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Hospital

The Source
For Women

DECEMBER 2006

BREASTFEEDING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT | EMPTY NEST TRANSITION
WOMEN AND JOINT HEALTH | PHYSICIAN Q & A | REFLECTIONS



GLUCOSAMINE AND CHONDROITIN SUPPLEMENTS WORTH A TRY FOR ACHING JOINTS

Nutritional supplements of glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate are considered the building blocks of cartilage. They are commonly used to provide pain relief and improve joint function resulting from osteoarthritis.

"Although there is no irrefutable scientific research that determines whether these supplements work, they are effective in many patients," says James A. Hill, MD, chief of staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine.

Dr. Hill recommends glucosamine or chondroitin sulfate to patients with mild to moderate arthritis and enough discomfort to prevent them from participating in activities they enjoy.

"If the patient experiences no change after taking the supplement for six weeks, there is no point in continuing," says Dr. Hill. "As with all nutritional supplements, it's important to talk to your physician about them because of potential drug interactions."

Making the 'Empty Nest' Transition

MANY WOMEN take time to explore their interests and pursue new hobbies when their children make lives of their own.

The "empty nest syndrome" is a term used to describe the range of emotions parents experience when their children leave home to attend college or to otherwise begin an independent life. It's common for parents to feel a sense of loss or purpose. These feelings might be overwhelming at first and can linger for an extended period of time.

"It's normal to feel sad when your children leave home," says Irene Silva, MD, internist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and instructor of Clinical Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. "However, if your sadness is overwhelming or turns into depression, it's important to talk to your physician."

Many empty nesters enjoy their new independence and take the opportunity to pursue their own interests, try new hobbies, refocus on a career or go back to school. Dr. Silva says it's important for parents to understand that although their children may come to rely on them less often, they

still can nurture them by showing pride in their accomplishments and finding joy in knowing they prepared them well for the transition into adulthood.

"Many women are pleased to realize that they find fulfillment in the fact that their kids are successful and happy," says Dr. Silva. "They enjoy the fact that they helped them achieve their goals in school and life beyond school."

An important part of the empty nest transition is finding new ways to be involved in a son's or daughter's new life away from home. Attending sporting events, plays or other functions, for example, can help parents feel involved and give them new things to talk about. Many parents like to stay connected using e-mail, because messages can be sent and read whenever it's most convenient for both parent and child. ■



LIVE A HEALTHIER LIFE! For up-to-date health and wellness

information for women at all stages of life, visit the new

Prentice Women's Hospital Web site at <http://prentice.nmh.org>.

Do Women Need to to Menstruate?

Skipping periods can offer health benefits to some women.

By taking continuous or extended-cycle birth control, women have the option of having fewer periods or skipping them altogether.

“There is nothing healthy, medicinal or therapeutic about shedding the lining of the uterus, which is what happens when a woman has her period,” says Elena M. Kamel, MD, an obstetrician and gynecologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and associate professor of Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology at Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine. “In addition, there are no adverse effects of suppressing menstruation. Ovulation returns within one to three months after stopping continuous birth control, depending on the method used.”

While standard birth control typically includes a hormone-free interval that triggers menstruation, continuous birth control can inhibit the lining of the uterus from building up.

“As a result there is nothing to shed, so you don’t get your period,” explains Dr. Kamel.

“This can be done using birth control pills, patches, an intrauterine device or a progesterone-only shot.”

Skipping periods may offer the health benefit of preventing anemia in women who bleed heavily during menstruation and often helps women suffering from period-related migraines and pelvic pain.

“Whether or not continuous birth control is appropriate for a specific woman is based on other clinical factors,” says Dr. Kamel. “Anyone considering this option should talk with her physician.” ■



► **TO LEARN MORE** about health topics of interest to women, visit www.nmh.org/forwomen. If you need help finding a physician on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, please call our Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at 866-664-6789.

FOOD FACTS: TIPS FOR AVOIDING MSG

Monosodium glutamate (MSG) is a natural flavor enhancer. Though it is not an allergen, it can cause headaches, migraines, upset stomach, heart palpitations or a runny nose.

