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Women's Health Services

Pre-Operative Surgical Packet

WOMEN'S HEALTH NORTH 8

Mission Statement

Welcome to Women's Health! In order to make your stay more comfortable we would like to share the following information with you and your family members.

The mission of Women's Health Services is to provide high quality health care and education to women in an atmosphere that promotes, maintains and restores the physical and emotional well-being of our patients and their families throughout their life span.

We are the Women's Health Unit of Hartford Hospital dedicated to the specialties of gynecology and high risk obstetrics. We are located in the main building of the hospital on the 8th floor in the North wing.

Confidentiality of patient information is very important. We will give out information to only one or two people who you have chosen when you arrive at the hospital.

Family members will be able to wait in the family lounge, room 802, across from the main elevators. Your Physician will contact your family as needed. There is a pay phone and restroom in the family lounge. The cafeteria is located on the ground floor and serves breakfast between 6:25 a.m. – 9:30 a.m., lunch between 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. and dinner between 4:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Au Bon Pain, a coffee and bakeshop and the Auxiliary Store, a gift and snack shop, is open in the main lobby area of the Hospital.

We hope that your stay with us will be a positive experience. The Unit Manager can be contacted at **860-545-1312**. The Service Director can be contacted at **860-545-2795**. Please feel free to inform them of any problems or concerns you have during your stay. You may receive a patient satisfaction survey at your home after discharge. Please complete this survey so that we can evaluate and improve the quality of our service ■

M i s s i o n S t a t e m e n t



Your Rights as a Patient

At Hartford Hospital, you and your family have the right to:

Respect

- We recognize your right to considerate and respectful care.
- Respecting the rights of patient's means recognizing that each patient has unique health care needs.
- We will introduce ourselves to you and we will explain our role in your care.
- We will take time to listen to you and communicate information to you about your care and treatment plans.
- Your medical records will be reviewed only by those directly involved in your care as outlined in hospital policy.
- We will honor your personal privacy and confidentiality.

Quality Health Care

- You can expect to be treated by skilled, compassionate, caring physicians, nurses and hospital staff.
- You have the right to know about treatment choices and to take part in your health care.
- You may be offered treatment that is experimental or educational. The staff will explain the treatment to you. You have the right to refuse to take part in such treatment.
- We will work with you to make your stay in the hospital as comfortable as possible
- You have the right to know what safety measures may be used during your care.
- Before you leave the hospital, we will teach you how to care for yourself, and what people and places in the community can help you and your family.

Information You Can Understand

- You have the right to information from hospital staff who are caring for you.
- You can ask what is happening and why. You have the right to have your condition and treatment plan explained in ways you can understand.
- If your spoken language is not English, or if you are hearing impaired, every attempt will be made to provide an interpreter.
- You have the right to receive information about, and explanation of, your hospital bill.
- You have the right to know the hospital's process for taking care of your concerns or complaints. You can discuss concerns or complaints with your nurse, physician, the unit Manager or Director at 860-545-1312 or you may call the Patient Representative at 860-545-1400.
- We encourage you and your family to take part in discussions about your care with your physician and other caregivers.
- We will strive to make you and your family as comfortable as possible.
- Your care will be provided in an environment that is sensitive to your beliefs, values and culture.
- We will honor your need for comfort and dignity.



Participate in Decisions

- You have the right to create an Advance Directive which (in Connecticut) includes a Living Will, durable Power of Attorney, and an appointment of a Health Care Agent.
- You have the right to informed consent. We will explain your options so you can understand the benefits and risks, and know your choices.
- We will work in partnership with you to make decisions about your care.
- You can change your mind about your medical care decisions.
- You can ask for a second opinion from another physician.
- If it is medically appropriate, you can ask to change hospitals.

Emotional Support

When you are in the hospital you may feel worried, frightened or confused. You can talk with a member of your Health Care Team, such as Pastoral Services at 860-972-2251, who will listen to you and will respect your feelings. Your care and comfort are important to us.

Your Responsibilities as a Patient

At Hartford Hospital, you and your family have the responsibility to:

Provide Information

- You may have important information about your health. We need to know about your symptoms, treatments, medicines and other health concerns.
- You should tell us what you need.
- It is important for you to tell us how you want to be a partner in your care.
- You should tell us if you don't understand something about your care.
- If you are not satisfied with your care, please tell us how to improve.

