

HEALTHY *Connections*

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

THE GREAT OUTDOORS: A Safer Escape

**CONCERNING
SYMPTOMS?
CONFIDE IN
YOUR DOCTOR**

**GETTING HELP FOR
YOUR HERNIA**

FORREST CITY
MEDICAL CENTER

Are You at Risk for **HERNIA?**

A hernia does not go away on its own. Here's how to know if this painfully common condition is in your future.

Hernias can occur in the groin, upper thigh, upper stomach or belly button. They can be passed on genetically, but they can also occur as the result of an accident, chronic condition or pregnancy.

A hernia is the result of pressure combined with a small tear in connective tissue or muscle. With strain, pressure pushes fatty tissue or an organ — often the intestines — through the torn muscle, resulting in a hernia.

Wondering what you can do to protect against hernia and what increases your risk?

PROTECT YOURSELF

As with many medical conditions, prevention is the best treatment for nongenetic hernias. Lowering your hernia risk starts with a healthy lifestyle. Eat a well-rounded diet, including fiber-rich foods, and stay hydrated. Work to reach and maintain a healthy weight.

If you smoke or use tobacco, stop. Find a cessation technique you like and go for it. Additionally, practice proper lifting technique, don't push hard when on the toilet and keep your other health issues under control.

RISKY BEHAVIORS

While some hernias are present at birth, many are brought on later in life.

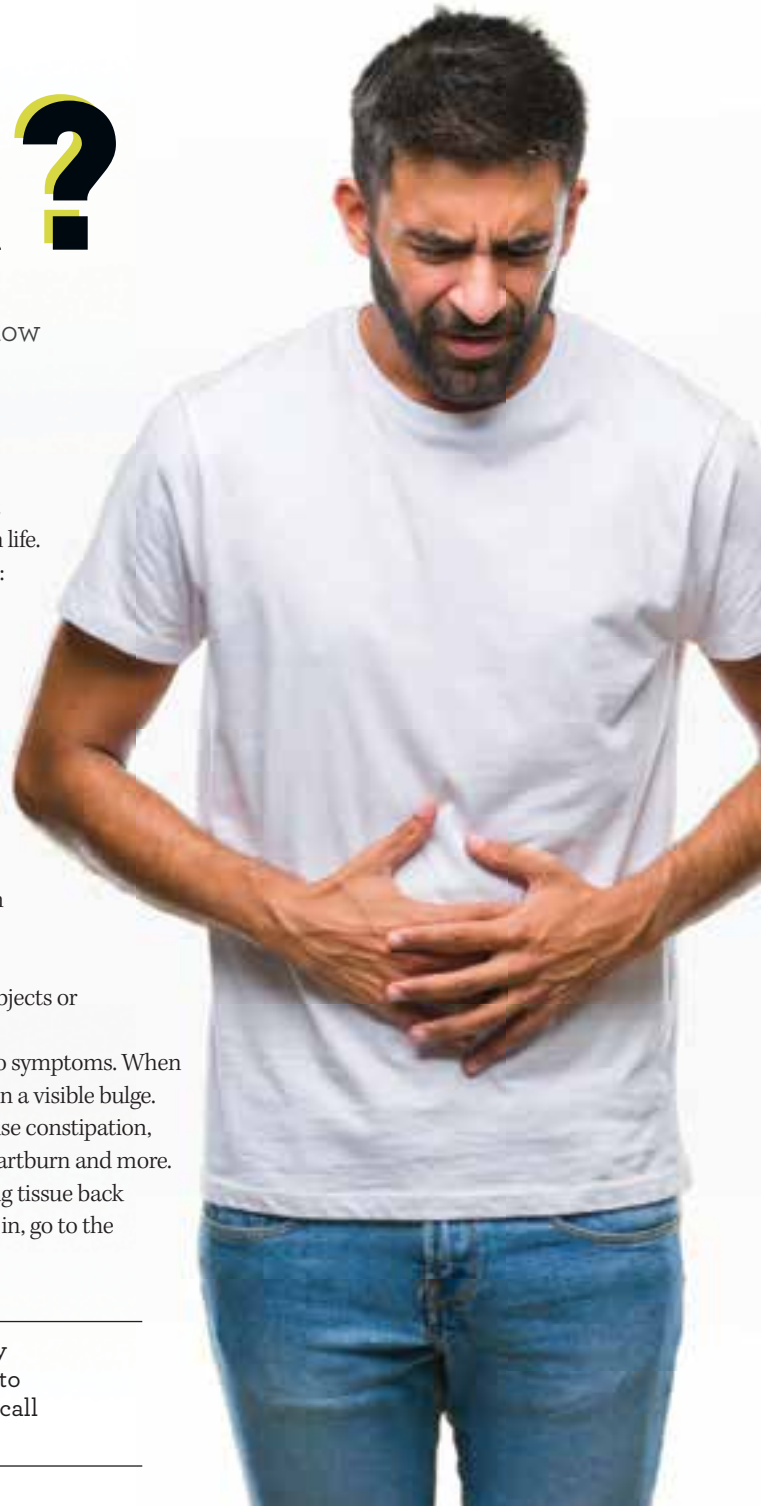
Common causes of hernia include:

- being overweight or obese
- chronic coughing
- lack of fiber in diet that leads to constipation
- other medical conditions, such as cystic fibrosis or enlarged prostate
- pregnancy-based weight gain
- previous surgeries in the groin or abdominal area
- smoking cigarettes
- straining while lifting heavy objects or using the restroom

Initially, hernias may result in no symptoms. When symptoms do arise, the first is often a visible bulge.

As time passes, the hernia can cause constipation, sharp pains, swallowing issues, heartburn and more.

When you can't push the bulging tissue back into place or severe symptoms set in, go to the emergency room.



Jeremy Whitt, M.D., FACS, sees patients at the outpatient surgery clinic of East Arkansas Medical Group. For more information, go to EastArkansasCare.com/Hernia and to schedule an appointment, call (870) 735-3664.



Jeremy Whitt, M.D., FACS

IS IT TIME TO SEE A SURGEON?

"If nonsurgical healing methods have not proven effective and hernia pain is disrupting your daily life, it's time to see a surgeon about having your hernia repaired," says Jeremy Whitt, M.D., FACS, of East Arkansas Medical Group's General Surgery Clinic.

"Hernia surgery is often relatively low risk," he explains. "For many patients, it can be performed laparoscopically, which typically means you recover faster and get back to your life sooner."

Patient results may vary. Consult your doctor about the benefits and risks of any surgical procedure or treatment.

Dr. Whitt is a member of the medical staff at Forrest City Medical Center.

HANDLING BEE STINGS AND OTHER EMERGENCIES

Prepare for the worst and know when you should head to the ER.

As the weather warms, there are more opportunities to head outside. But enjoying the great outdoors presents health risks, such as bees working to collect pollen and snakes coming out from their winter burrows. Whether your outdoor plans involve long hikes or just time in the backyard, you need to know what to do if faced with an emergency bite or sting.

MOST STINGS ARE MINOR

If you're stung by a bee, remove the stinger by flicking or scraping off the stinger, rather than pinching the area. Bees leave a venom pouch which contracts for about 20 to 30 seconds. When you pinch the stinger area, it injects the venom, whereas quickly flicking or scraping off the stinger limits the amount of venom that can enter the body. An ice pack can help reduce swelling.

WHAT ABOUT ANAPHYLAXIS?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can be life-threatening. In some people, this

reaction is caused by ingesting certain foods like peanuts, being exposed to latex, taking certain medications or being stung by an insect.

If you or a family member has severe allergies to foods, insects or other materials, it's important to carry an epinephrine injector at all times. If an insect sting happens, go to an emergency room immediately if you experience or witness the following symptoms of anaphylaxis:

- difficulty breathing
- dizziness
- hives
- nausea or stomach cramps
- swelling of the face, throat or tongue

SNAKE VENOM CAN KILL

Snakes really don't like to bite people, contrary to public opinion. If you see one and back away, it's unlikely to chase you. But if you are bitten, immediately go to an emergency room or call 9-1-1.

Do not try to trap the snake, tourniquet the limb or suck the venom out, like you see in the movies. Keep the bite below the heart, if feasible, until medical help arrives. And watch out for your pets, too — their smaller size makes snake bites more dangerous.



