

# Belgrade Regional Health Center

# HEALTH BEAT



News from the Belgrade Regional Health Center

Spring 2012



*Megan O'Brien, FNP is now able to communicate directly with patients using the Patient Portal. Patients can ask their provider questions, as well as get test results, request appointments, refill medications, and more, all from their personal computer.*

## Are you using the Patient Portal?

Interested in an online way to contact the health center in a confidential and secure manner? Check out the new Patient Portal. It's free and provides a great way to ask questions, refill prescriptions, get test results, check medications, request an appointment, and more! Stop in and ask a member of the team to enroll you!

We are getting some great feedback from Belgrade patients who are already using the Patient Portal.

Lisa Patrick of Oakland has been actively using the online system since we introduced it in February. Amy Madden, MD is her primary care provider and she loves that she can get quick feedback on a question.

"The Patient Portal is very helpful. If more people used it, it would be so much better," says Lisa. "It keeps me in contact with my provider and I never get an answering machine."

"I write an e-mail directly to Amy, tell her how I feel and ask her what I should do," she says. "Amy responds to me directly if she can, or else another staff member asks her and gets back to me."

Signing up is easy. Just ask anyone at the health center during your next visit.

## Help us Walk Across America!

Here at BRHC, we have begun a community walking program called Walk Across America. AmeriCorps member Laura St. John came up with the idea as a way to get patients and other community members to establish a healthy, daily walking routine. The program is a collaboration with the Move More project.

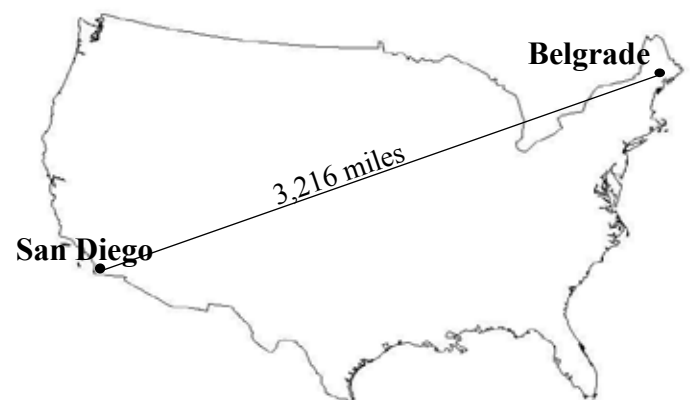
Each weekday, a staff member leads a group walk beginning at the health center. The overall goal of the program is for participants to track their mileage and collectively walk the distance from Belgrade,



Maine to San Diego, California (3,216 miles). Participants receive a pedometer and an official tracking sheet to tally up their miles.

"We hope this fun program will encourage our community members to establish a regular walking and exercise routine that will contribute to their overall health," says practice manager Wendi Wainer. "Our providers stress the importance of daily exercise, so it is a privilege to be able to provide our friends and neighbors with a free way to get healthy."

To get started in our walking program, talk to a health center representative. They will show you how to sign up and get your free tracking materials. Happy walking!



## Tips from a patient - being prepared for diabetes

By Kathy Bachelder and Jessica Hopkins

Managing a chronic health condition can be frustrating. Belgrade patient Kathy Bachelder knows all too well just how frustrating it can be. When I first met Kathy she told me, "I'm in denial, I don't have diabetes." After a period of adjusting to her condition, she started researching about the disease and identifying lifestyle changes she needed to make.

Often, medical providers and behavioral health specialists will work with patients on medication, dietary and exercise habits to manage diabetes. Recently, Kathy showed me a self management idea that was too good not to share. She said she was "running into trouble" when she would go out in the community. It was too easy to grab convenience foods that can cause problems with blood sugar. So Kathy problem-solved around her condition and came up with a smart idea.



Kathy suggests putting together a "diabetes self care bag." She has a small tote into which she has put testing equipment, sharps container, small notepad and ready-to-go carb friendly

snacks (seen above). The idea is to always be ready to manage sugar and not let it manage you. Since having this ready to go tote, Kathy says "when I'm on the road I make much better choices".

Along with dietary changes, taking medications and regular exercise, Kathy has given a good example of how small changes can help us stay healthy!

## Follow us on Facebook!

Are you looking for more Belgrade Regional Health Center news? Do you want to stay up-to-date with all of our programs, events, and community happenings? If so, like us on Facebook!



Find us by visiting:

[facebook.com/BelgradeRegionalHealthCenter](https://www.facebook.com/BelgradeRegionalHealthCenter)

or do Facebook search for  
"Belgrade Regional Health Center"

## Patient Advisory Council

Thank you to our Patient Advisory Council for all the wonderful work you do as part of our team!

