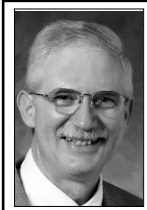


## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

## HEALTH TIPS


**From Your  
Neighborhood  
Chiropractor**

By Dr. Ross Royster,  
D.C.

**BEWARE OF HOSPITALS**

"Dirty Hospitals," an article by Katharine Greider published in the "AARP Bulletin" reads, "Of every 20 people who go into a U.S. hospital, one of them picks up something extra: an infection." The article states that 2 million Americans are infected in hospitals each year, and "for 90,000 Americans a year, the infections are a death sentence." Hospital infections are the eighth-leading cause of death. These are more than just statistics for me. I write this as we approach the anniversary of the date we lost our granddaughter to a hospital-induced infection. And, I know with these numbers, some of you reading this have also lost a loved one or have come close.

We would like to think that hospitals are the cleanest places on earth. Think again. What do you suppose happens when we put our sickest population together in one location, and, in that same setting, we make others vulnerable by surgical and invasive procedures? Think germ picnic. But, what about all the hygienic precautions taken at hospitals? The article goes on to say that "research suggests that more than half the time, health workers even fail to wash their hands as recommended – a critical bulwark against infection identified 160 years ago." Betsy McCaughey, a health policy expert and former lieutenant governor of New York, states, "In the old days, nurses and doctors were trained not to touch doorknobs, cabinets, curtains, and blood pressure cuffs once they scrubbed and/or gloved. But all that training really went by the wayside in the early '70's, when the liberal use of

antibiotics replaced that attention to rigorous hygiene."

This over-reliance on antibiotics has brought on a whole new set of problems. Their widespread use has hastened the development of drug-resistant bacteria. In 1974, only 2% of staph bacteria were drug-resistant: by 2004, that number skyrocketed to 63%. The most prevalent "super bug" is methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA. Identifying, isolating, and treating MRSA carriers is standard hospital practice in Denmark, Finland, and the Netherlands, and these countries have almost entirely suppressed the spread of MRSA. Such is not the case in the U.S., where only a few hospitals are starting this procedure.

So, besides avoiding hospitals all together, what can you do to protect yourself?

- Wash your hands frequently, and don't be shy about reminding doctors, nurses, and aides to wash theirs.

- People who smoke or are overweight are more susceptible to infection, so try to quit and lose before surgery.

- Wash with 4% chlorhexidine antibiotic soap for several days before surgery.

- Ask your doctor for a nasal swab test for MRSA.

- Be sure the doctor prescribes an antibiotic for you before your surgery if your immune system is not strong.

- Don't allow the doctor to shave the surgical site – tiny razor cuts can get infected. Use hair clippers.

- Ask friends and family to stay away if they're ill, and ask the doctor to limit the number of aides and medical students in your room.

- Call a nurse promptly if IV's or catheters become loose or damaged: the sites should be kept clean and dry.

- Finally, if you will not be able to speak for yourself, have a family member or friend advocate for you.

To compare hospitals and doctors go to: [www.aarp.org/bulletin](http://www.aarp.org/bulletin)

## NUTRITION TIPS



By Deborah  
Roussos, MS,  
RD & Ann  
Martin, RD


**CHOCOLATE: A NEW FOOD  
GROUP?**
**Sweet News About Chocolate**

That Valentine's box of delectable chocolates may not just make your heart sing. It may help your heart tick better and longer, too. There are benefits to eating chocolate! The only things going against chocolate are its calorie content and its ability to trigger a migraine headache and heartburn/reflux in some people.

Most of the health benefits come from the flavonoid and fat content. Flavonols and proanthocyanidins are the types of powerful antioxidants called flavonoids in chocolate. They prevent the oxidation (hardening) of cholesterol protecting the blood vessel lining. These substances also make platelets slippery so life-threatening clots don't occur. They may also affect the relaxation capabilities of blood vessels preventing blood pressure problems. Flavonoids also increase nitric oxide, a compound critical for healthy blood flow/ blood pressure.

The fats in chocolate contribute to its high calorie content but they either have a neutral or positive affect on cholesterol levels. These fats may decrease bad cholesterol and increase

good cholesterol in some people.

Chocolate protects against tooth decay since chocolate melts at body temperature and coats the teeth. Chocolate has been found not to cause acne or acne flair-ups. Chocolate resembles tea in some of its substances and may have cancer prevention qualities like tea.

If you are not a chocolate eater already, don't start. There are plenty of other food sources of flavonoids from wine, tea and coffee to apples, onions, berries and peanuts.

Dark chocolate is best since it is less processed and contains more cocoa. The higher the percentage of cocoa, the higher the flavonoid concentration. Look for bars with 60-70% cocoa.

The best chocolates have just three ingredients: cocoa (also in the form of cocoa liquor or solids or powder), cocoa butter and sugar. Health benefits are diminished with the addition of corn syrups and hydrogenated fats/oils, so watch for these.

The recommended amount of chocolate in a low fat diet is one half to one ounce a day. That is one and a half to three individually wrapped Dove dark chocolates. Dove can guarantee its flavonoid content since it uses cocapro, processed to preserve flavonoids. Look for other dark chocolates made by local chocolatiers. Make sure you aren't gaining weight from the chocolate, and eat as well as often as you can.



## Over the Garden Gate

By Judy Metz

The Northside News

The Garden Expo is coming! The Garden Expo is coming! Mark your calendar for February 9-11 at the Alliant Energy Center. We can enjoy a blast of spring at the Garden Expo. If you are like me, I have been receiving all of the new plant catalogs and drooling over all of the new and yummy perennials, annuals and veggies.

What a person needs in gardening is a cast-iron back, with a hinge in it.

Sow annual seeds in February that require 12-22 weeks from planting to flowering, including dusty miller, impatiens, pansy, coleus, petunia, lobelia and sanadragon. Take cuttings of geraniums, impatiens, fuchsia and coleus. When roots are half an inch long dip, in Rooting Hormone and plant into good potting soil.

In March begin regular fertilization of house plants. Now is also the time to order perennial plants and specify when they are to be delivered. Plant tuberous-rooted begonias indoors. Do not remove mulch from perennials too early. To keep amaryllis foliage growing, continue

to water and feed. Do not cut the leaves! The last week of March is the time to start tomato seeds inside. Do not prune spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia, flowering quince or lilac until they have finished blooming. After they have finished blooming there is a six-week window to trim them back. Begin springtime weeding early this year because of the mild winter. Pick up all fallen and dead branches in your yard. Check all houseplants for aphids, spiders or any other creepy crawlies and spray with Insecticidal Soap.

Keep your ears tuned to what is being said about the Emerald Ash Borer that may be invading the state. I will write more about that later. Hopefully you took pictures of your garden last year. This way you can look back at how well your garden did. If you have a perennial that has been in over five years, and you are not satisfied with its growth, the way it looks or how it took over., pull it out and try something new. Did you hear about the gardener that left a packet of seeds in her pocket? Her coat turned into a Chia coat. Happy Gardening!

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