

life's point

Focus on Health Care

Colorado Plains Medical Center



So Long, Back Pain

Advanced Treatment
to Banish the Ache

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Four-year-old Dani Moon of Wiggins offers her friendship to Grace, a Friesian mare owned by Jackie Danielsen.
—Photo by Sandy Schneider-Engle

Hand Sanitizers: Do They Work?

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Dear Friends,



life's point

I cannot begin to thank everyone I've met at Colorado Plains Medical Center and in Fort Morgan enough for the wonderfully warm welcome I've experienced. In my short time here, I have learned a lot from you about the way our medical center operates, from how visitors are greeted to the strict infection control practices followed.

I have met a great number of community members in my several months at CPMC, and I want to continue this trend. As a community hospital, CPMC is here for you. It is

through your valuable input that we can better meet the needs of this great community. As such, I recently began hosting community meetings; I look forward to seeing you at one in the future.

In order to guide CPMC into the future, it's important that you know about me and my history in health care. Since 1991, my focus has been on patient satisfaction and ensuring facilities under my watch met and exceeded quality standards.

I've now brought this focus on quality and service to Northeast Colorado

to build on the solid health foundation established many years ago at CPMC. Together with each team member at CPMC, we will strive to meet patient expectations and go above and beyond in terms of patient satisfaction and pride with quality of care.

Each of us at CPMC has made healing our life's work. We are here for you. Your health and the health of our community are our priorities.

Kevin Rogols, FACHE

Chief Executive Officer
Colorado Plains Medical Center

Give Me a B

Everyone needs a balance of energy, vitamins, and minerals from food. Be sure you're getting these essentials, especially vitamin B12.

Vitamin B12 is critical to red blood cell production. The vitamin is found in animal-based foods, such as eggs, meat, milk, milk products, poultry, and shellfish, and most people get enough of the nutrient in the foods they eat. However, vegans who eat only plant-based food; people who don't eat many animal products; and those who are unable to absorb B12—a condition known as pernicious anemia—may require supplements.

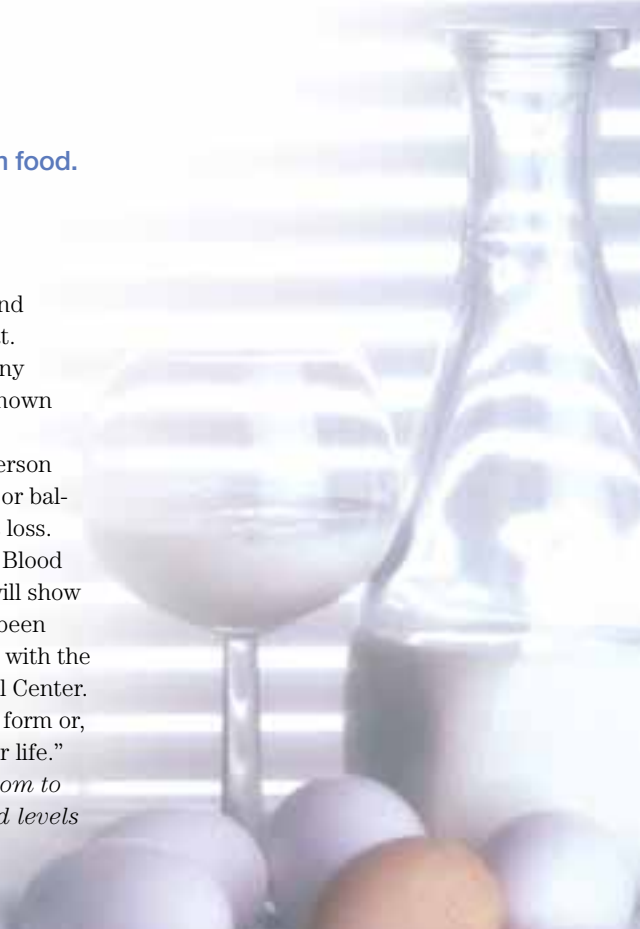
A B12 deficiency often occurs very slowly, with levels dropping until a person experiences symptoms. These may include bleeding gums, loss of appetite or balance, fatigue, sore tongue, tingling or weakness in arms or legs, and weight loss.

"Regular screening labs, such as the Complete Blood Count test followed by a B12 level if indicated, will show if B12 is lacking and when adequate levels have been reached," says Mitzi Garrison, nurse practitioner with the Family Practice Clinic at Colorado Plains Medical Center. "Treatment may include daily supplements in pill form or, for more severe cases, monthly B12 injections for life."

