runs away, focus your energy on bringing him home. Most of the time, you'll find him at a friend's or relative's house. If you still can't find him, call the police and ask your friends and family for support. ✪

If your child repeatedly threatens to run away or actually does so, talk to a counselor. If counseling or more serious help is needed, you can find a wide range of child and adolescent services at Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services in Westport.

HALL-BROOKE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Hall-Brooke's Child & Adolescent Ambulatory Services are specially designed to assist children and adolescents who are experiencing emotional, behavioral, or developmental difficulties. Hall-Brooke can help with outstanding evaluation and assessment services, an intensive day treatment program for adolescents, and Hall-Brooke School, an accredited therapeutic educational program for children and adolescents.

If you need help, call Hall-Brooke campus in Bridgeport at 203-365-8400 or the new Hall-Brooke in Westport at 203-227-1251.

HRT: What Do the Latest Findings Mean?



Research continues to uncover the effects of long-term hormone replacement therapy (HRT). In fact, women taking one type of HRT in a national study suddenly were told to quit the treatment. Why? And what does this mean for you?

UNDERSTAND RISKS

Bruce Kaplan, M.D., Chairperson of the St. Vincent's Department of Obstetrics/Gynecology, says that physicians have long prescribed HRT to ease symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes and sleeplessness. Additionally, HRT was recommended for long-term health benefits, such as heart disease protection.

But a recent study has shown that healthy postmenopausal women who took one type of HRT—estrogen plus progestin—for about five years had a slightly higher risk for heart disease, heart attack, breast cancer, stroke, and blood clots.

These women did have a lower risk of colon cancer and bone fractures. But some experts say these health gains were not enough to outweigh the potential risks associated with long-term HRT use.

In another study of women taking only estrogen

long term, researchers observed an increased risk of ovarian cancer.

FIND EXPERT ADVICE

Dr. Kaplan says that if you're concerned about HRT, it is important to talk to your doctor. Together, you can evaluate your own health history and individual risk factors. He says you should take the following into consideration:

- Short-term use of HRT may still effectively treat some menopause symptoms.
- Estrogen-only therapy is still under study.

EVALUATE OTHER COPING STRATEGIES

If you and your doctor decide that HRT is not right for you, various options exist. For instance, simple lifestyle strategies often can ease the following menopause symptoms:

- **Hot flashes:** Avoid possible dietary triggers, such as spicy foods, alcohol, and caffeine. Add tofu, soymilk, and other soy products to your diet.
- **Mood changes:** Exercise and stress-reduction techniques, such as yoga and imagery, may improve mood swings.



Bruce Kaplan, M.D.

- **Urinary incontinence:** Simple Kegel exercises, which involve squeezing and releasing the muscles that control urine flow, can help.

- **Sleeplessness:** Exercise regularly and try the herb valerian root.

- **Vaginal dryness:** Use natural moisturizers, such as vitamin E oil, sesame oil, and olive oil. Or try over-the-counter water-based gels.

What about heart health and protection against osteoporosis? In addition to lifestyle strategies, such as a healthy diet and regular weight-bearing exercise, other medications exist that can help you manage these risks. ✨

For a referral to a St. Vincent's physician who can answer your questions or help you to cope with menopause, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

A Tribute to the Daughters of Charity of Charity

In preparation for the celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2003, St. Vincent's has published a booklet recognizing the historic role of the Daughters of Charity in founding and guiding the work of the Medical Center in Bridgeport. The tribute features historic photos of the early years of St. Vincent's Hospital built on Hawley Farm in the North End of Bridgeport. It also includes reflections on the life of the Sisters who currently serve at St. Vincent's.

*For a free copy of **A Tribute to 100 Years of Service**, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS or fill out the coupon on the back page.*

ASK ALICE

If you have a health care question and want a quick answer from an experienced nurse, Just Ask Alice. Call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

What Do I Do Next?

