



CANCER ANSWERS

EVERYTHING YOUR HEALTHCARE SHOULD BE

Up in Smoke— Taking Care of Yourself

If you have used tobacco in any form, now or in the past, tell your healthcare provider—to be sure you receive the right preventive care. You should also be aware of any of the following:

- Any change in a cough (for example, you cough up more phlegm than usual)
- A new cough
- Coughing up blood
- Hoarseness
- Trouble breathing
- Wheezing
- Headaches
- Chest pain
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- General fatigue (feeling tired all the time)
- Repeated respiratory infections

Any of these could be signs of lung cancer or other lung conditions, and you should report them to your doctor immediately.



The Power of the Puff

Carolyn Dartez was 15 when she first started smoking. “I used to steal cigarettes from my daddy’s car, and my brother took the blame,” she said.

While smoking rates across the country have been declining for years, the rates are still rising among teens and young adults.

“Helping kids understand and resist what lures them into the habit to begin with is one critical piece of prevention that involves every parent, peer, teacher, or coworker,” said pulmonologist Dr. Ben Thompson, Director of Intensive Care Unit and Respiratory Therapy at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital.

“Reasons why anyone starts smoking vary, but most smokers say that their friends or family members smoke,” Dr. Thompson said. “It’s an equally important message when we say ‘I quit.’”

Health Effects of Smoking

Smoking is responsible for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society. It is a major cause of cancers of the lung, larynx, oral cavity, throat, esophagus, and bladder, and it contributes to the development of cancers of the pancreas, cervix,



Carolyn Dartez

kidney, and stomach, and some leukemias.

But cancers are not the only smoking-related illnesses. Smoking is a major cause of heart disease, aneurysms, bronchitis, emphysema, and stroke. It also worsens pneumonia and asthma.

The Lessons of Loss

Now 64, Carolyn clearly understands the effects of cigarettes. She lost her father to lung cancer, and her brother had his first heart attack at age 37.

Smoking also caused her chronic obstructive pulmonary

disease (COPD), which is actually two lung diseases—chronic bronchitis and emphysema. “You can hear me breathing across the office,” she said.

“Cigarettes kill more Americans than alcohol, car accidents, suicide, AIDS, homicide, and illegal drugs combined,” said Dr. Thompson. “Because cigarette smoking and tobacco use are activities that people choose to do, smoking is the most preventable cause of premature death in our society.” ■

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Looking Good, Feeling Better
- 3 Latest Diagnostic Technology Comes to Memorial
- 4 Taste Testing

WANT HELP QUITTING?

Visit www.lcmh.org. Under “Patient Center,” click on “Health Answers.” Under “Wellness” in the left-hand column, click on “Smoking Cessation.”

Looking Good, Feeling Better

Blood Counts Matter During Treatment

Chemotherapy and radiation therapy destroy cancer cells, but they also can harm healthy cells, including blood cells. That's why cancer patients' blood cell counts are checked often during treatment.

A blood cell count is a test that measures the amount of:

- White blood cells (WBCs), which fight infection
- Red blood cells (RBCs), which carry oxygen throughout your body
- Platelets, which stop bleeding by clotting

Abnormal blood cell counts warn of possible health risks.

When platelet counts fall below normal, you may bleed or bruise more easily. A blood count showing too few RBCs indicates anemia, which can cause fatigue, dizziness, and shortness of breath. If your WBC count is too low, your body has a harder time fighting infections.

Raising your WBC count greatly reduces your risk for severe infections. To raise WBC and other blood counts, the doctor may give you a drug or blood transfusion. Or the doctor may delay further treatment until blood counts return to normal. When chemotherapy and radiation therapy stop, normal cells usually recover.



Daughter, wife, mother, nurse anesthetist, artist. Mickey Laborde has a full life and fills many roles. In December she took on another: cancer patient.

Early in her diagnosis and treatment, she made the decision that the disease would not define her life. "I have cancer, but I am going to have a good life," she declared.

"Don't get me wrong, I have Winnie the Pooh days. But when I do, I pull the blanket over my head and go to sleep," explained the 70-year-old mother of four and grandmother of eight.

Changes More than Skin Deep

Before chemotherapy began playing havoc with her hair, Mickey's daughter urged her to get fitted for a wig that would match her natural color. So Mickey attended Look Good...Feel Better[®], an American Cancer Society seminar hosted by Lake Charles Memorial Hospital. While she expected tips for coping with the cosmetic side effects of her cancer, she was moved by the group camaraderie.

"I have a great support system of family and friends," Mickey explained. "But they don't have cancer. At Look Good...Feel Better there are eight to 10 women who are exactly where I am. There's a sisterhood."

This sisterhood of women are all currently struggling through their diagnoses, treatments, and concerns about their appearance, according to Paula LeBlanc, Area Director for the American Cancer Society. Specially trained beauty professionals offer tips on skin care, makeup techniques, and coping with hair loss and prosthetics.

Undeclared by Her Diagnosis

Mickey considers her cancer journey serendipitous. An injury had caused fat necrosis, a cluster of dead cells, in her breast. Because that mass could be confused with cancerous tumors in traditional screenings, she underwent more sensitive testing—which ultimately led doctors to discover a malignant tumor in the back of her chest wall.

Her surgeon, Dr. Thomas McCalla, performed a lumpectomy. The most common form of breast cancer surgery today, it involves removing the tumor and some of the normal tissue surrounding it. He also removed 17 lymph nodes, only two of which were positive for malignancy.

