

# KEEPING WELL

A JOURNAL OF WELLNESS AND GOOD HEALTH CARE

FALL 2010

## Our gift to you

Welcome to your first issue of *Keeping Well*! We are pleased to offer this free health and wellness publication to the community of Del Rio and its neighbors, including Brackettville. As part of our mission to improve the health of the people in the communities we serve, *Keeping Well* provides educational articles written specifically for our unique community. It will include information about diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, nutrition and arthritis, among other topics.

*Keeping Well* will be published quarterly. The content is produced by experienced medical writers to include relevant, engaging stories with reliable and practical content. *Keeping Well* is another way we aim to better serve you!



## Numbers to know



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**Human resources/ job line:**  
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## Redesigned with you in mind

**VAL VERDE** Regional Medical Center (VVRMC), a Joint Commission-accredited, 93-bed facility and level IV trauma center serving Del Rio and the neighboring communities, has launched an extensive image-building campaign. The campaign is designed to convey our commitment to continue building on a rich tradition of caring as we work to meet the health care needs of our dynamic and fast-growing community.

"With an experienced senior management team, a dedicated staff of health care professionals, a committed board of directors and Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio, it's a new era for the hospital," says Frank H. Larson, chairman of the Val Verde County Hospital District. "It was time for a new look."

The campaign includes a new logo

using fresh colors and the tagline "Care to Trust," since our patients can trust the care they receive at VVRMC. The logo was a collaboration between VVRMC and Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio.

In addition to the new logo, VVRMC has launched a sleek new website. At [www.vvrmc.org](http://www.vvrmc.org), you can search for health advice and get information to help make smart decisions for you and your family. You can search for a physician who will meet your health care needs—search by name or specialty, or browse a complete list of our physicians.

Our website also gives you access to the latest news and a wealth of health

information. The Health Information Library is searchable by keyword and topic and includes topics such as women's, seniors' and men's health and children and parenting. You can also view a complete list of our services.

### From our family to yours

"We are using this time as an opportunity to introduce a fresh new look and reintroduce ourselves to the community," says Polly Davenport, CEO of VVRMC. "We value the opportunity you give us to care for you and your loved ones. Our hope is that you will trust our family to help care for your family, should you ever need us."

**\* Need a doctor? You can find one who's right for you—and much more—on our website, [www.vvrmc.org](http://www.vvrmc.org).**

# The road to health after 50

**ONCE** you turn 50 years old, staying healthy can mean paying closer attention to the details. In fact, you may feel like you need a medical map to keep things straight.

Fortunately, there is a map, and it's relatively easy to follow. It starts with steps you can take on your own—lifestyle choices that can prevent or control many conditions that cause illness or premature death.

## The road to health

According to the National Institute on Aging, you can help protect your health by:

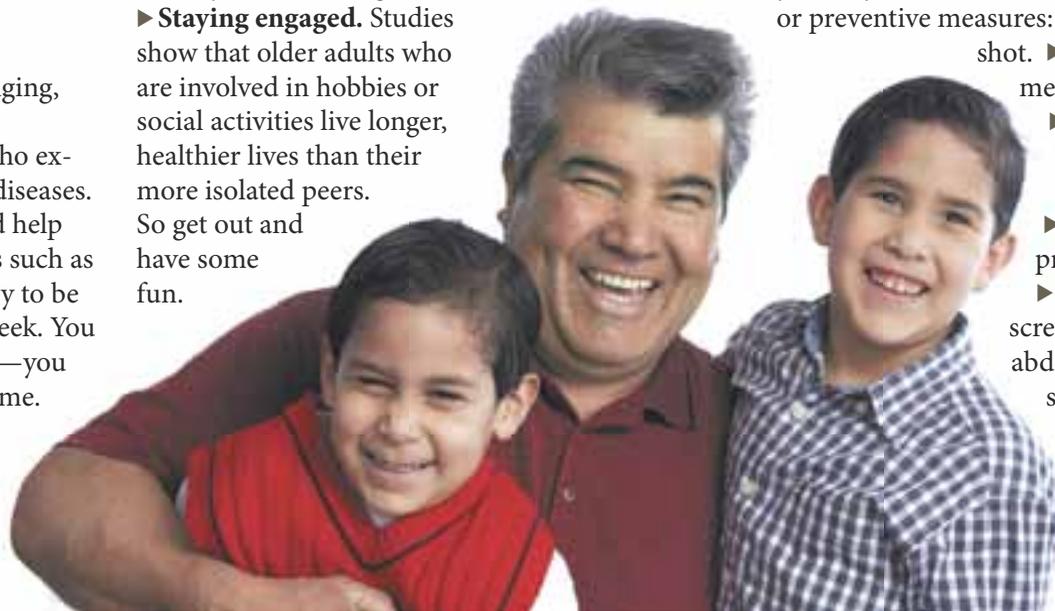
► **Getting some regular exercise.** People who exercise regularly reduce their risk for many diseases. Exercise can also improve your balance and help you avoid falls. Keep moving with activities such as bicycling, gardening or walking the dog. Try to be active for at least a total of 150 minutes a week. You don't have to get your activity in all at once—you can break it down into small segments of time.

