Meet Molly

Easy heart-health tips for winter

5 reasons to read to your kids
Clinic news

Check out our new style

We’re excited to kick off 2018 with a new look and new website.

“The rebrand and new website are the culmination of a deep examination of the organization and the value we provide to the communities we serve in Clark County,” said CEO Mark Mantei. “We’re excited to start the year with a fresh face and a renewed sense of purpose.”

Our doctors have always made caring for patients their first priority. The new brand puts their commitment front and center.

“It’s easy for people to feel like modern technology has pushed health care to the point where the word ‘care’ doesn’t mean much anymore,” said Chief Medical Officer Dr. Alfred Seekamp. “Through our new brand, we want our patients to know that we haven’t lost sight of the fact that the best care happens between one human being and another.”

See our new look and learn more about how we can care for you at tvc.org.

McClaskey Foundation honors Dr. Dodge

A new section of PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center is being named for Dr. Cyril Dodge, a longtime Vancouver Clinic physician who retired in 2016.

A wing of the Benjamin H. McGough, MD Inpatient Rehabilitation Unit, part of the new Thomas & Sandra Young Neuroscience Center, will bear Dodge’s name, thanks to a $600,000 donation from the McClaskey Foundation.

Dr. Dodge cared for the McClaskeys for years and they were longtime friends.

“My grandparents, Tod and Maxine McClaskey, would have been pleased to be involved with this project. We are glad to have the opportunity to carry on their legacy of generosity and to honor Dr. Dodge,” said Jillian Hagstrom, board member of the McClaskey Foundation, in a press release.

The rehabilitation unit will serve patients with brain and spinal injuries and is scheduled to open later this year.
Vancouver Clinic expanding into Ridgefield

Plans are underway to break ground in 2018 on a new $6.7 million facility in Ridgefield, Washington. The 15,000-square-foot facility will meet the primary care needs of North Clark County residents and house eight providers.

With five locations, we’re Clark County’s largest private, multi-specialty clinic. Adding a sixth location in Ridgefield expands our ability to reach patients and increases access to care.

The growth continues last year’s momentum. In 2017, we added 36 new providers, doubling our midwifery team and expanding multiple primary and specialty areas.

February is American Heart Month.

Exercise strengthens heart muscles, improves circulation, lowers cholesterol, and keeps stress at bay. All of these things reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease—the leading cause of death for women and men alike. Prioritizing physical fitness is one of the most important choices you can make.

See our winter heart-health tips on the back cover.
By American Heart Association News

American Ninja Warrior, you’ve been warned: Molly Hemphill is coming after you.

She’s fit, courageous, and indomitable. A zealous rock climber eager to take on your rugged obstacle course. Don’t underestimate her—she’s conquered plenty already.

Hemphill, a 32-year-old Vancouver Clinic patient, has a congenital heart defect.

A surprising diagnosis
Growing up, Hemphill loved sports, the outdoors, and ballet. She remembers sometimes feeling heart palpitations and chest pain, but she and her doctors dismissed it as stress or overexertion.

Then eight years ago, she took her young son to the doctor for a checkup.

In the exam room, she winced with chest pain, and the doctor turned his stethoscope to her.

“You’ve got a heart murmur,” he told her.

A battery of cardiology tests finally found the problems: a pulmonary valve defect that caused an enlarged heart, and electrical issues resulting in tachycardia, an elevated heart rate. That, and a subsequent removal of a cancerous thyroid, left her weak, fearful, and facing a heart valve replacement a few years down the road.

Getting out there
While the diagnosis was scary, she was determined not to let it hold her back.

“I’m going to get stronger, I’m going to push myself harder and there won’t be any question about whether I’m able to do this.”
“Maybe it’s easier for us heart patients to live a sedentary life,” Hemphill said. “We think as long as we preserve ourselves and we’re super careful, maybe we’ll get to live a long life. I decided to put my foot down and said, ‘You know what? My time is going to happen whether I’m sitting on a couch or getting out there. I’d rather get out there.”

She began hiking, then running, then discovered a passion for climbing rocks. She pushed herself. Her doctor, Vancouver Clinic cardiologist Aaron Schoenkerman, said she could run three miles. She ran five and came back and asked, “What can I do now?” Finally, he said, “OK, no limits. Go test yourself.”

“That’s the greatest doctor’s appointment you can have,” she said.

**Taking on a hit NBC show**
The impetus to challenge *American Ninja Warrior*, she said, came from her son Gerrick, who’s now 9. A couple of years ago they were watching the show “and he said, ‘That’s so cool. I want you to do that.’ I laughed and said, ‘I can’t even do a pull-up,’ and he said, ‘Why do you have excuses?’ I said, ‘Wow. Why do I have excuses? Let’s see if I can do it.’”

Hemphill, who works in information technology at Nike’s Oregon headquarters, upped her workouts and got in the best shape of her life. A year ago, she submitted an audition video showcasing her skills and making the case that it would be incredibly meaningful for people with heart disease to see one of their own on the show.

“I think it’s really important to represent the heart disease community,” Hemphill said. “A lot of times when you think about someone whose heart is damaged, you think about someone walking around with an oxygen tank. That might be the case for some people but it’s not all of us.”

The response was a chance to travel to the Los Angeles studio on her own as a walk-on—with only the slimmest chance of competing. She decided to try for 2018 instead. “I’m going to get stronger, I’m going to push myself harder and there won’t be any question about whether I’m able to do this,” she said.