Visit www.ColoradoPlainsMedicalCenter.com to find a physician who can monitor your blood levels to help you maintain proper health.



Mitzi Garrison, nurse practitioner





Specialty Service Spotlight: Massage Therapy

Exercise and strength training are essential for physical therapy success, but they sometimes can cause tension in muscles and joints. Now, seniors at Colorado Plains Medical Center can receive massage therapy to ease aches and combat tension.

Massage therapy is a complementary medicine technique that has proved to be an effective means of stress relief and relaxation. When combined with traditional medical practices, therapeutic massage can boost the immune system

and increase endorphins—the body’s natural painkillers.

“Massage therapy is more of a health benefit than a luxury,” says Connie Francone, physical therapist assistant, certified massage therapist at CPMC.

“Older patients with osteoporosis, hypertension, diabetes, anxiety, lymphedema, or depression can really gain from the medical advantages therapeutic massage has to offer.”

The health benefits of massage therapy include:

- alleviating pain from carpal tunnel syndrome and arthritis
- decreasing stress and tension
- enhancing lymph flow
- improving flexibility
- increasing blood circulation
- reducing muscle stiffness
- relieving pain—both chronic and temporary

Certified massage therapists at CPMC are trained to understand how the body’s muscular system works and how they can improve its functionality as it relates to pain, dysfunction, and correction.

“Massage therapy provides a more complete and comprehensive approach to healing,” says Francone. “We want our outpatient rehabilitation patients to recover as effectively and comfortably as possible, and massage therapy helps to reach that goal.”

For more information about massage therapy for seniors receiving rehabilitation, call (970) 867-6544.

Wash Up for Wellness

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer has become an increasingly popular tool for keeping hands clean and can be found almost anywhere, from cars and handbags to hospital areas such as waiting rooms, hallways, outside patient rooms, and in dining areas. But is it effective?

Clean hands can help keep you and the people around you healthy by preventing the spread of germs.

“Hand sanitizer is as effective as using soap and water to sanitize hands—with the exception of cleaning visibly soiled spots or infectious spores—and it helps prevent illness from spreading,” says Sonya Bass, Director of Quality and Risk at Colorado Plains Medical Center. “At CPMC, we promote this germ control by placing antibacterial

hand gels outside every room and hanging signs promoting hand washing around the facility. We also encourage patients to ask their caregivers if they have washed their hands or used hand sanitizer.”

WHEN TO SCRUB UP

When soap and clean water prove unavailable, use a hand sanitizer. It is portable and easy to keep in your purse, car, pocket, or on your desk at your work. Be sure to rub the gel all over your hands and fingers until the product dries.

“Hand hygiene is the single best way to prevent infection,” says Bass. “It reduces transmission of infection between team members and patients, and from patient to

patient, which aligns well with our ongoing infection control protocols. It also can help keep you healthy in your everyday life.”

In fact, CPMC’s hospital-acquired infection rate has steadily declined during the past three years. This attention to hand washing has contributed to success in this area, notes Bass.

For more information about ways CPMC is working to keep you safe, visit www.ColoradoPlainsMedicalCenter.com and select “Commitment To Patient Care.”



Sonya Bass,
Director of Quality and Risk



Say Goodbye to **B**

Should I See My Doctor?

Some people simply suffer at home with back pain. It's time to seek immediate medical attention if you:

- experience fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, weakness, or sweating
- experience numbness in the leg, foot, groin, or rectal area
- experience pain caused by injury
- have pain that radiates down the leg
- have trouble moving or functioning because of pain
- lose control over bladder or bowel function

If you experience back pain and notice it occurs more often than not, put a stop to it now—don't let back pain rule your life. At Colorado Plains Medical Center, we offer a variety of treatment plans to help you overcome back problems and reduce or eliminate pain.

According to the National Institutes of Health, approximately 80 percent of people in the United States will experience back pain at some point in their lives. While many of these issues are acute, meaning they don't linger and often resolve on their own, many are chronic. Chronic back pain is that which lasts more than three months.

"The sooner a patient gets back pain evaluated, the sooner he or she can be placed on a treatment program," says Angela Eicher, DPT at CPMC. "With prompt treatment, patients typically recover more quickly and have better long-term results."

WHY IT HURTS

While almost everyone will suffer from back pain at some time, the reasons for pain can stem from a wide variety of factors, such as:

- aging
- being out of shape and/or overweight
- injury
- overexertion at work or play
- poor posture
- smoking (see "One More Reason to Quit")

Because there are so many reasons for back pain, location and severity of pain can differ greatly from person to person as well. To ensure treatment plans will address each of these unique factors for pain, treatment at CPMC is tailored to each patient's specific needs.