► **Eating a healthful diet.** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains is key to avoiding many of the health problems that often occur in older adults. It's also important to avoid saturated fats and to go easy on salt.

► **Not smoking.** If you're a smoker, it's really important that you try to quit. Quitting will reduce your risks for cancer, heart attack and lung disease. In fact, quitting will likely add years to your life. You can find resources to help at [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).

► **Watching your weight.** Being too thin or too heavy can increase your risk for a number of diseases or even premature death. Ask your doctor about your ideal weight and how to maintain it.

► **Staying engaged.** Studies show that older adults who are involved in hobbies or social activities live longer, healthier lives than their more isolated peers. So get out and have some fun.



## Follow directions

To stay on course for health, you'll also need to stay in touch with your doctor. All adults should have their blood pressure checked at least every two years. It's also important to have your cholesterol checked regularly—ask your doctor how often you need this test.

And depending on your sex, age and health risks, you may need some of these additional screenings or preventive measures: ► A mammogram. ► A flu shot. ► A colonoscopy. ► A

- mental health screening.
- A pneumonia shot.
- A shingles vaccination.
- A diabetes screening.
- A daily aspirin to help prevent heart attack or stroke.
- A bone density scan to screen for osteoporosis. ► An abdominal aortic aneurysm screening test.

If you haven't been taking very good care of yourself so far, don't feel like it's too late to change now. You're never too old to start living a healthy life.

## Help children reach a healthy weight

**COMPARE** a typical school class photo from today to one taken 30 years ago. Besides clothing and hairstyles, what other difference stands out?

More times than not, a current photo will show far more youngsters to be overweight, even obese, than three decades ago. In fact, a third of all children and adolescents in this country are currently overweight or obese, according to the American Heart Association.

"It's an increasing problem," says Anne Francis, MD, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Obesity Leadership Workgroup. "There are, unfortunately, a large number of children who have trouble with obesity."

### Significant risks

Overweight and obese children and adolescents are at risk for a number of physical, emotional and social problems.

Immediate physical problems may include joint pain, asthma, sleep apnea and skin infections.

Social and emotional problems may include teasing, low self-esteem, depression and a poor body image. Obesity also has been linked to poor school performance and risky behaviors, like alcohol and tobacco use.

But as significant as these immediate problems can be, an overweight or obese child is also likely to

face some serious health issues in the future.

For example, being overweight raises risks associated with cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure, unhealthy cholesterol levels, glucose intolerance and type 2 diabetes. Today's obese child is also at long-term risk for stroke and cancers of the breast, colon and kidney.

How can you tell if your child is overweight or obese?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most widely accepted measure is body mass index (BMI), which is based on weight in relation to height.

A child between the ages of 2 and 19 is considered overweight if his or her BMI is at or above the 85th percentile compared to other children of the same age and sex. Obesity is defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile.

Your child's doctor can help determine your child's BMI and which percentile it falls in.

### How to help

There are a number of ways to help an overweight child. Perhaps the most important is to be a good role model. "The whole family has to be on board," Dr. Francis says. "Adults have to model the healthy lifestyle."

She often recommends that families aim for the

following Five-Two-One-Zero weight-control goals:

- **Five** servings of fruits or vegetables each day.
- **Two** hours or less of screen time each day, which includes TV, computer and video game time.
- **One** hour of moderate physical activity each day.
- **Zero** sugared drinks.

### A third of all children and adolescents in this country are currently overweight or obese.

"It puts everything together in a nutshell," she says. "Very small changes, incremental changes, even single changes can make a big difference."

For example, switch from whole milk to 2 percent milk and then to fat-free milk. Eat breakfast every day. Fix food at home instead of going out. Drink lots of water.

What doesn't work is for the overweight or obese child to be singled out at home, Dr. Francis says.

"The important thing is for the family as a whole to try to make some adjustments," she says.

"Families who make a commitment to learning about nutrition, to exercising more and to making small, sustainable types of changes in their lifestyle are the ones who are going to have the most success."

And that can develop into a pretty healthy picture.

# KEEPING WELL

KEEPING WELL is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of VAL VERDE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, 801 Bedell Ave., Del Rio, TX 78840, telephone 830-775-8566, website [www.vvrmc.org](http://www.vvrmc.org).

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Information in KEEPING WELL comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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