That's a question asked by many people who suddenly find themselves serving as caretakers for elderly parents or relatives. St. Vincent's Medicare Counselor Gerd Weindling says that caregivers can quickly get overwhelmed by the need to make decisions about care for their loved ones. How do you arrange for recuperative and future care? Should it be at home or in a convalescent facility? Who will pay for it? For answers to many of these questions, you can take advantage of the free, one-on-one counseling available at St. Vincent's. Just stop by on the first Wednesday of every month from 10 a.m. until noon at St. Vincent's Wellness Booth in Trumbull's Westfield Shopping Town Mall (lower level) or on other Wednesdays at the Medical Center. No appointment is necessary. For more information, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at **1-877-255-SVHS**.



Helping Seniors Remain *Independent*

For some seniors and their family members, there are two challenges of aging that can dramatically diminish quality of life—loss of hearing and the need for day care. St. Vincent's Special Needs Services (SVSNS) provides support for both concerns.

AUDIOLOGICAL SERVICES

While SVSNS in Trumbull offers comprehensive audiological services for all ages, Audiologist Rhoda Naylor sees many seniors for hearing screenings and when hearing aids are indicated, she can recommend the most appropriate aid from the many styles available today. "Our aids include the latest models using digital technology and providing superior sound quality," Naylor explains. "We also provide fittings and follow-up care that is essential for users to achieve the optimum benefit from whatever aid is recommended."

ADULT DAY PROGRAM

SENIOR CONNECTIONS, located in Stratford's Oronoque section, emphasizes nursing services to monitor individual needs and help maintain optimum health for participants challenged by Alzheimer's disease, dementia, depression, stroke, ABI, severe arthritis, diabetes, and other chronic medical conditions. "Our family members are happy to share how the program has improved quality of life for their loved ones," says Program Supervisor Sheila DePascale, R.N. "In addition to providing respite for family caregivers, we also support adults living alone, picking up on medical problems before they reach a critical stage." ✱

St. Vincent's Club 50 members receive a free hearing screening and a 10 percent discount on hearing aid purchases—fill out the coupon on the back page. Call 203-386-2736 to schedule an appointment. To arrange a free, full day of visitation at Senior Connections adult day care, call 203-380-0111, or fill out the coupon on the back page.

PET Scanner Pinpoints Cancers

PET (Positron Emission Tomography), the best scanner now available to detect cancerous malignancies at their earliest stages, is now at St. Vincent's. The PET scan is a noninvasive test that requires a patient to lie down inside a cylinder similar to a CT scanner. PET's major difference from other scanning technologies is that it detects metabolic changes at the cellular level, often long before structural changes, such as tumors, occur. PET will be particularly effective in detecting cancers of the lung, colon, head, and neck as well as melanoma and lymphoma. Another

important benefit of PET is the technology's ability to detect nodules in the lungs and breasts, eliminating the need for invasive biopsy procedures. In addition to detecting early-stage malignancies, PET scans also detect cardiac irregularities and neurological disorders, including Alzheimer's disease. ✱

St. Vincent's is providing this promising new technology one day a week through a mobile PET scanning unit. For more information, or a referral to an oncologist or other cancer specialist, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

Calendar of Events

St. Vincent's



Programs are held at St. Vincent's Medical Center unless otherwise indicated.

ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN

Classes and services geared to today's women.

To register, call Wellness Services at 203-576-5500

or e-mail st.vincents.health@snet.net.

Mammography

For women 35 and older with no known breast problems. Assistance available for those with financial limitations or no insurance. Funded by Swim Across the Sound and the Fitness Edge.

Call for dates, locations, and times.

One-Day Childbirth

Offered monthly on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Breast-Feeding

Offered monthly.

Infant/Child CPR

Offered monthly.

Safe Sitters

A medically accurate, hands-on class that teaches boys and girls ages 11 to 13 how to handle emergencies when caring for children.

Offered monthly.

Senior Strength Training for Women

Improve strength, endurance, and balance.

Offered every six weeks.

Pilates for Women

Improve strength and flexibility without building bulk.

Offered every six weeks.

Yoga for Women

Offered every six weeks.