Be Part of Your Care

- You and members of the Health Care Team work together to plan your care.
- You are responsible for doing things you agreed to do in your plan of care. If you cannot follow the plan, please tell us.

Meet Financial Obligations

- You should help make sure that your hospital bill is paid as promptly as possible.

Respect and Consider the Rights of Others

You and your family are expected to respect the rights of other patients, families and hospital personnel.

If you have any questions or concerns, or to receive more information about patient rights, please talk to your physician or nurse, or call the Patient Representative at 860-545-1400.



Patient Relations

Your comfort and quality of care are our highest priority. Patient Representatives from the Patient Relations Department are available to help you and your family with any questions, concerns or problems you or your family may have during your hospital stay.

The Patient Relations Department also offers the Hospitality Services Program available weekdays between 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. and weekends between 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. To make a request call extension 5–1489.

Available services include:

- Obtaining Newspapers
- Auxiliary Shop Services
- Beauty/Barber Shop Services
- Free VCR/Movie Rentals
- Free Audio Cassette Player Rentals
- Art Supply Materials

A Patient Representative can be reached at 860-545-1400 weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays a Nursing Coordinator will be available to assist you. Your nurse will contact the nurse coordinator for you.

Donating Your Own Blood

If you are concerned about needing blood during your surgery and are interested in donating your own blood before surgery, discuss this with your physician.

You may donate your own blood (autologous) before elective or planned surgery. Your physician can help to make these arrangements at the Donor Center. An order written by your physician is needed to donate your blood.

For more information, please call the IV **Donor Center at 860-545-2484** on Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday, between 7:45 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

Complementary Therapies

Women's Health Services at Hartford Hospital offers three options to help you prepare for surgery.

- **“Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster” Pre-Op Class**

Learn 5 steps that will help you prepare physically and emotionally for surgery and recovery

- **Relaxation, Guided Imagery and Music Tapes**

Tapes are available through the Pre-Op Class and during your hospitalization. You should bring your own tape player to the hospital if you have one. Research has shown that the mind and body are connected.

Thinking about pleasant images, having relaxing thoughts and listening to music can create the “relaxation-response” that decreases stress, lessens pain and helps you heal faster

- **Reiki Healing Touch**

A gentle hands-on relaxation technique is available during your hospitalization upon request

To register for “Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster” please call Hartford Hospital's Health Referral Service at 860-545-1888 or 1-800-545-7664

There is also an entire department offering other complementary therapy services, called the Integrative Medicine Program at Hartford Hospital. For more information on the program please call 860-545-4444.



Your N8 Caregivers

Registered Nurse (RN) – Your nurse is a licensed professional who provides physical care and education for you. With your physician and other providers, the RN will plan, monitor and evaluate your care.

Patient Administrative Associate (PAA) – The PAA is often the first person to greet you to the unit. She will review with you your admission information on the computer and then bring you to your room.

Patient Care Assistant (PCA) – PCA's provide care under the supervision of a RN and gives care such as taking blood pressures, assisting with bathing, walking, delivering meals/snacks, drinks and other care needs you may have.

Patient Service Associate (PSA) – PSA's provide care to you by keeping your room stocked and cleaned.

OB/GYN Attending Physician – Your OB/GYN provider directs your medical care and works together with a team of health care professionals.

OB/GYN Resident - Hartford Hospital is a teaching hospital. The OB/GYN residents are physicians who are on duty around the clock. The residents assist your OB/GYN provider with your surgery and care after the surgery.

Anesthesiologist – The Anesthesiologist is responsible for the administration of anesthesia during your surgery. Anesthesiologists are physicians specially trained in the administration of anesthesia and anesthetics who are available 24 hours per day.

Social Worker – Clinical Social Workers are available to assist you and your family with any social and emotional needs that you may have. Social Workers provide crisis counseling, support and referral to community and other resources. Social Workers can assist with issues related to anxiety and depression, substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, adoption and domestic violence, as well as family relation issues. They may be contacted through your nurse.

Patient Care Coordinator (PCC), Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) and Case Coordinator – Are advanced practice nurses who work together with your physicians, nurses, social workers and other health care providers to plan and coordinate your care when special services are needed.



Information and Services

Parking

On the day of admission and the day of discharge, free valet parking is available at the main entrance of Hartford Hospital. Your ticket will be stamped and validated when the Valet Parker's bring your car to you.