The Emergency Department at Forrest City Medical Center is OPEN, SAFE and READY to treat patients. For emergencies, call 9-1-1. For more information about our emergency services, visit ForrestCityMedicalCenter.com.



MAKE A FIRST-AID KIT

Sure, you can buy a prepackaged first-aid kit, but it's just as easy to make your own. Get a plastic storage box or sturdy waterproof bag and add the following:

- acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- adhesive tape
- adhesive bandages in different sizes
- antibiotic ointment
- antiseptic or alcohol wipes
- elastic wrap bandage
- emergency blanket
- flashlight and extra batteries
- hydrocortisone cream
- instant cold pack
- nonlatex gloves
- safety pins
- scissors
- splint
- sterile gauze pads
- thermometer
- tweezers

If a family member has a known medical condition, add any medications that could be needed in an emergency. Keep a first-aid kit in each car and another one in your house.

Happy (Safe) Camping!

PREPARING TO SPEND TIME OUTDOORS

"One of the great things about living in Arkansas is the opportunity to spend time outdoors, but be aware that nature protects itself from us in the form of bites, stings and rashes that can be uncomfortable and even cause life-threatening reactions," says Alison Shepherd, MSN, APRN, of East Arkansas Medical Group's Family Medicine Clinic.

"When spending time outdoors, have an antihistamine on hand in either pill or cream form and alcohol wipes to clean the affected area," she advises. "Avoid scratching and use these to treat the reaction as soon as you notice it, to prevent further irritation and infection."

Alison adds, "In the event of a life-threatening reaction, like anaphylaxis, have a cell phone, radio or some other means of communicating with emergency personnel. Know your surroundings and look for markers that can help them get to you quickly."

For more information about the Family Medicine Clinic, visit EastArkansasCare.com.

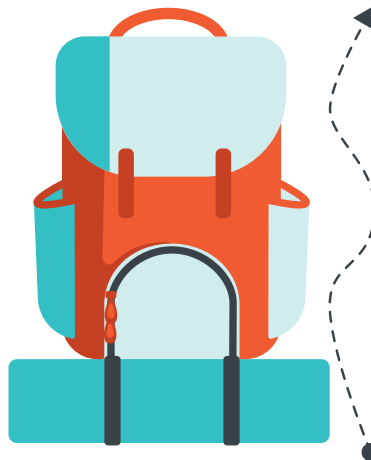
Alison Shepherd, MSN, APRN, is an employed provider with East Arkansas Medical Group.

Keep these safety tips in mind before embarking on your next adventure.

Camping is a long-standing favorite American pastime, but its popularity has skyrocketed during the pandemic. State parks have seen record numbers of visitors flocking to nature for a much-needed change of scenery. If you're planning a camping trip, follow these preparation steps on your next getaway.

HIT THE TRAILS

Safety is key while enjoying an afternoon hike around the park. Choose to hike with a buddy or a small group of people. Not only does this give you companionship on your hike, but there's added safety in numbers. Before you head out on your trek, let a trusted third party know where you will be hiking and when you will return. This person can call for help in case of an emergency or if you haven't returned by an appointed time. You should also check the weather and set out only if conditions are safe. Bring a flashlight and basic safety essentials, such as a whistle, first-aid kit, analog compass and fire starter.





AVOID INJURIES

Nothing puts a damper on outdoor fun quite like an injury or feeling sick. Here's how to avoid and treat common camping ailments:

AVOID

TREAT

BURNS	CUTS AND SCRAPES	DEHYDRATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cooking over a campfire with long, loose sleeves• building a fire when forest fire danger is high• getting closer than 3 feet to a burning fire• using gasoline, kerosene or other accelerants to start a fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• leaving knives and sharp objects out• using a pocket knife recklessly to cut sticks or other objects• walking without watching for uneven terrain, fallen trees, branches or loose rocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• drinking caffeine and alcohol when it's very hot outside• exercising in the hottest part of the day• waiting until you are thirsty to drink water
<p>If your clothes catch fire, follow the "stop, drop and roll" protocol. Soothe minor burns with cool, clean water, and cover them with a dry bandage. If a burn is large, severe and the affected person appears to be in shock, seek emergency medical attention.</p>	<p>Wash any dirt off your hands with soap and water before treating a wound. Stop bleeding by holding gauze to the wound and gently applying pressure for a few minutes. Clean any debris out of the cut with water. Apply an antibiotic ointment to prevent infection. Get emergency help if the wound is large and deep or is severely bleeding. Call your doctor if the cut was caused by a rusty object or still has debris stuck inside.</p>	<p>Mild dehydration will make you feel very thirsty, tired or dizzy. If this happens, simply replenish your fluids quickly. If dehydration is severe, you may need to seek medical attention. Signs of severe dehydration include confusion, fainting, rapid heartbeat and shock.</p>

The American Burn Association states embers cause 70 percent of campfire burns.