Belgrade Health Center's Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) is a group of patients, family members, and health center staff who work together to improve the patient experience at the health center. Some of the projects we have been working on include medication reconciliation, and exploring how to enhance communication with our patients, participation at partnering with patient retreats, and so much more!

Our PAC meets at the health center the last Wednesday of even months from 5:30-7 p.m. We are inviting individuals who are excited to work with us to provide the best care possible to our patients.

To learn more about our Patient Advisory Committee, or to join our committee, please call our practice manager Wendi at 495-3323 or e-mail her at [Wendi.Wainer@Healthreach.org](mailto:Wendi.Wainer@Healthreach.org)

**BELGRADE REGIONAL  
HEALTH CENTER**

4 Clement Way, Belgrade, ME 04917  
(207) 495-3323 • [www.BelgradeCHC.org](http://www.BelgradeCHC.org)

A proud member of **HealthReach Community Health Centers**

## Enjoy the region with some great local hikes *By Jay Bradshaw*

One of the first things that come to mind when thinking about Belgrade are the beautiful lakes and streams where one can swim, canoe, kayak, fish, and just relax. And those hills in the background have many wonderful hiking trails that are open for all to enjoy.

Thanks to the private donations, land easements, and volunteer efforts, the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance, (BRCA) has conserved nearly 7,000 acres through purchase or conservation easements, including the 6,000 acre Kennebec Highlands. The BRCA includes representatives from 5 area lake associations for the purpose of protecting property for the benefit of the general public and for charitable, educational, recreational, scientific, and historical purposes.

### A walk in the woods

BRCA has 5 trails that provide an opportunity to enjoy a walk in the woods that often results in a scenic view of the Belgrade Lakes. These trails vary in length and terrain, and are perfect for a few hours or a day hike. The trails are well marked and do not require technical climbing.

Trail maps are available for free download from the BRCA web site ([www.belgradelakes.org](http://www.belgradelakes.org)) and for purchase in a handy folded size at area stores (proceeds go to BRCA).

While hiking on these trails does not require rope and carabiners, it does require some planning and preparation. It's easy to pack a few things into a small backpack that will make your outing safer and more enjoyable.

- Water - there are no water fountains on the trails, plan accordingly.
- Snacks – they call it trail mix for a reason.
- Insect repellent - black flies and mosquitoes do not make pleasant hiking companions. Keeping them away will be much more enjoyable.
- Band aids – blisters at the far end of a trail make for a long walk back.

Some trails are loops, others go out and back. This isn't the Appalachian Trail, but it's easy to get tired, so plan accordingly. Better to turn around early than become exhausted and run out of energy.

At the end of the hike, be sure to check for ticks. If one is found, don't freak out, just remove it. Then check again in a couple of days. *See page 6 for more on how to deal with ticks.*

### Other area trails

#### **Kennebec River Rail Trail** [www.krrt.org](http://www.krrt.org)

The Kennebec River Rail Trail is a 6 ½ mile trail that goes between Augusta and Gardiner and, with the exception of downtown Hallowell, is paved and away from traffic.

In Augusta, the trail starts on Water St. under the west side of Memorial Bridge (beside the Maine State Housing Authority). In less than a mile, there is a spur that goes off to Capital Park and the State House complex. Hallowell is about 3 miles from Augusta and has many interesting shops and places to eat. Continuing south, the trail goes along Route 201 in Hallowell for about ½ mile, then goes to the right, crosses over the road, follows the river, and ends in Gardiner near the Hannaford parking lot.



*A view of Great Pond from the top of Mt. Phillip in Rome.*

- Map – the trails are well marked, but a trail guide is handy when the kids start asking if you're "there" yet.
- Cell phone – just in case.
- Camera – to capture and share the scenic views.
- Flashlight – Yes, it may start as a day hike, but just in case time goes too quickly, it's much better to have a flashlight than try and navigate out of the woods by the light of a cell phone.

#### **Kennebec Messalonskee Trails** [kmtrails.org](http://kmtrails.org)

The Kennebec Messalonskee Trails include 9 trails in Oakland, Waterville, Winslow, Benton, and Fairfield for walking, running, cycling (and in the winter, cross country skiing). The trails range from ½ mile to 6 miles and could take a few minutes or a few hours. Some include moderate climbing and rough terrain. Trail maps are available at the web site.