Hartford Hospital Seymour Street Garage is open 24 hours a day at \$1.00 per hour up to a maximum daily rate of \$8.00. A metered lot off of Retreat Avenue is an additional parking option.

Telephone

Each patient room has a telephone from which outgoing local calls may be made anytime. Long-distance calls may be made using your calling card or by calling collect. Relatives and friends may call you directly by dialing the number on your phone, between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.

Television Service

Color television is available in all rooms. If you would like to rent TV, a Television Hostess will visit you on a daily basis.

Valuables

Each patient room is equipped with a locked closet for personal belongings. For additional safety, valuables such as cash, credit cards and jewelry should be left at home.

Smoking

Hartford Hospital is a smoke-free environment. Patients and visitors are asked not to smoke, except in an outside designated area.

Social Service Support

Social Services are available to Hartford Hospital patients during their stay. A nurse or physician can help put you in contact with a social worker.

Pastoral Services

Pastoral caregivers on staff at Hartford Hospital can offer support to patients during their stay.

Visiting Hours

Visiting hours are from 12:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Interpretation Services

Interpretation services are available to non-English speaking patients and their families through employee-interpreters and the AT&T Language Line. Interpreter services are also available to the deaf or hearing impaired, as well as assistive listening devices.



Your Hospital Stay and Surgery

Before Your Surgery

- Discuss all of the medications, including vitamins and herbal supplements that you take with your physician before your admission.
- When you know the date of your surgery, let your Insurance Company know to ensure that pre-certification has been authorized and to review medical benefits with you.
- Your physician may direct you to visit Hartford Hospital's Assessment Center for blood work, any necessary pre-operative testing and review of health history information and insurance coverage.

The Night Before Your Surgery

- DO NOT eat or drink after midnight.
- Follow your physician's directions about what to do the night before surgery (i.e.: taking any medications in the morning before surgery).
- A nurse from the Assessment Center will call you the night before your surgery to answer any questions.

The Morning of Surgery

- Come to North 8 Nurse's Station two hours before your scheduled surgery and the Patient Administrative Assistant will confirm your admitting information.
- If you have had anything to eat or drink since midnight tell someone.
- You will be admitted by a RN. She will complete the pre-operative paper work, review teaching, insert an intravenous (IV) catheter and give any medications ordered by your physician.
- You will meet your anesthesiologist before your surgery in the pre-operative waiting area.
- A family member can go with you to the pre-operative waiting area.

After Surgery

- You will be in the Recovery Room for about 1 – 4 hours.
- You will go back to your room on a stretcher and will be helped into your bed.
- You will have an IV in your arm to give you fluids until you can drink liquids.
- You may have a urinary catheter to empty your bladder.
- You may have special leg stockings on to help with circulation in your legs until you are up and walking.

Tips for Surgery

- To help prevent complications after surgery, we would like you to be actively involved in your care.
- It is important to breathe deeply and cough after surgery. You may be taught how to use a special device called an incentive spirometer to help you to breathe deeply to prevent pneumonia and other related complications.
- If you have an incision, put a pillow against it while coughing for added comfort.
- Each shift, it is important to walk as much as possible, even at night. A nurse or PCA will assist you until you can walk alone. Walking is important to help with circulation and the return of normal bowel function – passing gas and bowel movements.
- Once you can, drink plenty of liquids.
- Pain medication is available as needed, as ordered by your physician.
- Ask your nurse for medicine for pain or nausea when needed.
- Take only the medicine given to you by your nurse.

Helpful Hints

- Bring a list of all medications that you take and the time you take them.
- Do not bring money, jewelry, credit cards or any other valuables to the hospital.
- We supply soap, lotion, powder, and mouthwash.
- You may want to bring toothpaste and a toothbrush, shampoo, brush, deodorant, lightweight robe, underwear and bra, night clothes, slippers, magazines, books and other needed items.



Planning for Going Home

Here are some things to think about:

- Will someone be with you at home? If it is needed, can someone stay with you?
- Who will help you with your shopping, cooking, and laundry while you are recovering?
- Do you have plans for childcare during and after your hospital stay?
- Can your meals be made and frozen before you come into the hospital?
- Who will take you home on your day of discharge?
- Do you have prescription medications that can be filled before your discharge?

If you have special needs regarding your discharge or will need equipment, you may discuss them with the Case Coordinator at 860-545-4170.