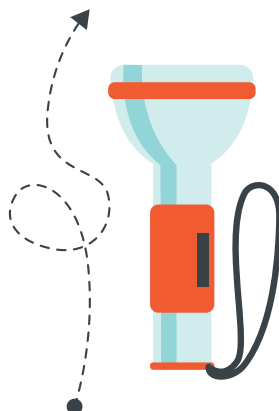


PITCH IT SAFELY

Ready to set up your site? As you settle in, don't forget to:

- **Build campfires at least 15 feet away.** Make sure an open fire is a good distance from your tent and other flammable objects.
- **Critter-proof your site.** Keep your area clean and free of trash. Never leave food, coolers, garbage or kitchen utensils out in the open, where they might attract bears and other creatures.
- **Inspect for hazards.** Check for any ant mounds, patches of poison ivy, shards of glass or flooding zones.
- **Plan an early setup.** Pitching a tent and scouring for firewood in the dark is inefficient and could be unsafe. Plan to arrive at your site with plenty of daylight to set up camp.

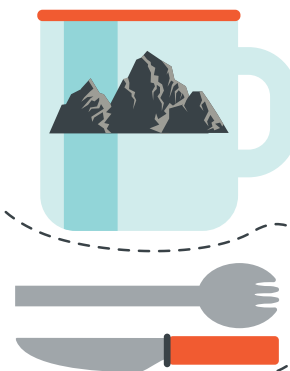
If you experience a minor injury while outdoors, follow up with professionals at East Arkansas Medical Group's Family Medicine Clinic. To schedule an appointment, visit ForrestCityAnytime.com.



DINNER IS SERVED

When cooking in the outdoors, take care to avoid food poisoning, which can cause nausea, an upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, fever and potentially long-term side effects.

Keep foods out of the danger zone — the temperature range between 40 and 140 degrees Fahrenheit that gives bacteria prime opportunity to grow. To prevent this, don't leave perishable foods unrefrigerated for more than two hours—one hour if the temperature is over 90 F. Keep perishable foods safely packed in a cooler with enough ice to maintain 40 F or below. Also, bring along a meat thermometer to make sure meat you cook has reached a safe internal temperature. Before handling foods, don't forget to wash your hands with soap and water — hand sanitizer is ineffective for visibly dirty hands, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While a sink may not be readily available, staying clean helps prevent spreading bacteria during your outdoor picnic or barbecue.





Heart to Doc TALK

It's important to speak openly with your healthcare provider each visit so he or she can fully address your health concerns.

You already know that getting an annual checkup with your primary care provider (PCP) is important for your health. But what good is a checkup if you don't talk about all of your health concerns with your provider? Even if you think your concern is minor, your provider needs all the information in order to offer proper care or guidance.

SHARE WITH YOUR DOCTOR

If you've had any chronic issues since your last visit, you should mention them, no matter how embarrassing. For example, gastrointestinal problems could be a sign of something serious, as could a spot on your back that won't stop itching.

You also need to be honest with your provider about your eating habits and how much you exercise. If you drink alcohol, use drugs or smoke, your doctor needs to know how much and how often, and the same goes for your sex life. Make sure your PCP has an accurate list of your medications and their

dosages — write down a list beforehand if you don't think you'll remember.

If you've had a major life change in the past year, like a divorce or death in the family, you should also share this with your doctor. Your mental health can affect your physical health, and vice versa.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR

PCPs are used to treating all kinds of patients and conditions, so there really is no such thing as a dumb question. Don't be afraid to ask anything that you want to know or to follow up with questions about a diagnosis or medication that you don't fully understand.