# Leaves of three ... Let them be!

By  
Patricia Fleming, RN

*Poison ivy, is a dreaded three-leaf plant that can cause severe rash and itching for many. What is it about the plant that actually causes the rash and itch? What is the biggest myth surrounding poison ivy? Let's look at the facts and myths when it comes to this plant also known as Toxicodendron.*

## FACT

- Poison Ivy contains oil called urushiol. It is actually the oil from the plant that causes the allergic reactions.
- Humans do not need to come into direct contact with the plant. They just have to come into contact with the oil (urushiol).
- People can get poison ivy from their pets if the animal has come into contact with the oil/urushiol and then rubs up against them. The oil can also be transferred through petting the animal.
- After you have been exposed to poison ivy you have only 10 minutes to remove 50% of the oil/urushiol. By 30 minutes only 10% of the oil/urushiol is removable. This must be done at once after exposure, and is quite impractical as most people are unaware of the exposure until the symptoms begin to appear. If you know you have been exposed, simply remove any clothes that may have the oil/urushiol on them and quickly wash your skin with liquid dish soap. Liquid dish soap is made to remove oil and is a cost effective way to get rid of the plant oil. Wash the clothing separately.
- NEVER knowingly burn poison ivy to get rid of it. In rare situations, the eyes, airway, and lungs may be affected if exposed to smoke from burning the plant.

## MYTH

- Poison ivy is NOT contagious.
- People can get poison ivy from another person ONLY if the oil (urushiol) remains on that person.

## SIGN & SYMPTOMS

- First signs are curved lines of red, itchy bumps or blisters ~ usually within 1-2 days after exposure. These blisters continue to appear for many days, even up to two to three weeks after exposure. This makes it seem as though the rash is "spreading," although the fluid in the blisters is just a part of an allergic reaction and contain no chemicals or bacteria.

## TREATMENT

- Treatment is directed at controlling the itching from the rash. Oral antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl), may help the itch somewhat, but often do no more than cause people to feel drowsy. Do not take diphenhydramine and drive or use machinery. Always consult your Primary Care Provider prior to taking any over the counter medications if you have allergies to medications and are on other medications. Your Primary Care Provider is always just a phone call away and Belgrade Regional Health Center has on-call services. On-call services means you can call Belgrade Regional Health Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and you will be able to address any questions/concerns you have regarding your health.
- Cortisone creams, whether over the counter or prescription, are helpful when applied right away.
- Cool compresses to the rash help to alleviate the itch.
- Local anesthetic agents such as calamine lotion have been known to bring relief for some people.
- Oatmeal baths also are recommended to help relieve symptoms.
- When the rash is severe, if it affects the face or causes extensive blistering, oral steroids (for example prednisone) can help produce rapid improvement.
- Prior to reporting to the nearest hospital emergency room, contact your Primary Care Provider and let him or her assist you in the best course of treatment.

## PREVENTION

- Poison ivy is often hidden among other vegetation. Even if you know exactly what poison ivy looks like, it is often difficult to avoid coming in contact with the dreaded plant.
- Wearing long pants and long sleeves can help.
- So called "barrier creams" may help a little but are not completely effective.
- When pulling up weeds, tuck in your sleeves into gloves at all times. Be sure your wrists don't get exposed. When the sleeves ride up, tuck into your gloves.
- Vinyl gloves do not absorb poison ivy oil/urushiol well and are more effective for prevention than fabric or leather gloves.
- Wear clothing that covers your entire body when hiking or exploring the great outdoors.
- Wash pets and clothing that have come into contact with poison ivy.

## MAY IS LYME DISEASE AWARENESS MONTH

Lyme Disease is a tick-borne bacterial infection that is often heralded by the onset of flu-like symptoms and a characteristic rash three to thirty days following a deer tick bite. Given the prevalence of Lyme Disease in Maine and the expectation that the incidence of the disease will rise this year given the mild winter, we want to remind our patients about Lyme disease and its prevention.

The following is extracted from the Maine Centers for Disease Control Fact Sheet on Lyme Disease. More valuable information on Lyme Disease can be found at Maine CDC's website:  
<http://www.mainepublichealth.gov>.

### **Who gets Lyme disease?**

People of all ages can get Lyme disease, but the following are the people at the highest risk:

- People who are commonly outdoors in areas where ticks are found (e.g. wooded areas, thick grass, over grown bushes, and brush or leaf piles)
- Children under the age of 15 years old
- Adults over the age of 50 years old
- People who have other illnesses that make it hard for them to fight off infections

### **What are some of the signs of Lyme disease?**

It is important to recognize the early signs and symptoms of Lyme disease because it is easiest to treat when diagnosed in the early stages. Some of the early signs of Lyme disease include:

- A ring-like rash around the area of the tick bite. The rash could resemble a bull's eye with a clearing center and a distinct ring around it. Not everyone with Lyme disease gets a rash and not all rashes have a central clearing.
- Flu-like symptoms (e.g. fatigue, headache, fever and chills, muscle or joint soreness).