If you think that you may need a short-term stay at a rest home/convalescent home after your surgery, you and/or your family should visit several facilities before your hospital admission. You can fill out an application at the time of your visit.

Insurance coverage varies. It is a good idea to contact your insurance company to talk about your medical coverage prior to coming to the hospital.

Financial Counselors are available to help you if you have questions about the cost of your hospital stay at 860-545-2730.

Instructions for Going Home

Ask your Physician:

- What are your activity restrictions
- Do you have any dietary restrictions
- When you may have sexual intercourse
- When you can go back to work
- When you can drive a car
- When to make your next appointment

Eat a healthy diet to help you get better sooner. Avoid constipation by eating fresh fruits and vegetables and drinking plenty of fluids

Slowly increase light activities. Limit your activities such as carrying or picking up heavy objects, walking up and down stairs, doing heavy household chores and exercising. Your physician will instruct you on a schedule to increase your activity.

Make and keep your follow-up appointment with your physician

Call your Physician if you have the following symptoms:

- Temperature over 101°
- Incision is reddened, puffy, hot, draining or open
- Pain is not better after pain medication
- Vaginal discharge is foul smelling or bright red and heavy
- Nausea, vomiting, constipation and/or not able to pass gas out of your rectum
- Pain or redness in your leg(s)
- Chest pain or shortness of breath

TAKE CONTROL of your life by:

- Getting daily exercise once okayed by your physician
- Trying to stop smoking
- Going for a mammogram as ordered by your physician
- Doing monthly self breasts exams
- Going for a yearly pap smear and gynecological exam
- Having regular physical examinations
- Having your blood pressure checked
- Having your cholesterol level checked
- Being screened for breast, colon and rectal cancers



The following information can be used as a resource guide to read following your surgery as it includes information about health maintenance, wellness and disease prevention.

A Review of the Reproductive System

Uterus (Womb)

Hollow organ where your menstrual period comes from and where a fetus can grow.

Fallopian Tube

Passage way for egg to go from ovaries to uterus.

Ovaries

Stores eggs until they are ready and makes female reproductive hormones.

Endometrium

Lining of the uterus

Cervix

Part of the uterus that opens into the vagina and dilates in labor

Vagina

Long, muscular opening that is involved in sexual intercourse and used as the birth canal during childbirth.

Labia

Fold of skin around the vaginal opening



Menopause

Menopause is the stopping (by nature or by surgery) of the menstrual period due to the loss of function of your ovaries. At this time in your life, the hormones estrogen and progesterone are no longer made. The average age of natural menopause is 51 years old.

Menopause can bring on changes or feelings, which may vary between women.

Hot Flashes/Night Sweats:

- Most women have these sensations
- Quick feeling of being hot that lasts a few minutes
- Happens above the waist and can cause you to sweat
- Night sweats may wake you
- May occur for months or years

Osteoporosis:

- Most serious side effect of menopause
- A slow weakening of the bones
- Bone loss occurs most rapidly during the first few years after menopause but may continue to occur throughout life

Changes in Vaginal/Urinary System

Menopause can cause the lining of your vagina to become thin and dry. This may cause pain during and/or after sexual relations. If this happens, use a water-soluble lubricant, such as K-Y Jelly.

You should talk to your physician about estrogen replacement therapy to see if it is right for you.

There are other ways to help with any unpleasant changes or feelings. Ask your physician for details.

Only you and your physician can decide what is right for you



A Healthy Menopause

Anything that affects body temperature can bring on a HOT FLASH.

To help be more comfortable:

- Wear light, loose, layered clothes
- Keep the house cool and use lightweight blankets at night
- Limit red wine, chocolate, and aged cheese
- Avoid smoking and drinking fluids that contain caffeine or alcohol

A good diet with adequate calcium can help build strong bones, but after menopause, diet by itself may not be enough to prevent osteoporosis. Talk to your physician about choosing a calcium supplement. Good eating habits help promote good health, as well as a healthy outlook. Eat a diet that has fiber, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, and is low in fat and cholesterol.

Exercise is very important for healthy hearts and bones. After menopause, too little exercise can make the bones weaker. A consistent exercise program is important to women of every age.

Check with your physician before beginning any exercise programs. If you have never been active you should start now, it is never too late. Daily exercise such as walking, bicycling, and swimming will help to control your weight and keep your heart healthy.