Unfortunately, it’s challenging to avoid MSG, particularly when dining out. While restaurants serving Chinese food are more likely to know if they use MSG and often are able to omit it if requested, restaurants serving

American cuisine often aren’t aware that they are serving a food that contains added MSG.

When grocery shopping, reading labels will help you determine if a food contains MSG. Other words indicating that MSG is in the food product include autolyzed yeast, calcium caseinate, sodium caseinate, gelatin, hydrolyzed protein, fermented soy powder and yeast extract.

In most cases, the more processed a food is, the more likely it is to have added MSG. Foods that commonly contain added MSG include flavored chips, frozen items and canned soups.

Naturally occurring MSG, in the form of glutamic acid, also can be found in some fish, dairy foods and certain vegetables, including soybeans, mushrooms and tomatoes.



Educational Resources and Expert Support for New Mothers and Their Families

Though breastfeeding is considered a natural way to feed a newborn, it may not always come naturally—both mother and baby may take some time to learn what works best. Continuing a longstanding commitment to caring for women and their families, caregivers at Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Prentice Women's Hospital provide new mothers with resources and support for breastfeeding including classes, the most up-to-date educational materials and access to lactation consultants who are international board certified.

Women who plan to deliver at Prentice are encouraged to attend breastfeeding classes led by certified lactation consultants. Participants learn about feeding techniques and positions, pumping and breast milk storage. Instructors also recommend that husbands, partners, mothers or sisters attend, as they can be supportive and informed coaches when a mother begins breastfeeding.

Postpartum nurses at Prentice serve as a new mother's first resource for breastfeeding. Many of these postpartum nurses have earned special certification as lactation counselors and can guide a mother in the basics of positioning her baby and coaching the newborn to latch on to the breast. In response to growing needs of new mothers, the goal is for all postpartum and neonatal intensive care nurses at Prentice to earn lactation counselor certification over the next few years.

Mothers who need additional assistance can request help from one of Prentice's certified lactation consultants. Working collaboratively with the postpartum nurses, lactation consultants often help new mothers with more complicated needs, such as developing pumping schedules for babies in the Renée Schine Crown Neonatal Intensive Care Unit who



New mothers beginning to breastfeed receive expert guidance and support from postpartum nurses and certified lactation consultants at Prentice Women's Hospital.

cannot yet breastfeed and assisting with breastfeeding as the baby matures. Lactation consultants also facilitate the Mother's Milk Group, a free, weekly support and information group for mothers with newborns in intensive care.

New parents also can view educational breastfeeding programs in their rooms using the hospital's on-demand video system and patient education television. Free breastfeeding resources, including books and

DVDs, are available from the Alberto-Culver Women's Health Learning Center on the first floor of Prentice. New mothers also have access to portable breast pumps and visiting mothers can use one of five "mothers' rooms" throughout the hospital to pump in a private setting.

After going home, parents with questions can call the hospital's breastfeeding helpline at 312-926-7155 for assistance from a lactation consultant.

In response to feedback from mothers and their families, expanded breastfeeding resources will be available at the new Prentice Women's Hospital, which will open in the fall of 2007. Breast pumps will be available for new mothers in postpartum rooms and also in the neonatal intensive care unit, where families will be able to spend time with their critically ill newborns in family-centered bays. Here, a new mother will be able to pump with privacy at the bedside of her infant, thus reducing the amount of time she needs to be away from her child. Two separate pumping rooms also will be available in the neonatal intensive care unit.

The new Prentice also will feature an expanded Alberto-Culver Women's Health Center on the first floor, patient education rooms and direct, in-room access to health education videos and the Internet. Lactation rooms also will be available on the first and second floors for breastfeeding mothers who visit the new Prentice. ■

Breastfeeding:

Knowing the Options Can Help You Decide What Works Best for You and Your Baby

A message from Catherine Chen, MD, obstetrician and gynecologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and clinical instructor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and **Dore Sobel, MD**, pediatrician on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and clinical instructor of Pediatrics at the Feinberg School.