If you have questions about your health or symptoms you're experiencing in the weeks before your appointment, write them down so you won't forget to ask. Make sure to note if the symptoms are constant or if they come and go, and whether they're affecting your daily activities.

OPEN THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PROVIDER



Alison
Shepherd, MSN,
APRN

"It's important to be comfortable with your primary care provider," explains Alison Shepherd, MSN, APRN, of East Arkansas Medical Group's

Family Medicine Clinic. "Know that we are here to help you. Our top concern is your health."

"Ask questions: Medical professionals have a variety of knowledge and we can give you answers to your questions and ease your concerns," she says. "Don't let discomfort with certain topics stop you from seeking necessary treatment."

Alison Shepherd, advanced practice nurse and member of the allied health staff at Forrest City Medical Center, treats patients of all ages.



Alison Shepherd, MSN, APRN, sees patients at the Family Medicine Clinic of East Arkansas Medical Group. To schedule an appointment, visit ForrestCityAnytime.com.

TEMPERATURES RISING

Screening for COVID-19 has made taking a temperature a daily occurrence for some. Here's how to check for a fever and what that means.



98.6

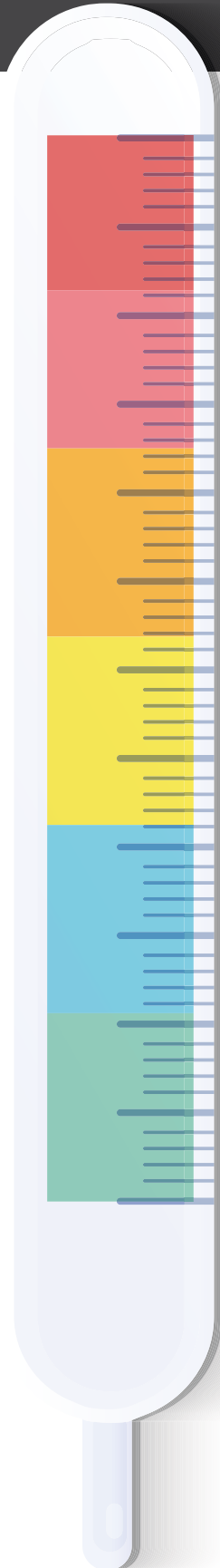
In the mid-1800s, German physician Carl Wunderlich established 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit as the standard healthy temperature after measuring the temperatures of roughly 25,000 people, using the armpit method.

TAKING YOUR TEMP

- Read the thermometer immediately after removing.
- Call your doctor or urgent care center if body temperature readings are at or above the top number for each method (see *The New Normal*, right).



The Emergency Room at Forrest City Medical Center is OPEN, SAFE AND READY to treat patients. For more information on emergency services, visit ForrestCityMedicalCenter.com.



FEVERS AT WORK

- Most bacteria and viruses that cause illness thrive at 98.6 F.
- Fevers destroy harmful bacteria and viruses and activate the immune system.



THE NEW NORMAL

Body temperatures vary by location of measurement and from person to person.

- 95.9–99.5 F adults (mouth)
- 97.8–99.5 F children and adults (armpit)
- 97–99 F for adults (forehead)
- 96.4–100.4 F for children (ear)
- 97.9–100.4 F for children (rectal)

TEMPERATURE SPIKES

High temperature readings could also signal:

- hot outdoor conditions
- eating hot foods
- menstrual cycle
- medication reactions
- overdressing
- physical activity
- time of day



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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al (870) 261-0000 (TTY: (800) 285-1131).

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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.



Do you have pain every time you eat? It could be your gallbladder.



Jeremy Whitt, M.D., FACS
General Surgeon

Pain in the upper right or upper middle of your stomach after eating is often caused by a gallbladder condition such as gallstones. If you're suffering from this or symptoms including nausea, vomiting, fever, yellowing of the skin and eyes, or bloating, don't wait to get help. We'll provide a careful diagnosis. And if gallbladder surgery is needed, we use a minimally invasive technique that requires only tiny incisions.

Next-day appointments are often available. And if you need a referral, we'll help you get one from your primary care physician. To schedule an appointment, call 870-735-3664.

Jeremy Whitt, MD, FACS, is an employed provider with East Arkansas Medical Group.

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