Monthly breast self-examinations and regular checkups with your physician, including yearly pap smears and mammograms, are very important for a healthy life.

Ask your physician about taking hormone replacement therapy to see if it is right for you.



Estrogen Replacement Therapy After Menopause

Women who are bothered by menopausal feelings such as hot flashes or night sweats or have pain during sexual relations should talk with their physician. Estrogen replacement therapy is designed to replace natural estrogen to help relieve the symptoms of menopause and to provide long-term benefits.

The benefits of estrogen replacement therapy are:

- Prevents bone loss
- Controls the symptoms of menopause which are hot flashes/night sweats and vaginal dryness
- May prevent heart disease
- Decrease colon cancer
- May help prevent Alzheimer's disease

How estrogen replacement therapy is given:

- Pill – taken by mouth daily
- Skin Patch – worn on the skin of your abdomen or buttocks, (*never near your breasts*), and changed 1 – 2 times a week
- Cream, Tablet or Ring – placed in the vagina

All women on estrogen replacement therapy should have regular checkups, including a GYN exam, mammogram and a blood pressure check.

Possible side effects of estrogen replacement therapy:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Vaginal discharge
- Fluid retention
- Swollen breasts
- Weight gain

(Changing the dose of estrogen given may lessen these side effects)

Ask your physician about taking hormone replacement therapy to see if it is right for you.



Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a slow weakening of your bones, which may increase their risk of breaking.

Signs and Symptoms

There are no symptoms associated with the early stage of this disease. Symptoms that occur late in the disease include; fractures of the spine, wrist, or hips; low back, neck or bone pain or tenderness, loss of height over time; and stooped posture.

Risk Factors:

- Loss of estrogen
- Smoking, eating disorders, low amounts of calcium in the diet, heavy alcohol use, small body frame, lack of exercise, and use of certain medications (i.e.: steroids, thyroid medication).
- Women who are white or Asian, especially with a family history of osteoporosis have a greater risk of getting the disease.
- Women who have had an early menopause or had their ovaries removed by surgery before the age of 45, without having estrogen replacement therapy.

Prevention is the only cure

Women of all ages:

- Maintain an active lifestyle and a regular exercise program.
- Maintain adequate calcium intake (1000mg – 1500 mg/day depending on your age) through diet (milk, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, ice cream) and calcium supplements.
- Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- Eat whole grains and legumes.
- Decrease intake of excessively salty foods, processed foods and alcohol.
- Quit smoking.

Premenopausal Women:

- Discuss with your physician obtaining a baseline bone density evaluation if at high risk.

Menopausal Women:

- Add 400 units of Vitamin D to your diet each day (often found in calcium supplements).
- Obtain a baseline bone density evaluation.
- Estrogen replacement therapy if indicated plus progestin if the uterus is in place.
- There are other nonhormonal medications available to prevent bone loss if you are unable to take estrogen.

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- National Osteoporosis Foundation 202 223-2237 www.nof.org
- National Institutes of Health, Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases
800 624-BONE www.osteoporosis.nih.gov



Heart Health

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best way to prevent heart disease

Warning signs of heart disease may include:

- General feeling that something is not right
- Feeling faint or weak
- A new pain in the chest
- An irregular heart beat
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Shortness of breath

Warning signs of a heart attack may include:

- An uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing, or pain in the center of the chest
- Pain spreading to the shoulders, neck or arms
- Chest discomfort with lightheadedness
- Fainting
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath

Warning signs of a stroke may include:

- A sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance
- Sudden severe headache

Risk factors for heart disease:

- Older women, especially after menopause, in part because their bodies produce less estrogen
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Being overweight
- Diabetes
- Inactive life style

Screening:

- Check cholesterol level every five years or as recommended by your physician (should be less than 200 mg/dl and HDL should be 35 ml/dl or more)
- Blood pressure monitoring by your physician

Prevention:

- Healthy Life Choices:
 - Good eating habits
 - Regular exercise
 - Avoiding alcohol and cigarettes
 - Regular visits to your physician

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist or Internist

Contact one of the following resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity 1-888-CDC-4NRG



Breast Health

Early detection is the best way to fight breast cancer

Signs and Symptoms:

- Appearance of a lump or mass in breast tissue; persistent changes in the breast such as thickening, swelling, or skin irritation; nipple pain, dryness, pulling in or leaking.