PHYSICAL THERAPY CAN HELP

At CPMC, therapists use the McKenzie Protocol to ensure accurate diagnoses, prescribe appropriate exercise techniques, and properly educate patients.

When a patient arrives for pain relief, the team works to determine a patient's cause or causes of pain. The evaluation

Sleep Right

Back pain can be caused or exacerbated by sleeping awkwardly or on an inappropriate mattress. Here are a few tips that can help prevent morning backaches.

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, the best way to prevent back pain caused by sleeping positions is to sleep on your side with your legs bent at the knees. Place a small pillow between your knees for added comfort. If you sleep on your stomach, place a pillow under

your hips to alleviate pressure on the low back. If you sleep on your back, a small pillow under the low back and a pillow under the knees can provide much-needed support.

When selecting a mattress, make sure it's not too soft. A medium-firm mattress should provide appropriate support for the natural curvature of the spine without being too rigid. However, test a variety of mattresses to find the one that's just right for you.

ack Pain

process may even involve the simulation of daily activities. For instance, if a patient mentions experiencing severe pain at work, therapists will work to replicate his or her work environment to best evaluate the cause.

After the sources of pain are determined, CPMC experts develop a treatment plan. Patients learn exercises that can be used to strengthen core and back muscles to relieve current pain and hopefully prevent recurrence in the future. Depending on a patient's condition, he or she may begin aquatic therapy exercise before transitioning to land-based exercise. Modalities such as ultrasound and electrical stimulation may also be used.

"In addition to being taught how to maintain proper postures, patients also learn appropriate ways to lift and move items without causing injury," says Eicher. "Our goal is to alleviate strain on tissues by working on correct spine posture and alignment."

WHEN YOU NEED MORE

For patients whose back pain has not resolved with rest, medication, physical therapy, and other pain management options are available. Epidural steroid injections and/or facet joint

injections provide successful relief for many patients. In severe instances, surgery may be required.

"Having back pain is a sign of a problem that may be treatable, and it's not something you have to live with," says Jon Brookins, Chief Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at CPMC.

"If you're experiencing back pain, the first step in recovery is asking your primary care physician about treatment options and for a referral for treatment at CPMC."

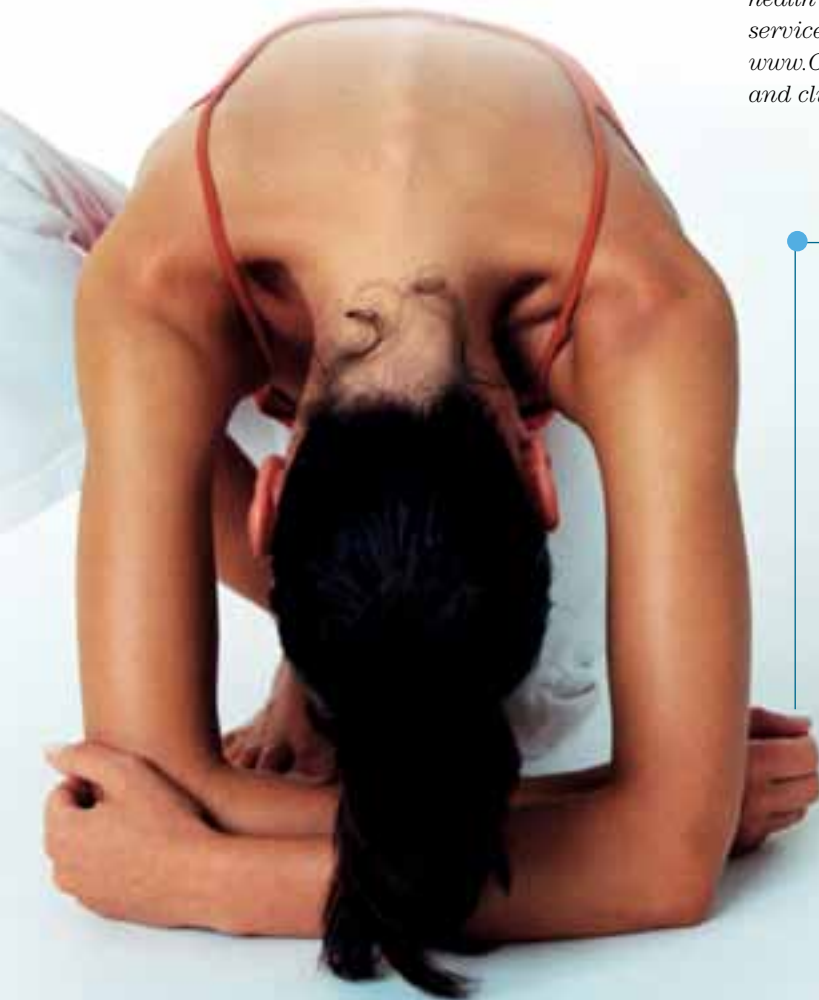
For more information about back health or other physical therapy services at CPMC, visit www.ColoradoPlainsMedicalCenter.com and click "Services and Technology."