Deciding whether to breastfeed is an important and highly personal decision. It can be overwhelming for an expectant or new mother to sift through the multitude of messages she hears about breastfeeding from the media, her family and even other mothers. Among the new mothers we see at Prentice Women's Hospital, every woman's experience with breastfeeding is different.

The multidisciplinary team of obstetricians, pediatricians, neonatologists, lactation consultants, nurses and health educators at Northwestern Memorial Hospital work together to provide women with as much information as possible to make informed choices.



DORE SOBEL, MD, is a pediatrician on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that women, excluding those with certain health problems, breastfeed their infants for at least the first six months of life and ideally for the first year. Studies have shown that breastfed babies have a lower risk for infections of the ear, upper respiratory system and digestive

tract. Other studies have suggested that breast milk could impact brain development and possibly boost IQ.

Breastfeeding also helps a new mother burn a few hundred additional calories each day and provides an opportunity to bond with her newborn. Some studies have suggested that breastfeeding might even lower a woman's long-term risk for breast cancer. In addition, breastfeeding can be inexpensive and convenient.

Pumping and storing breast milk can be a good alternative for mothers whose newborns are in intensive care or have other special needs that require bottle feedings. It also can be helpful for breastfeeding mothers who are transitioning back to work.

Working with nurses and lactation consultants, we support new mothers with countless resources and provide expert advice as they learn the best approach for themselves and their babies. ■



CATHERINE CHEN, MD, is an obstetrician and gynecologist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital.

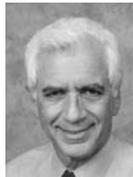
ANSWERS FROM OUR PHYSICIANS

Q *Should my daughter get the new human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine?*

A The answer is a resounding yes. Each year in the United States 10,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and almost 4,000 women die as a result of the disease. While 99 percent of cervical cancer cases are HPV-related, the HPV vaccine prevents 70 percent of these cancers from developing. So the impact of the HPV vaccine on women's health truly will be monumental.

The HPV vaccine has been approved for girls and women ages 11 to 26. Currently, the HPV vaccine has not yet been tested for use in women older than 26. Because HPV is spread through sexual contact, the most effective use of the vaccine is in women who are not yet sexually active.

The vaccine is extremely safe and has been proven to protect against four types of HPV, which are commonly sexually transmitted viruses. The vaccine is administered through three injections over six months. It can be given by your daughter's pediatrician, a family practitioner or gynecologist. ■



MELVIN V. GERBIE, MD
chief of Gynecology at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine

Q *Are calcium supplements beneficial if you begin taking them at age 50?*

A Yes, calcium supplements can be very beneficial at this age, whether or not you were taking them previously. Calcium is especially vital later in life because women lose bone mass more rapidly in the first three to four years after menopause than at any other time in their lives. Women in their 50s should get 1,200 milligrams of calcium each day. Because the body uses the calcium in food more readily than that contained in supplements, it's best to get as much as you can from calcium-rich sources such as low-fat dairy products, broccoli and calcium-fortified orange juice or breakfast bars. ■



KARIN B. ULSTRUP, MD
internist on the medical staff at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and clinical instructor of Medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine



Q *Is there a link between oral health and heart health?*

A Some studies have linked gum disease with cardiovascular problems. What we know is that dental procedures may cause oral bacteria to enter the bloodstream, which can result in the infection of heart valves or tissues. The risk is greatest in patients with pre-existing heart valve abnormalities. The American Heart Association recommends that these patients take antibiotics before dental procedures. Consult your cardiologist if you have any concerns and alert your dentist about any health conditions. ■



CAROL LEE, DDS
general dentist on the staff at the Northwestern Dental Center at Northwestern Memorial Hospital and clinical instructor of Dentistry at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine

FOR MORE INFORMATION on any of these women's health topics, please visit Northwestern Memorial Hospital at www.nmh.org/forwomen. If you need help finding a physician affiliated with Northwestern Memorial Hospital or wish to schedule an appointment, please call our Health Resources and Physician Referral Service at **866-664-6789**.

