

ABBOTT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL



Specialized hand therapists can offer a variety of treatment options, including custom-fitted finger splints that help to support the joints.

Help for hands that hurt

ARTHRITIS IN her hands had bothered Linda Larson, 55, for some time. But last year the pain became unbearable. Several knuckles—especially those on her index fingers—were so painful that it affected her job, which requires long hours at the computer.

“It got so bad that, after working about 20 minutes, I would have to stop and hold the finger to warm it and calm down the pain,” Larson says.

HANDS AT RISK

Hand problems are very common, especially among aging baby boomers, like Larson, who are beginning to feel the effects of arthritis. Traumatic injuries and repetitive motion injuries also contribute to hand pain.

Although hand injuries can affect anyone, some jobs (such as music, dental hygiene and

hair styling), sports activities, hobbies and other activities are especially hard on the hands.

Not only are hand problems common—they can also be debilitating. Many daily tasks are nearly impossible if your hands are painful or injured. Unfortunately, the hands are vulnerable because of their complexity and the many demands we place on them.

“We need to learn to use good joint protection for our hands,” says Marcia Sitz, a certified hand therapist and occupational therapist at Sister Kenny® Rehabilitation Institute at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. “We know we need good shoes for a long walk—we should also protect our hands when doing hand-intensive activities.”

Hand therapists treat a variety of conditions, including fractures, tendon injuries,

—Continued on Page 8



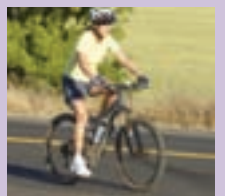
3

Saving lives: Fight breast cancer with yearly mammograms



4

Be ready! Learn how to know if it's an emergency



6

Mark your calendar for classes and events



ABBOTT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL

Allina Hospitals & Clinics

Fight the bite! Tips to avoid West Nile virus

You might think of a mosquito bite as just an itchy annoyance. But the risk of West Nile virus makes the bite of this pest a health concern.

Mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus in their salivary glands. When an infected mosquito bites, it can pass on the virus. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), West Nile virus is now in most areas of the United States.

Most people infected with the virus never get sick. Some develop West Nile fever, a flulike illness that lasts a few days.

A very small number of people, about 1 in 150, develop a more severe form of the disease, called West Nile encephalitis or West Nile meningitis. People older than 50 have a higher risk of becoming seriously ill when infected than younger people.

Steps to take. The CDC offers this advice on protecting yourself from West Nile virus:

- Before you go outside, apply insect repellent to exposed skin and clothes. Look for an EPA-registered insect repellent and apply it according to the label.
- Consider staying inside in the early morning and early evening, when mosquitoes are most active.
- Make sure all of your windows and doors have screens that are in good condition.
- Drain any standing water around your home. Mosquitoes can lay eggs in even a small amount of water. ❖

Sunscreen smarts

From the sting of a sunburn to an increased risk of skin cancer, too much sun can do a lot of damage.

You can help protect yourself and your family by limiting time in the sun and using sunscreen, the American Academy of Dermatology says. Practice these pointers—year-round:

- Use sunscreen anytime you are going to be outside for more than 20 minutes.
- Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going outside. Slather it evenly on all exposed areas, paying special attention to the face, ears, hands and arms.
- Select a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. The sunscreen should also be broad-spectrum, to block both ultraviolet A and B (UVA and UVB) rays.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours—even on cloudy days—and after swimming or sweating heavily.

Finally, don't use sunscreen as an excuse to prolong time in the sun. Remember, the sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade when you can, and wear protective clothing, such as pants, a long-sleeved shirt and a wide-brimmed hat. ❖



Relationships: Leaving abuse behind

It can be difficult to admit to anyone—even yourself—that you're in an abusive relationship.

But you may be, if your partner does any of the following:

- monitors your every move
- tries to stop you from seeing family or friends
- destroys things of value to you
- threatens or harms you, your kids or your pets
- blames you for causing his or her violent outbursts.

If someone is violent toward you, it's a crime. More important, that person is a danger to you. But even if you acknowledge this is true, it might not make your choices seem any easier.

Staying in an abusive relationship puts your safety at risk. At the same time, your partner may have warned

you against trying to leave. How can you best protect yourself?

A good first step may be calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.

A counselor can help you weigh your options. Consider your safety—you might want to call from a phone your partner doesn't have access to.