Risk Factors:

- All women are at risk for breast cancer. The risk of breast cancer increases with age, 75% of all breast cancers occur in women over 50.
- Mother, sister, maternal grandmother or daughter with breast cancer
- Early age at menarche (the start of your menstrual cycle)
- Late age at menopause
- Late age at first birth
- Never been pregnant

Screening Guidelines:

- Self-Breast Exams every month starting at age 20
- Clinical Breast Exams by a physician every three years at age 20-40, and then every year after age 40
- Mammograms every year beginning at age 40

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- American Cancer Society 1-800-492-7161 www.cancer.org
- National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-Cancer www.nci.nih.gov
- Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation 1-800-IM-AWARE
www.breastcancerinfo.com
- Y-Me of Connecticut 1 800-933-4YME



Bladder Health

Steps women can take to maintain good bladder health:

- **Stop smoking** - Nicotine is a bladder irritant and can cause bladder spasms. Smoking reduces the blood supply to the pelvic floor, which includes the bladder, vagina, rectum and uterus. Chronic coughing, caused by smoking, weakens the pelvic floor support muscles and can lead to urinary incontinence.
- **Eliminate/decrease caffeine** - Caffeine is a bladder irritant and causes bladder spasms. Caffeine is also a diuretic, which causes the kidneys to make more urine, and the bladder to empty more often.
- **Urinate more frequently** - Try to empty your bladder about every 3 hours or so. This will reduce the amount of urine held in the bladder, and helps prevent leakage and bladder spasms in women who are likely to have them.
- **Do Kegel exercises daily** - Kegel exercises strengthen the pelvic floor muscles, which surround the bladder, vagina, rectum and uterus. These exercises can help stop urine from leaking with straining activities such as coughing, sneezing, laughing or lifting.
 1. To find the muscle, place a finger inside your vagina. Try to squeeze around your finger. This is the muscle you want to exercise. This is the same muscle you use to hold back gas or stop the stream of urine in the middle of urinating. Caution: It is not advisable to perform Kegel exercises while urinating.
 2. Do not squeeze your stomach, leg, or buttock muscles. Do not hold your breath.
 3. Squeeze the muscle, which you identified earlier, and hold for a count of 3 seconds. Then relax for at least 3 seconds between each squeeze. Do a series of 10 of these exercises, 4 times a day. Practice doing these exercises in a variety of positions such as lying down, sitting and standing. Kegel exercises can be done anytime, while sitting in your car at a red light or standing in an elevator. No one will know that you are doing them.



Cervical Cancer

Signs and Symptoms:

- Early stage cervical cancer rarely has any symptoms. Abnormal vaginal bleeding, discharge or spotting may be symptoms of cervical cancer.

Risk Factors:

- Infrequent Pap Tests
- Hispanic women have twice the incidence of invasive cervical cancer as White women
- Women who start having sexual intercourse at an early age, have multiple sex partners or have partners who have had multiple sex partners
- Sexually transmitted diseases (including the human papilloma virus)
- Cigarette smoking, use of birth control pills and diets low in folic acid have also been linked to a higher risk of cervical cancer

Screening Guidelines:

- Pap Test every year beginning at age 18 or at the onset of sexual activity
- Pelvic exam every year at age 18 or at the onset of sexual activity

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- American Cancer Society 1-800-492-7161 www.cancer.org
- National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-Cancer www.nci.nih.gov



Ovarian Mass

Ovarian masses can be either benign (non cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

Signs and Symptoms (of ovarian cancer):

- Can be vague
- Most common complaints are of abdominal discomfort, indigestion, flatulence (gas), loss of appetite, pelvic pressure, and urinary frequency

Risk Factors (of ovarian cancer):

- Family history of ovarian cancer
- Personal history of certain types of breast cancer

Screening Guidelines:

- Yearly pelvic exams

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- American Cancer Society 1-800-492-7161 www.cancer.org
- National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-Cancer www.nci.nih.gov



Colorectal Cancer

Signs and Symptoms:

- A change in bowel habits, blood in the stool, general abdominal discomfort or weight loss with no known reason can be signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer

Risk Factors:

- Colorectal cancer can occur at any age but it is more likely to occur after age 50
- History of polyps in the colon
- History of colorectal cancer
- Women with a history of ovarian, uterine or breast cancer
- First degree relative with colorectal cancer
- History of inflammatory bowel disease (i.e.: Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis)
- Eating a high fat, high calorie, low fiber diet