CARDIAC SERVICES

Wellness services with a cardiac focus. To register, call Wellness Services at 203-576-5500

or e-mail st.vincents.health@snet.net.

Smoke Stoppers

Classes focus on behavior modification techniques to achieve a smoke-free state after eight sessions. Fill out the coupon on the back page

for free admission.

Offered every six weeks.

"Choose to Lose" Weight Control Program

An eating program that gives you the skills to control your weight and health for a lifetime.

Offered every eight weeks.

Lifestyles Diabetes Education Classes

Learn skills for a lifetime with diabetes. Four-class sessions include information on diet, exercise, blood sugar, and medication. Financial assistance for those who qualify.

October 17 to November 7, 1 to 3 p.m.

Slow and Steady

Low-impact aerobics for adults age 50 and older.

Offered every six weeks.

CANCER SERVICES

Made possible through St. Vincent's Swim Across the Sound. To register, call Wellness Services at 203-576-5500 or e-mail st.vincents.health@snet.net.

Prostate Screening

Free screenings to all men age 50 and older, and those age 40 and older who are either African-American or at risk due to family history.

Screenings to be held in January. Call to register.

Nutrition Services for Cancer Patients

Appointments are arranged for sessions with a registered dietitian.

Teen Smoke Stoppers

Free smoking prevention and cessation program for teens in middle and high schools. Offered throughout Fairfield County.

Massage for Cancer Patients

Free to St. Vincent's cancer patients receiving treatment in either Bridgeport or Southport.

Yoga and Meditation for Cancer Patients

Designed for cancer patients who feel overwhelmed by stress and treatment.



Tuesdays in Bridgeport at 5:30 p.m.

Thursdays in Southport at 11:30 a.m.

SUPPORT GROUPS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

For more information on these free programs, call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS.

Better Breathing Club

For people with lung disease or breathing problems.

Call for dates and times.

Healthy Hearts Support Group

For heart patients and their families.

First Wednesday of every month, 7 p.m.

Senior Health Series

A series of free talks by physicians and medical professionals. Free blood pressure checks and refreshments. At Rosedale of Trumbull, 2750 Reservoir Avenue, Trumbull. "Good and Bad Cholesterol," October 28, 1 p.m., cardiologist Kathleen Harper, D.O. "Insurance Choices," November 25, 1 p.m., Medicare Counselor Gerd Weindling.



Nutritional Counseling

Individual nutritional counseling for a variety of weight, dietary, and health problems with registered dietitian Jane Hackett. Ask about insurance reimbursement.

Call 203-576-5930 to make an appointment with the registered dietitian.



"Health Talk" Radio

St. Vincent's "Health Talk" Radio Show with Dr. Frank Scifo

Tune in to WICC 600 on your AM dial to hear guest physicians answer important health questions on a variety of topics.

Host: Frank Scifo, M.D.

Every Monday, 7:05 p.m.

detach along perforated line

Could You Have Sleep Apnea?

Heavy snorers are more likely to develop sleep apnea, a syndrome in which you stop breathing for 10 seconds or more many times during the night. Sleep apnea is more likely to affect people who are obese or have short, thick necks.

You may have sleep apnea if you:

- * snore loudly
- * wake up often at night
- * sometimes sound as if you're choking when you sleep
- * frequently have trouble waking up in the morning
- * usually feel tired in the early morning or during the entire day
- * struggle to stay awake during quiet activities such as reading.

If you have any of these problems, see your doctor and ask for a referral to **St. Vincent's Sleep Center** for further testing. Besides causing daytime sleepiness, sleep apnea can contribute to high blood pressure, diabetes, and other problems. Fortunately, special devices or surgery can help reduce snoring and breathing problems during sleep.

Call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS for information on St. Vincent's Sleep Center.



Can Snoring Be Stopped?

Q What causes snoring?

A Snoring happens when something blocks the flow of air at the back of your mouth or nose. Occasional snoring can be caused by colds or allergies that stuff up your nose.

But chronic snoring can often be blamed on anatomy. For instance, large tonsils can block the air passage at the back of your throat. So, too, can excess weight. Snoring also results when the muscles in the throat and tongue relax during sleep, blocking the airway.