**Sharing her passion**
Hemphill hopes her story of determination and self-healing can inspire other heart patients. She has created a website, heartsforadventure.org, to share her progress and encourage others, and she plans to take that passion offline and outdoors by organizing meetups in the Portland area.

“I want to reach out to heart patients and take them rock climbing or even just on a walk,” she said. “These things typically start with a safety blanket, and that’s me. I want to build people up and empower them to do these things on their own—as long as they have their doctor’s permission.”

Hemphill’s own heart still has structural and electrical issues. She still suffers episodes of irregular heartbeats. But her lifestyle choices and fierce determination have paid off. “All the cardio has vastly improved my lung function,” Hemphill said. “And parts of my heart are actually functioning better. I’ve strengthened myself holistically to the point that my heart doesn’t need a new valve in the foreseeable future, if ever.”

Molly and Dr. Stephen Rechenmacher, a member of her cardiology care team.
Five benefits of reading

By Jennifer Lyons, MD

Time spent sharing stories is about far more than what adventure Elephant and Piggie are on today. When you read aloud to your child you help them leap ahead socially and emotionally. Here are more ways reading benefits kids:

1. Stronger family relationships. When you snuggle up with your child for story time you increase closeness, provide comfort, and reduce anxiety. Being physically present and giving kids undivided attention helps children feel loved and cared for.

2. Increased empathy and kindness. Reading fiction or non-fiction stories about people from different parts of the world helps children experience new cultures and different points of view. They can also see how other children manage difficult situations and apply those skills in their own lives.

3. Greater attention span. Listening quietly and paying attention are important skills for school. The more children practice them, the more prepared they’ll be for the classroom.

4. Bigger vocabulary. Books use a much wider vocabulary and more exacting grammatical structure than we use in everyday speech. Toddlers who have more words available to describe how they’re feeling are better able to manage their emotions. Children who are read to enter kindergarten with a multimillion-word advantage and have an easier time learning how to read. It’s simpler to sound out words when you’ve heard them before.

Dr. Lyons is a pediatrician at Vancouver Clinic. She enjoys partnering with families to promote their children’s overall health and well-being.
5. **Love of learning.** When children enter school enjoying reading and possessing some early literacy skills they are more excited to learn—and more successful at it. The more successful they are, the more they are motivated to learn. This love of learning keeps building.

It’s never too early to start reading to your children. Even 6-month-olds get excited by a new book. They love exploring how it feels, practicing turning the pages, and checking out the bright shapes and colors. Of course, you want to watch them to make sure they don’t gum the book too much.

I recommend reading 20 to 30 minutes a night with your child. A baby might make it for only a page or two, and some nights you may only have 10 minutes. Just make the most of the time you have. Consistency is key.

Also, I suggest taking time to read to older children. Most kids enjoy being read to far longer than parents think. What’s more, reading creates a great opportunity to discuss important or complex subjects. While some kids do fine tackling scary books like the Harry Potter series on their own, many others benefit from being able to talk about the content.

For ideas for great books for every age, talk to your local librarian. If you have questions about how reading to your child can support healthy brain development, talk to your pediatrician.

Dr. Kevin Hatcher-Ross, a pediatrician at Vancouver Clinic, reads a book to a patient.
Heart-health tips
How to stay active this winter

By Amanda Levchuk, FNP

When winter creeps in and the days get shorter and colder, it can be hard to find the motivation to exercise. However, staying active year round is vital to our heart health.

**Tip #1: Dress for the weather.**
There’s an old Scandinavian saying, “There’s no bad weather, only bad clothing.” If you dress correctly, weather doesn’t have to get in your way. For most folks in the Northwest, this means investing in a good raincoat, boots, and clothing you can layer. Having the freedom to peel off items if you get too hot can be the difference between finishing your activity and giving up.

**Tip #2: Wear a pedometer.** When it gets chilly, a step tracker can be the motivation you need to walk instead of drive, take the stairs rather than the elevator, or simply park the car further away. Another tech-based option? Try a phone fitness app that delivers a new workout every day.

**Tip #3: Use a calorie tracker.** During the winter, people tend to eat richer, heavier foods, which can pack on pounds. Tracking calories encourages you to balance that food with exercise and make healthier meal choices.

**Tip #4: Spend some time in front of a light box.** Seasonal depression can destroy a person’s motivation to exercise. Light therapy can get your body going again.

**Tip #5: Find something you love to do.** As a fellow mom, I really relate to parents who don’t have time to go to the gym and recommend finding ways to be active as a family instead. In my house we have dance parties, do exercise videos, and go on walks together. If you love what you’re doing and the people you’re doing it with, you’re more likely to stick with it.

**Tip #6: Embrace the season.** Take advantage of winter snowfalls and do some skiing or snowshoeing. Walk around the mall and enjoy the decorations. Go hiking in the rain. Warm up in a hot yoga class. Each season offers its own unique options for staying fit—enjoy them!

Finally, if you have a way you love to stay active in the winter, consider asking a friend or family member to participate with you. The more we develop and grow a culture of fitness within our community, the healthier we’ll all be.

Amanda is a board-certified family nurse practitioner who enjoys working with patients to achieve their unique health goals. She is passionate about preventative medicine and women’s health.