Screening Guidelines:

- One of three screening options is available for ages 50 and over:
 - Flexible sigmoidoscopy (direct examination of the inside of the rectum and sigmoid colon) every five years
 - or*
 - Colonoscopy (direct examination of the inside of the colon) every ten years
 - or*
 - Double-contrast barium enema every five to ten years
- Fecal occult blood test (a check for blood in the stool) yearly
- A rectal exam should be done at the same time as any of the above

If at risk, the above screening exams may need to be done by your physician earlier in life and more frequently

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- American Cancer Society 1-800-492-7161 www.cancer.org
- National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-Cancer www.nci.nih.gov



Diabetes

Signs and Symptoms:

- The warning signs for diabetes are:
 - Urinating often
 - Feeling thirsty all the time
 - More hungry than usual
 - Weight loss
 - Blurry vision
 - Feeling irritability
 - Feeling weak and tired
 - Nausea and vomiting

Risk Factors:

- Family member with diabetes
- Overweight
- Race/Ethnicity (i.e.: African American, Hispanic American, Native American, Asian American, or Pacific Islander)
- Inactive lifestyle
- Age 45 or older
- History of gestational diabetes or delivery of a baby over 9 pounds
- High blood pressure
- Elevated cholesterol and/or triglyceride level
- Previously identified impaired fasting glucose or impaired glucose tolerance

Screening Guidelines:

- Every three years, beginning at age 45, a fasting glucose level should be done and be less than 110 mg/dl, if it is over 110mg/dl you should follow up with your primary care provider.
- With risk factors, a fasting glucose level should be checked every year.

For More Information:

Talk to your Gynecologist

Contact one of the following resources:

- American Diabetes Association 860-561-1153
- Juvenile Diabetes Foundation 860-561-1153



Exercise and Weight Control

Exercise, along with a healthy diet are the best ways to lose weight and maintain it once you achieve your goal.

Aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, aerobic classes for example) is recommended 3 – 5 times a week for at least 30 minutes.

Exercising with weights is a great way to increase your metabolism, prevent osteoporosis and become stronger.

Start with small weights and try 2 sets of 10 – 20 repetitions. Include exercise of your back, chest, shoulders, muscles of upper arms, legs and abdomen 2 – 3 times a week

Check with your physician before starting any exercise program.



Your Guide to Better Health

Physical Exam – Every 2 – 3 years between age 20 – 50, then every 1 –2 years over 50

Blood Pressure Check – Every 2 years if within normal limits

Pap Smears – Every 1 – 3 years beginning at age 18 or the onset of sexual activity

Mammograms – Every year after age 40

Rectal Exam – Every year after age 40

Stool Blood Test – Every year after age 50

Sigmoidoscopy – Every 3 – 5 years after age 50

Cholesterol Check – Every 5 years as recommended by your physician

Diabetes Check – Every 3 years after age 45



Domestic Violence Prevention

Domestic violence hurts over 4 million women each year. Domestic violence is a problem in close relationships where one person is hurt because of the other person's words and actions. Domestic violence affects women, children and men of all races, religions, and income levels.

If you or someone you know is a victim of domestic violence, there is help available. Hartford Hospital works with other community partners to end domestic violence. Some of the community resources are:

Connecticut Domestic Violence 24-Hour Hotline	1-888-774-2900
Hartford Interval House 24-Hour Hotline	527-0550
Hartford Hospital Lifesaver Project	545-2796
Infoline	211



Additional Resources

- The Women's Health Education Resource Center is located at Hartford Hospital. Bilingual resources include:
 - Comprehensive collection of books on Women's Health issues
 - Video tape collection of various Women's Health topics which can be used in the Center or signed out for use at home.
 - Pamphlets on various Women's Health topics
 - Three computer databases containing articles and information that can be printed as needed.

An information search service is provided upon request and free of charge specific to the needs of the individual.

For more information about the Center location and hours of operation please call 860-545-2920.

Interpretation Services are available to non-English speaking patients and their families through utilizing employee-interpreters and the AT&T Language Line. Interpreter services are also available to the deaf or hearing impaired, as well as assistive listening devices.

Visit our Web Site at:

- <http://www.harthosp.org/>
- Go to Clinical Centers, then to Women's Health Services, then to Gynecology Services