Angela Eicher, DPT, uses a variety of treatments, including aquatic therapy, to help alleviate back pain for patients.



Jon Brookins, CRNA



One More Reason to Quit

If you're a smoker, you know the habit can lead to various cancers and heart disease. Would you have thought that smoking could also be the culprit behind your back pain? Numerous studies say it's possible.

Researchers have yet to determine how exactly smoking causes back pain, but some experts think it could be attributed to nicotine affecting the way pain signals are sent through the body. Another cause may be smoking-related clogged arteries and the prevention of the flow of vital nutrients to tissues in the back.

While the verdict is still out on why smokers experience back pain more frequently than nonsmokers, evidence consistently indicates a correlation between the two. If you're a smoker with back trouble, kicking the habit may help alleviate your pain—and make you healthier.



Recognizing the Signs

The main symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease are heartburn, regurgitation, and nausea. Other symptoms include:

- bad breath
- chest pain
- choking sensation at night
- dry cough
- earaches
- feeling like there is a lump in your throat
- hoarseness
- sore throat

Consult your physician if heartburn symptoms persist after taking medications or you have to take medications for more than three weeks to control heartburn and indigestion.



More than Heartburn

Do you experience heartburn two or more times a week without relief from over-the-counter medications? If so, you may be one of 17 million people in the United States living with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD).

For adults, the main symptom of GERD is frequent heartburn—a burning-type pain in the lower mid-chest behind the breast bone and in the mid-abdomen that occurs after eating or at night.

“The term GERD refers the movement or reflux of stomach contents back up into the esophagus, the muscular tube that connects the stomach to the throat,” says Stephen Godar, MD, internist on staff at Colorado Plains Medical Center. “Since the stomach produces acid to aid digestion, this occurrence is often referred to as acid reflux, and this acid can cause irritations of the esophagus.”



Stephen Godar, MD

FINDING RELIEF

For many people, GERD can be treated with a combination of medication and lifestyle modifications.

- **Change your eating habits:** Avoid foods that increase symptoms of GERD, such as citrus fruits, chocolate, mint, spicy foods, and tomato-based foods.
- **Reduce pressure on your stomach:** Don't lie down for two to three hours after eating, and don't wear tight clothing over your stomach.
- **Stop smoking:** This may alleviate a variety of health concerns.

If lifestyle modifications and prescription medications fail to provide relief, surgical intervention can sometimes help eliminate symptoms and prevent further damage to the esophagus.

CPMC offers laparoscopic surgery for patients suffering with GERD. An alternative to traditional surgery, laparoscopic surgery uses smaller incisions and involves a shorter hospital stay. Patients also benefit from less pain and can generally return to their normal activities more quickly.

“Laparoscopic surgery is the most recent advancement for GERD when medications and other therapies fail to help,” says Edward Lopez, MD, FACS, general surgeon on staff at CPMC. “The main goal of the surgery is to repair the stomach valve that is allowing acid into the esophagus. People no longer have to suffer with heartburn and other disruptive symptoms associated with GERD.”



Edward Lopez, MD

To find a physician at Colorado Plains Medical Center, call (970) 867-3391 or visit www.ColoradoPlainsMedicalCenter.com and click on “Physician Directory.”

Breathing Trouble?

Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency is a genetic condition that can cause emphysema in nonsmokers at a young age, and it's often misdiagnosed as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Colorado Plains Medical Center works with the Alpha-1 Foundation to raise awareness of this condition, which affects approximately 1 out of every 2,500 people in the United States.

The Alpha-1 Foundation recommends the following individuals are appropriate candidates for testing:

- individuals with bronchiectasis
- newborns, children, and adults with unexplained liver disease
- individuals with a family history of liver disease
- blood relatives of a person with Alpha-1
- anyone with panniculitis
- individuals with irreversible COPD, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, or asthma



To learn more about Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, contact Teresa Martens, CPMC Director of Cardiopulmonary Services, at (970) 542-3385.