If you can, you might also tell a trusted friend or family member about your situation. Maybe someone can offer a safe place for you to stay or other support.

If you decide to leave, plan where you will go and what you will take with you. And be careful to share your plans only with people you trust. ❖



Sources: National Domestic Violence Hotline; National Women's Health Information Center

Saving lives

**MAMMOGRAPHY—
A POWERFUL TOOL
IN THE FIGHT AGAINST
BREAST CANCER**



WHEN IT COMES to fighting breast cancer, we shouldn't underestimate the power of detection.

Cancer that is detected is cancer that can be treated, which is why mammograms are such a significant—and lifesaving—medical innovation.

These safe, low-dose X-rays of the breast are arguably a woman's best first line of defense. Mammograms can find breast cancer when tumors are still too tiny to feel and treatment is most likely to succeed.

Not only do mammograms help women survive a potentially deadly disease, but they also increase treatment options. Early detection allows many women to have breast-sparing surgeries rather than mastectomies.

"Mammograms have been proven to be an effective tool in detecting most breast cancers at an early stage, which in turn saves lives," says Deborah Day, MD, chief radiologist and medical director of Abbott Northwestern's Piper Breast Center.

YOUR BEST PROTECTION

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends that most women have annual mammograms

beginning at the age of 40.

However, if you meet certain criteria indicating that you have a heightened risk of breast cancer—for instance, if two or more close family members have been diagnosed with breast cancer—you may need to start screening earlier, Day says. You may also need additional tests, such as a breast MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). Ask your doctor what is best for you.

Remember, too, that mammograms are a substantial safeguard against breast cancer only if you have them regularly. Because some breast tumors grow quickly, skipping screenings isn't a good idea, Day cautions. Thus, if your most recent mammogram was normal, you still need to continue annual screening.

Other important considerations. Alert your doctor if you notice a change in your breast, such as a lump, puckered skin or nipple discharge.

Mammograms are not 100 percent accurate. Occasionally they miss abnormalities.



To learn more about the 2008 Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, on Sunday, May 11, at the Mall of America, see page 7.

Don't be unnerved if a mammogram shows something unusual. About 10 percent of women who have a mammogram need additional tests—often ultrasound or another mammogram. But most of these tests have normal results, with only two to four mammograms out of every 1,000 resulting in a cancer diagnosis, says the ACS. Still, be sure to follow through—in a timely manner—with any extra tests suggested.

ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY

As a technology, mammography is constantly evolving. One notable advancement is digital mammography, in which images appear on a computer screen rather than on X-ray film. All mammograms at the Piper Breast Center are digital.

While doctors explore even more ways to detect early breast cancers, traditional mammograms remain incredibly worthwhile, Day says. "They save countless lives."

Indeed, the widespread use of mammograms is a major reason why the number of women dying from breast cancer has dropped steadily in this country since the 1990s,

the ACS reports.

For more information about mammography or the Piper Breast Center, visit www.abbottnorthwestern.com. Go to *Services & Programs*, then *Piper Breast Center* in the *Departments & Programs* list. ♦

Mammograms offer the best protection if you have them regularly.





Be ready

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY to know whether a medical situation calls for a trip to the Emergency Department.

Is that hacking cough a crisis? Does that cut need stitches? Are those chest pains heartburn or heart problems?

The answer might depend on who is ill or injured—the person's age, for example, or medical history.

Err on the side of caution: When in doubt, assume it's an emergency and get help.

"The elderly and the very young are always a top priority in an emergency situation," says Chris

Kapsner, MD, medical director of the Emergency Department at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. "For these populations, the chance that it's a serious problem is higher."

But one guideline that never changes is this: Err on the side of caution. If you're not sure you have



Abbott Northwestern

Last year, the number of patient visits in Abbott Northwestern's Emergency Department increased by 10 percent to 47,000 visits.

"That's almost unheard of for an urban hospital," says Chris Kapsner, MD, medical director of the Emergency Department.

Kapsner attributes some of the growth to the hospital's role as a hub

dy!

WHEN IT'S YOUR CALL— ACTING QUICKLY IN AN EMERGENCY

an emergency, assume you do and get help.

IS IT AN EMERGENCY?

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), it's an emergency if someone could suffer significant harm or die without prompt care.