If a person is not treated early, he or she may develop late signs and symptoms of Lyme disease weeks, months or years after the tick bite. Late signs and symptoms of Lyme disease include:

- Arthritis usually in one or more large joints, especially the knees
- Neurological problems including numbness, pain, facial paralysis, and meningitis (fever, stiff neck and severe headaches)
- Memory and concentration problems
- Heart problems

**TICK TIPS** *continued on page 6*

## Teaming up with the Kennebec Valley Community Care Team

BRHC is one of 26 Primary Care Practices in Maine that is participating in the Patient Centered Medical Home Pilot. Through this pilot, Community Care Teams (CCTs) will be introduced as a key strategy for improving care and reducing avoidable costs for patients in the pilot, especially those with complex or chronic conditions. CCTs will coordinate and connect patients to additional healthcare and community resources in order to support their health improvement goals, achieve better health outcomes and reduce avoidable costs.

The primary goal of the CCT is to provide support for the most complex, high risk, high need, and/or high-cost patients served by our Practice. We will work together to identify and serve high risk/high need patients in the practice regardless of age, health status or insurance coverage status. The criteria to determine high risk/high

need patients will be defined by the CCT in collaboration with their Primary Care Provider, and reassessed on an ongoing basis based on the population served.

Development and roll out of our CCT have been a collaboration with patients, families, community members, community-based prevention services, community health, social service organizations, Area Agencies on Aging, Healthy Maine Partnerships, municipal health departments, Community Action Programs, hospital community health divisions, home health or visiting nurse associations, palliative care and hospice organizations, and organizations that directly serve populations with disparities or are made up of populations with disparities.

This is very exciting work to be involved with! If you have any questions about the Community Care Team, please ask a member of our team.

## **TICK TIPS** *continued from page 5*

### ***How soon do signs of Lyme disease appear?***

Early symptoms of Lyme disease usually occur within the first month after the tick bite. Later symptoms may not appear for weeks, months, or years after a tick bite.

### ***How is Lyme disease diagnosed?***

Diagnosis of Lyme disease is based on signs and symptoms, presence of characteristic rash, and history of exposure to deer ticks. A blood test may also be helpful to confirm diagnosis.

### ***What is the treatment for Lyme disease?***

Lyme disease is treated with antibiotics. It is easiest to treat in the early stages of illness. If Lyme disease is found in later stages intravenous antibiotics may be given to the patient.

### ***Is there a vaccine for Lyme disease?***

No, currently there is no vaccine for Lyme disease.

### ***If I've had Lyme disease in the past, can I get it again?***

Yes, you can get Lyme disease again if you do not take proper steps to protect yourself from tick bites.

### ***Can I get Lyme disease from another person?***

No, Lyme disease is not passed from person to person.

### ***How can I protect my family and myself from getting Lyme disease?***

The best way to prevent Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses is to avoid contact with ticks. If you are working, playing, or relaxing in areas that may have ticks you should do the following:

- Wear long sleeve shirts and pants. Light colored clothing makes it easier to spot ticks.
- Tuck your pants into your socks and tuck your shirt into your pants.
- Use insect repellent (with DEET) on your skin and apply permethrin to your clothes.
- Check your clothing and skin carefully after being outdoors and remove ticks immediately.
- If bitten by a tick, wash area of bite thoroughly with soap and water and apply an antiseptic to area of the bite.
- Mark on a calendar the date that you were bitten, and then watch for signs of Lyme disease or any changes in your health every day for the next month.
- Keep your lawn mowed, cut overgrown brush, and clear away leaf litter from your home.
- Inspect any pets daily and remove any ticks found.

### ***How should I properly remove a tick?***

Using tweezers, grab the tick at its mouth and using firm steady pressure pull the tick out. Avoid crushing the tick's body because its bodily fluids may be harmful. Also, do not use petroleum jelly, hot matches, nail polish remover or any other substance to remove the tick. Using those items could increase the risk of infection.

### ***Should I take antibiotics to prevent Lyme disease after being bitten by a tick?***

Use of antibiotics after a known tick bite is not routinely recommended, but may be considered under very specific circumstances (e.g. tick has been identified and has been attached for more than 24 hours and there is a high rate of infected ticks in the local area. Antibiotics can be started within 72 hours).

### ***How long does a tick need to be attached to a person for that person to get Lyme disease?***

In general, ticks need to be attached for 24 to 48 hours before they can give you Lyme disease. However, just to be safe you should check your health closely for one month after a tick bite and call your doctor if you have any of the early signs of Lyme disease.