Improving Quality of Life

The Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit at Colorado Plains Medical Center is an innovative unit designed to deal specifically with the emotional needs of senior adults.

A patient's caregivers must submit a confidential inquiry form about the patient, noting specific behaviors and when they began. Physicians, psychologists, social workers, mental health professionals, social service agencies, residential and long-term care facilities, family members, or friends may make referrals. Once a patient is admitted, team members complete a comprehensive evaluation, examining both the patient's overall mental and physical health to determine an individualized treatment plan.

"We are the only unit like this in Northeastern Colorado," says Bob Oleskevich, Director of the Geriatric Behavioral Health Unit at CPMC. "We see patients from Kansas, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska, and we have excellent patient outcomes. We offer individualized care in a warm, supportive atmosphere. Patients have constant interaction with staff members, and we develop discharge planning immediately, helping to ensure proper aftercare."

Learn more by calling (970) 542-4357.

The Road to Recovery



Katrina Gadsby, occupational therapist

Following a traumatic injury or serious illness, getting back into the swing of regular daily life may prove difficult for some patients. To help them get back on track, Colorado Plains Medical Center offers occupational and physical therapy.

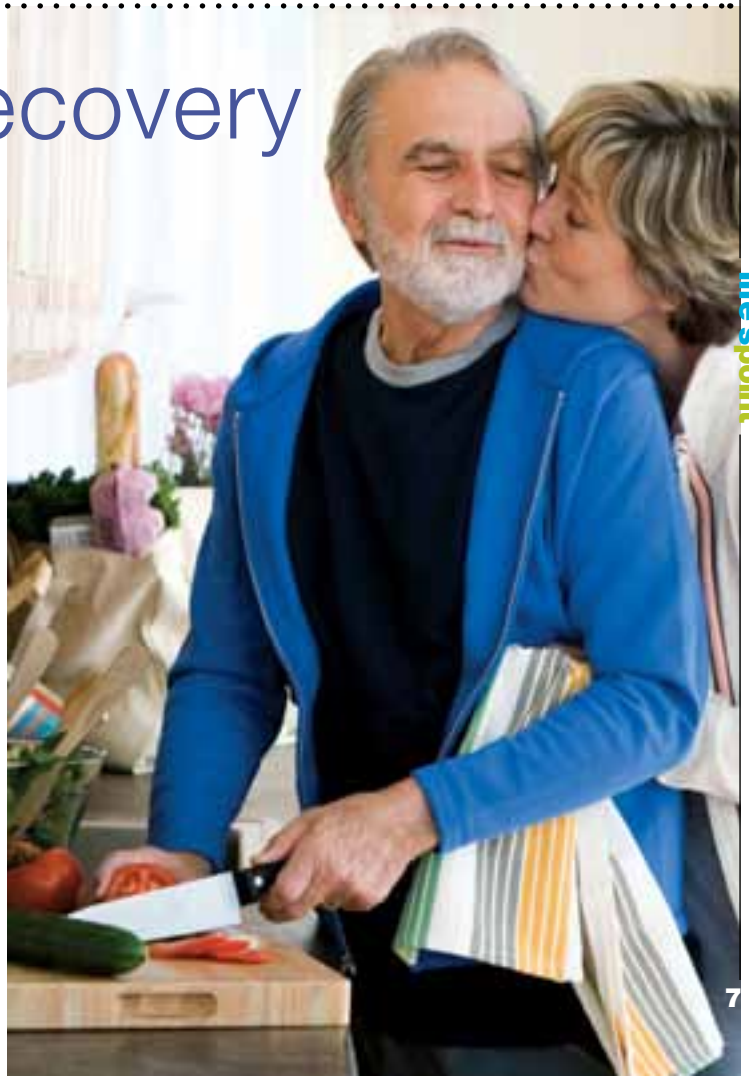
Occupational therapy

focuses on the everyday life of a patient, from bathing and getting dressed to cooking and cleaning, to restore activities that are vital to work and home life. **Physical**

rehabilitation focuses on basic acts such as walking and on the upper body and extremities.

"At CPMC, the Occupational and Physical Rehabilitation departments work together to provide patients a comprehensive approach to recovery," says Katrina Gadsby, occupational therapist at CPMC. "Patients receive the individual attention and focus necessary to achieve as much recovery as possible."

For more information about rehabilitation services at CPMC, visit www.ColoradoPlainsMedicalCenter.com or call the Center for Rehabilitation and Wellness at (970) 867-6544.





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