Some warning signs are:

- problems breathing
- chest pain that lasts two minutes or more
- uncontrolled bleeding
- coughing or vomiting blood
- sudden dizziness, weakness or numbness
- sudden changes in vision, speech or ability to walk
- severe or persistent diarrhea or vomiting
- confusion or other changes in mental status.

Kids and emergencies. Warning signs in children may also include fever accompanied by sudden

headache, neck stiffness or rash; difficulty eating; excessive sleepiness; or skin or lips that look blue, purple or gray.

ACTING FAST

"If you think that you or someone else needs emergency care, come to the Emergency Department and have a doctor examine you. We're here to help," Kapsner says.

You could drive the person to the hospital yourself. But call 911 for an ambulance if:

- you think the person's condition is life-threatening or might become so quickly
- moving the person might require special skills or equipment
- the ill person is you and no one is available to drive you.

When in doubt, call 911. The emergency staff at Abbott Northwestern Hospital is ready when you need them—24 hours a day, seven days a week. ❖

Why the wait? Understanding how triage works

You go to the Emergency Department because you believe you have an urgent medical situation on your hands.

And yet you may be told you'll have to wait awhile before a doctor can see you.

It might seem like a contradiction, but sometimes going to the Emergency Department can take longer than a visit to your doctor's office.

For one reason, there are no set appointments in the Emergency Department. That means any number of people could arrive for care at the same time.

To handle this, Emergency Departments use a system called triage, which sorts people by the severity of their illnesses or injuries. Those with the most serious medical conditions are seen first, while those with less severe problems may have to wait.

When you arrive at the Emergency Department, a nurse or other health care worker will ask about your symptoms. Your vital signs—such as blood pressure and temperature—will be checked.

If you're told to wait, rest assured that you will be seen as soon as possible.

Source: American College of Emergency Physicians

: A hub for acute emergencies

for acute emergencies like heart attack, aortic dissection, stroke and abdominal aortic aneurysm.

"These demand a multispecialty medical response, and we've assembled the teams required to handle these situations aggressively," he says.

The increased volume has led the hospital to explore ways to enhance efficiency in the Emergency Department.

"The electronic medical record has been helpful. We're also the first Emergency Department in the Twin Cities to use scribes—they do real-time transcription as we see the patients. This ensures that all the vital information and orders are documented in the electronic medical record, allowing physicians to remain focused on taking care of patients," Kapsner says.





ABBOTT NORTHW

To register or for more information, call Medformation® at 612-262-3333



HEALTH CLASSES, COMING EVENTS

Visit www.allina.com/classes
or call 612-262-3333.

CANCER

*Support groups offered by the Virginia
Piper Cancer Institute:*

**Brain Tumor (with the
Neuroscience Institute)**

Breast Cancer

**Coping With Change
(esophageal, gastric, head
and neck cancer support group)**

I Can Cope

Look Good, Feel Better

**Program for Women Newly
Diagnosed With Breast
Cancer (structured series
of four sessions)**

DIABETES

Diabetes Education

One-to-one and group education
for people with all forms of diabetes.

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Aphasia Support Group

**Stress Reduction Biofeedback
Program**

HEART AND LUNG

Heart Failure Support Group

Heart Transplant Support Group

For people on the heart transplant
waiting list and their families.

INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

*Please call 612-863-3333 to register
for events and classes at the Institute
for Health and Healing.*

Acupuncture

Drum Circle

Herbal Therapies

**Mindfulness-Based Stress
Reduction**

**Nutritional Support for
Specific Health Concerns**

Physician Consultation

Yoga

NEUROSCIENCE

*Support groups offered by
the Neuroscience Institute:*

**Brain Tumor (with Virginia
Piper Cancer Institute)**

Parkinson's Disease

PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND PARENTING

All About Babies

Birth and Parenting Preparation

Breastfeeding Preparation

Expecting Multiples

Infant and Child CPR

Infant Massage

New Brother/New Sister

**Small Talk: Communicating
With Your Baby**

**Refresher Birth and
Parenting Preparation**

Vaginal Birth After Cesarean

STROKE

Stroke Support Group

For stroke survivors and family
members at Sister Kenny® Rehabilita-
tion Institute. Call 612-863-4996 for
information.

VISION

Offered by the Phillips Eye Institute:

Refractive Surgery: Is it for You?



If you do not find the
program or class you're
looking for in this
listing, call Medformation®
at 612-262-3333 for infor-
mation about offerings at
other Allina hospitals, or
visit www.allina.com/classes.