A Son's *Growing Pains*

In caring for his mother during her battle with lupus, Vincent Glaviano became a confident and thoughtful young man.

When Ann Marie Glaviano, 52, was diagnosed with lupus more than six years ago, her son Vincent was faced with the realities of adulthood, though he was just 10 years old.

Lupus, an autoimmune condition, causes the body to produce antibodies that attack healthy tissues as if they are diseased. Ann Marie's kidneys and central nervous system were affected, which caused her to suffer two strokes. Subsequent chemotherapy treatments for advanced kidney disease left her weak. A newly divorced mother, Ann Marie needed help and Vincent learned to care for her, his then 7-year-old sister and the family home.

"It was like being thrust into cold water," says Vincent, now 16. Suddenly, he was washing dishes, making lunches, feeding pets and helping his sister with homework each night. Family, friends and others would help Ann Marie during the day or help with errands and meals, though Vincent would manage many day-to-day responsibilities after school. "I would stay up late doing things Mom couldn't finish. It was so much all at once."

Usually battling fatigue after chemotherapy, Ann Marie only occasionally left the house and often was too ill to spend time with her children. "Mom was really sick, and she had to be careful of germs and exposure to the sun," Vincent says. "She would come down from her room twice a day for meals, and that was the only talking time we had as a family." He saw his once active mother become nearly helpless.

"I learned that my mom is not superwoman. You always think your parents know everything, and then you realize they don't," he says. "I learned that earlier than most people."

At first, Vincent was frustrated and had difficulty balancing school and home. "I would wake up feeling exhausted," he says.



"I would be worrying about my mom's health and my schoolwork." His grades suffered, and he had little time for himself. "It was very wearing on him," says Ann Marie. "He had to learn self-reliance."

But Vincent says through this experience he has learned valuable life lessons. He knows how much it costs to own a car and to put food on the table. He understands what it takes to run a household and make ends meet.

Learning how to provide emotional support for his mother and sister also helped Vincent reach out to others. Now, he maintains a 3.5 grade-point-average but also is involved in his high school's theatre group and is president of his synagogue's youth group. Ann Marie, whose illness has been in remission since 2004, says she has seen her son become emotionally mature and independent.

"Happiness is a choice," Vincent says, "no matter the circumstances." ■

REFLECTIONS is a page reserved for personal stories about lives impacted by a health experience. If you would like to share a story, please contact us at forwomen@nmh.org or call us at **866-664-6789**.

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About Your Health

NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S COD LIVER OIL

Cod liver oil once was an important weapon against diseases associated with softening of the bones, such as rickets and osteomalacia, which are caused by a vitamin D deficiency. But cod liver oil also may have other benefits. It contains omega-3 fatty acids that might reduce inflammation, prevent Type I diabetes in children, reduce cholesterol levels and alleviate symptoms of premenstrual syndrome and depression.

The Right Accessory for Every Season

Long-term exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays may be associated with cataracts and macular degeneration, two of the leading causes of blindness.

To protect your eyes, always wear sunglasses outdoors, no matter what the season. More expensive pairs aren't necessarily better. Just be sure your pair has lenses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV rays and a design that helps shield your eyes from most angles.



WRITE YOUR WAY TO BETTER HEALTH

Several studies have reported the mental and physical benefits of keeping a journal. Writing about stressful circumstances may help minimize stress, improve immune system functioning and reduce symptoms of physical conditions such as asthma and arthritis.

When writing, pick a comfortable setting where you won't be interrupted. Try to write about both the facts of an experience and the feelings they aroused without censoring your thoughts.

DELETING THE GERMS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Computer keyboards are a haven for germs. Both bacteria and viruses can survive on keyboards for long periods of time and can be transferred to a user's hands and subsequently to other surfaces. To avoid spreading germs, clean your keyboard often with disinfecting wipes and wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using a shared computer.

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