St. Vincent's Pulmonologists providing sleep study interpretations through the new Sleep Center:

- * Robert Brown, M.D.
- * David Bushell, M.D.
- * William Fitzgerald, M.D.
- * Eric Gentry, M.D.
- * Philip Simkovitz, M.D.
- * Benjamin Weisman, M.D.

Q How can chronic snoring be treated?

A Snoring that is mild or occasional might be reduced or prevented with the following strategies:

- Avoid alcohol for at least four hours before sleeping. This can help prevent the muscles in your throat and tongue from relaxing.
- Try to sleep on your side. Sleeping on your back makes snoring worse.
- Lose weight, if necessary.
- Try over-the-counter adhesive strips for your nose. Some research shows these help open up the nasal passages.

Heavy snorers should consult a doctor about other treatments. Loud, chronic snoring is linked to a higher risk of heart disease and may be a symptom of sleep apnea. *



Robert Brown, M.D.

Fighting the **Flu** or Just a Cold?

As we enter flu season, here's a simple yardstick provided by Dr. Michael Doyle, Medical Director of St. Vincent's Immediate Care Centers.

You're sick both ways but the flu is worse:

Cold: Creeps up on you gradually.

Flu: Hits you like a 300-pound tackle.

Cold: Doesn't usually cause a fever.

Flu: You feel like you're on fire.

Cold: Lasts a week or so.

Flu: Seems to hang on forever.

Cold: You want to take a nap.

Flu: You want to sleep all day.



For an older person with a chronic heart or lung disease, or a younger person with asthma, it's important to get a flu shot now. You'll be protected during February and March—peak flu months.

Another way to fight flu and colds? Relax. Stress may make you more vulnerable to bugs. *

*Protect yourself and your family by getting a flu shot. Take advantage of the \$15 flu shots now being offered at three convenient St. Vincent's Immediate Health Care Center locations open seven days a week: 4490 Main Street, **Bridgeport** (203-371-4445); 1055 Post Road, **Fairfield** (203-259-3440); and 15 Armstrong Drive, **Shelton** (203-929-1109). Just drop in!*

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Keeping an Eye on the Homebound

If someone in your family receives home nursing care, imagine having his or her vital signs checked and assessed daily without the nurse actually coming to your home! All it takes is a telephone line and the new telemonitoring device available through Visiting Nurse Services (VNS) of Connecticut.

VNS has launched an innovative telemonitoring service that enables patients to be checked at home. Nurses can remotely monitor blood pressure, heart rate, blood glucose, temperature, weight, oxygen levels, and other vital signs through a computer modem in the VNS Bridgeport headquarters. The service breaks the cycle of emergency care for patients with chronic illness such as CHF, emphysema, and diabetes.

The service will be available in Fairfield and Litchfield counties through an exclusive contract with HomMed, Inc., a leading manufacturer of the in-home devices.

The result: more convenience and reassurance for the patient, and a daily monitoring system that enables nurses to respond to warning signs before more serious care is required.

"This is a great improvement over traditional models of home care delivery, which can provide patients with only a limited number of home visits. Now patients can be monitored on a daily basis," says VNS Vice President Mary Linda Rivera.

Families get peace of mind and patients love the system because they feel more in control of their overall care plan. Rivera says it's also important to remember that telemonitoring helps nurses and doctors, it doesn't replace them. It ensures timely care when needed. *

Patients must be referred by their doctors to participate in the telemonitoring program. VNS patients will be monitored at no cost. For information, contact Andrew Eaves at VNS at 203-576-1344; or the Central Intake Department at 1-800-551-8671 or 203-576-8621. For a \$5 discount on a VNS Homemaker Visit and a free brochure on VNS home telemonitoring, fill out the coupon on the back page.