WESTERN HOSPITAL

or visit www.allina.com.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Regular volunteer orientation takes place every second Wednesday. For more information, please call Volunteer Services at 612-863-4281.

WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY

Please call 612-863-7501 for information about weight-loss surgery support groups. All groups welcome people who have had or are considering weight-loss surgery at Abbott Northwestern or at other hospitals. Support groups include an educational presentation and are facilitated by a professional.

LAP-BAND® Support Group

For individuals who have had or are considering LAP-BAND surgery. Meets monthly.

Renewal and Renewal Halves Support Groups

For individuals who have had or are considering Roux-en-Y gastric bypass surgery. Renewal Halves is for partners or family members of Roux-en-Y patients. Both groups meet monthly.

Therapeutic Support Group

For individuals who have had weight-loss surgery and need the guidance of a licensed psychologist to assist in regaining focus and eliminating barriers to a successful weight-loss journey. Meets monthly. Fee is \$15 per session.



COMING EVENTS

Understanding Pancreatic Cancer

Date: Wednesday, April 23

Time: 5 to 6 p.m.

Location: Education Building, Auditorium A

Learn about current methods of diagnosis and treatment, including surgical and medical approaches.



2008 Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure

Date: Sunday, May 11

Location: Mall of America

Join breast cancer survivors, their family members and friends, and representatives of Abbott Northwestern's Piper Breast Center at the 2008 Twin Cities Race for the Cure on Sunday, May 11. Through events like Race for the Cure, more than \$25 million has been invested in local breast health and breast cancer awareness programs in Minnesota. For more information, call 952-746-1760 or visit www.komenminnesota.org.

Hurting hands

—Continued from Page 1

cumulative trauma disorders, arthritis, joint replacement, nerve injuries, amputations, crush injuries and reconstructive surgeries.

The specialized training that hand therapists receive enables them to help patients regain function and productivity without risking re-injury.

“It’s important to know when rest is required, when protection from a splint would be helpful, and when it is safe to return to normal activity,” Sitz says.

MANY OPTIONS FOR TREATMENT

When Larson began therapy, she learned there were many things she could do differently to heal and protect her hands, including re-positioning her arms and wrists and using an ergonomic mouse while working at her computer. Heat therapy at the start of each

session improved circulation and mobility. Daily exercises helped Larson maintain the range of motion in her hands.

Larson also began using finger splints, which look like thin silver rings around her knuckles, to support the joints while she’s working at the computer. She wears a different type of splint at night, which offers further joint protection while resting vital tendons and muscles.

Hand therapists may also employ treatments like whirlpool, ultrasound and electrical stimulation. Biofeedback, which measures the electrical activity in a muscle, can help pinpoint which muscles are contributing to stress and pain. Another therapy, iontophoresis, delivers an anti-inflammatory medication through the skin using an electrical current.

Larson was impressed by how thorough her therapists were in addressing her problems.

“They talked to me about every possible detail—like cooking, dressing, opening jars—and had a lot of experience with people who had similar problems. They were able to say, ‘try this, it really seems to help.’”

In a matter of weeks, Larson noticed a big difference in her pain and mobility. Not long ago she couldn’t imagine going through a day without pain. “This is a miracle to me,” she says.

Hand therapists are available at many Sister Kenny Rehabilitation Institute locations, including Abbott Northwestern Hospital and Buffalo Hospital, and at Sister Kenny Sports & Physical Therapy Centers in Coon Rapids, Edina, Fridley, Richfield and Plymouth.



For more information, call 612-863-3246 or visit www.sisterkennyinstitute.com.

Go to *Services & Programs*, then *Hand Therapy* under *Specialty Services and Clinics*. ❖

Protect your hands

Hand therapist Marcia Sitz suggests these tips to protect your hands:

- Pay attention to ergonomics at home and in the office. Use good posture and proper positioning.
- Don’t overdo it when participating in an activity that involves strenuous

use of the hands.

- Use tools and protective gloves for tasks that could injure your hands.
- Follow directions and protect your hands when using table saws, lawn mowers, snowblowers and other equipment.

HOW TO REACH US

Directions Line 612-863-5550

Emergency Department 612-863-4233

General Information . . . 612-863-4000

Medformation® 612-262-3333

Patient Information . . . 612-863-4111

For hospital information and services, visit www.abbottnorthwestern.com.

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