Mickey's first series of chemotherapy followed immediately thereafter. "Some



chemotherapy drugs inhibit the rapid division of the cancerous cells—the cells' method of reproduction—while others actually destroy the cells," said her oncologist, Dr. James Gaharan with Memorial.

Twenty days into treatment, Mickey started losing her hair. With unrelenting optimism, she joined her husband and daughter-in-law for wine and chocolates while her son shaved her head. Her daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters then gave her a hat party, and her own mother gave scarves—lots of scarves.

Mickey is prepared for another series of chemotherapy and radiation therapy that will follow a brief respite while her blood counts recover.

In fact, the self-proclaimed "hat lady" is ready for just about anything, thanks to the support of family, friends, and a few new "sisters."

"My skin tone has changed and without my hat, I look like a Buddhist monk with earrings," said Mickey. "I was fortunate, but some of the ladies are coming to grips with losing one or both breasts. It's all an issue of self-esteem, and it's good to face it together." ■

Latest Diagnostic Technology Comes to Memorial

Memorial Hospital recently added the latest in nuclear medicine technology for the speed, quality, and comfort of patient scanning.

Capable of accommodating patients who weigh up to 400 pounds, the Siemens e.cam system has various positions and uses organ-specific imaging, so patients undergo minimum radiation exposure.

The high-definition camera also provides excellent image quality in a shorter amount of

time than with other technology—so patients spend less time on the scanning table.

"The new camera can complete a whole-body scan in 15 minutes, as opposed to 45 minutes with the previous system," said Dr. Richard Martinez, Medical Director of Radiology at Memorial. "Patients are pleased that we can image both sides of the body at the same time, and their physicians get better images with more details."



Members of Memorial's radiology team with the latest diagnostic tool added to the department. Front, L to R: Jeanne Chaffin, ultrasound supervisor; Leslie Foreman, nuclear medicine supervisor; Donna Hawkins, ultrasound tech; Shelly Buxton, CT tech; Kyle Hodges, CT supervisor. Back, L to R: Alice Nunez, CT tech; Ramon Glover, nuclear medicine tech; Deanne Landry, diagnostic supervisor; Adam Landry, diagnostic tech; Kary Landreneau, special procedures tech; Sarah Cormie, nuclear medicine tech; Scott Daigle, director of radiology.

Upcoming Events

A cancer diagnosis is the start of a difficult journey, but support groups at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital can help you along the way. All groups are free and professionally led.

Coping with Cancer Support Group

For those who are newly diagnosed or undergoing treatment, or who have completed treatment. For more information, call Memorial's Chaplain, Rev. David DeWitt, at (337) 802-1933.

Tuesdays, May 20, June 17, July 15, and August 19

Noon

I Can Cope

An educational program for those facing cancer, either personally or as a caregiver. For more information, call the American Cancer Society at (337) 433-5817.

Mondays, June 9 and August 11

11:30 a.m. – 1p.m.

Look Good...Feel Better

An uplifting program designed to heighten women's spirits while they are undergoing chemotherapy or radiation. For more information, call the American Cancer Society at (337) 433-5817.

Mondays, June 9 and August 11

11 a.m.

Sisters Surviving Cancer

A breast cancer support group for African-American women, but open to any woman regardless of race. For more information, call the American Cancer Society at (337) 433-5817.

Tuesdays, May 20, June 17, July 15, and August 19

6 p.m.

Taste Testing

As though the diagnosis and treatment of cancer weren't bad enough, side effects abound: hair loss, fatigue, nausea, and skin changes, to name but a few.

Weight loss is a particular concern. But it's not always the inability to hold food down that causes the loss. Treatments, infection, and the cancer itself can change the way food tastes. Some people experience a decrease in their ability to taste food (hypogeusia), a change in the way food

tastes (dysgeusia), or the inability to taste foods altogether (ageusia). They may even experience a metallic or medicinelike taste.

These changes, in addition to side effects such as a dry mouth or painful mouth infections, could have a significant impact on cancer patients' nutritional status: If patients avoid foods or lose their appetites, they also can lose weight. And they need to maintain their "fighting" weight for the battle ahead.

Those who are unable—or just not willing—to eat, might try the following

tips from Amie Buffalo-Benot, a registered dietitian with Memorial Hospital:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Rinse your mouth before eating.
- Try favorite foods.
- Eat with family or friends, and have others prepare the meal.
- Use plastic utensils instead of metal ones.
- Try citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, or grapefruit, unless you have mouth sores.
- Eat meat with something sweet like cranberry sauce, jelly, or applesauce.
- Try new foods when feeling best.
- Eat small meals and healthy snacks several times a day.
- Eat nonmeat, high-protein foods, such as ice cream, yogurt, milkshakes, and cheese.
- Substitute poultry, fish, and eggs for red meat.
- Use sugar-free candy, gum, or mints to minimize a bitter taste.
- Add spices and sauces to meals. ■



LOOKING FOR SOME HEALTHY AND TASTY RECIPES?

Go to www.lcmh.org. Under "Patient Center," click on "Health Answers." Under "Library" in the left-hand column, click on "Healthy Recipes."



Lake Charles
Memorial Hospital
Everything Your Healthcare Should Be.

1701 Oak Park Blvd.
Lake Charles, LA 70601

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Lake Charles
Memorial
Hospital

CANCERANSWERS

Kathy DeRouen
Vice President of Marketing

Jamie Gaines
Communications Manager

This publication is published quarterly by Lake Charles Memorial Hospital. The information in this newsletter is intended to educate readers about subjects pertinent to their health, not as a substitute for consultation with a personal physician.
© 2008 Printed in U.S.A.



Printed on Recyclable Paper

6133M