Begin Your Health Care Career in January

There is still plenty of time to enroll, and job opportunities have never been better. With a nursing shortage and a growing demand for allied health professionals, you can make a career change or start a career by earning an Associate of Science degree with one of the following majors:

- * Radiography
- * Medical Assisting
- * Cardiovascular

Technology

- * Nursing

Take advantage of the College's innovative rolling admission policy, and enroll in the Spring semester with your choice of major or certificate programs. Classes start on January 13. Students have the option of day or evening courses and financial assistance is available.

To enroll in the Fall at St. Vincent's College, call 203-576-5513. For more information on the College, you can also visit our website at www.stvincentscollege.edu.



Swim Victory! On a beautiful summer's day with thousands cheering him on, marathoner Petar Stoychev of Bulgaria captured his fourth consecutive *Swim Across the Sound* championship at Captain's Cove. The event raised \$2.25 million to benefit the 34 cancer prevention and support programs of the Swim.



Postmaster please deliver
within September 30 and October 4.

Need a physician? Call toll-free 1-877-255-SVHS.

Vinny's Tips for a **HEALTHY BREAKFAST**

Did you know that skipping breakfast is linked to being overweight. How? To compensate for what they've missed in the morning, breakfast-skippers may overeat at other meals.

Here are some quick, convenient, and healthy breakfast ideas from Vinny and some of the country's top nutrition researchers:

- * Toast a waffle and add low-fat yogurt and fruit on top.
- * Eat your favorite low-fat yogurt, mixed with cereal and fruit.
- * Drink a glass of low-fat milk with a cereal bar and a piece of fruit.
- * Scramble an egg, top it with low-sodium salsa, and wrap it in a soft tortilla. Then have a piece of fruit or a container of fruit juice.
- * Try less traditional breakfast foods—such as leftover pasta or pizza—or have a peanut butter sandwich with a glass of low-fat milk. *

Families wishing to have their children join "Vinny's Club" should call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS, or visit Vinny's Den on St. Vincent's website: www.stvincents.org.



SHARE YOUR MEMORIES WITH US . . .

St. Vincent's will be celebrating its 100th year anniversary beginning in January 2003. Please stay tuned for many exciting activities and events that will be announced in *Health Talk* and your local newspaper. You can help us prepare for our commemoration by sending in any thoughts or memories you or your family have that are associated with St. Vincent's. In particular, we are interested in any old photos, film, or other memorabilia. If you would like to be part of our history, please call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at **1-877-255-SVHS**.

Recipe:

Chicken and Vegetables

- 1 1/2 T margarine
- 1 t garlic powder
- 1/2 C onions, chopped
- 1 lb + boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- 4 oz cut green beans, frozen
- 1/4 t pepper

1. Melt margarine in a heavy skillet. Add garlic and onions. Stir until blended. Cook over medium heat, until tender, for about five minutes. Remove from the skillet.
2. Place chicken in the skillet. Cook over medium heat until chicken is thoroughly done, about 12 minutes. Remove from the skillet; keep warm.
3. Place frozen green beans, pepper, and cooked onions in the same skillet. Cover and cook over medium-low heat until beans are tender, about five minutes.
4. Add chicken to vegetables. Continue cooking, stirring from time to time, until heated through—about three minutes.

Yield: 4 servings; **Serving size:** 1 C; **Each serving provides:** Calories: 190, Total fat: 11 g, Saturated fat: 3 g, Cholesterol: 57 g, Sodium: 109 mg

Source: United States Department of Agriculture; Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

HealthTalk

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- Free adult day care visitation day at Senior Connections
- Free Smoke Stoppers through Swim Across the Sound
- \$5 discount on a VNS Homemaker visit
- Free brochure on VNS home telemonitoring
- Free application and membership in St. Vincent's Club 50
- To become a senior volunteer at St. Vincent's

NAME _____

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You can get your **FREE** information in one of four easy ways: ① Mail this coupon to: Care Line, St. Vincent's Medical Center, 2800 Main Street, Bridgeport, CT 06606 ② Fax this coupon to Member Services at: 203-576-5124 ③ Call St. Vincent's toll-free Care Line at: 1-877-255-SVHS ④ E-mail us at: callcenter@svhs-ct.org

— Cut along the dashed line —