



MEET OUR DOCTORS

Dr. Jeffery Thatcher of the Franconia Office is one of TriValley's board certified Internal Medicine specialists. He has been practicing in the Souderton area since 1989 after completing a year of practice in Pittsburgh, PA. His medical education began at Thomas Jefferson University Medical School and continued with his residency training at Reading Hospital in Internal Medicine. He completed an extra year of residency training to hold the position of "chief resident" for his fourth year. Having special interests in geriatrics, Dr. Thatcher not only sees patients of all ages in his office, but also sees patients in many of the area's nursing homes and retirement communities and is involved in other aspects of nursing home care.

In addition to medicine, Dr. Thatcher has interests in another art form – piano. He restarted lessons two years ago with an instructor at Lehigh University in both piano performance and composition and has shared his talents with the community in local benefit performances at

(continued on page 2)

CARING FOR WOUNDS

Finally summer is over and we can again don those layers that we need for warmth. Nevertheless, we can't fully hide our body's largest organ – our skin. We're always at risk for scrapes, cuts and rashes. Here are some tips on how to heal fast.

The best way to clean a wound is with cool water. You can hold the wound under running water or fill a tub with cool water and pour it from a cup over the wound. Use soap and a soft cloth to clean *around* the wound. Soap can be irritating to the exposed skin within the wound. Use tweezers to remove any dirt that remains in the wound. Clean the tweezers with isopropyl alcohol prior to use. Even though it may seem that you should use a stronger cleansing solution (such as an antiseptic), these may irritate the wound.

Bleeding helps to clean the wound. Most small cuts will stop bleeding quickly, but you may find that those on your face or head bleed more. This is because those areas are very rich in blood vessels. To stop the bleeding, apply firm but gentle pressure with a tissue or gauze (or whatever you have available). If the blood soaks through, apply another gauze over the first; don't remove the initial piece.

Leaving a wound uncovered helps it stay dry and heal. If the wound is in an area that may get dirty or irritated due to clothing rubbing against it, you may choose to cover it. Change the dressing each day to keep the wound clean and dry. Certain wounds such as scrapes that cover a large area of the body should be kept moist and clean to reduce scarring and speed healing. Bandages used for this purpose are called "occlusive" or "semi-occlusive" bandages. These can be bought at the drugstore

(continued on page 2)

PA'S MALPRACTICE CRISIS

How it affects you

Pennsylvania's healthcare system is recognized as one of the best in the nation and is an important part of our state's economy. Unfortunately, access to medical care for you as a patient is in serious jeopardy. Pennsylvania is losing its doctors due in large part to skyrocketing malpractice insurance premiums – premiums that are among the highest in the nation.

Physicians in the state are concerned because it's getting very difficult to keep a medical practice going in PA. Your doctor is required by law to buy liability insurance (this insurance covers your doctor in case he or she gets sued). Your doctor's insurance premium rates increased by 21-60% this year. Also, doctors must pay a surcharge into the Pennsylvania Medical Catastrophic Loss (CAT) Fund and that surcharge increased by 26%. Some doctors in Pennsylvania pay more than \$100,000 per year for insurance and the CAT Fund. Health insurance companies like Blue Cross, Blue Shield and Aetna don't increase the fees they pay doctors to cover liability insurance costs. So, as doctor's cost of doing business goes up, their payments stay the same.

As a patient, you should be concerned because: your doctor may move out of state or retire, cannot hire new doctors, may be less willing to perform high-risk procedures, or may feel compelled to order extra tests to avoid a lawsuit. This affects all consumers as stated in a recent report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which showed that the annual cost for defensive medicine costs the U.S. health system \$60 billion. The report also

(continued on page 2)

PA's Malpractice Crisis....

(Continued from page 1)

demonstrated that if reasonable limits on non-economic damages were enacted, taxpayers would save at least \$30 billion annually in the nation.

The problem in part is caused by the court system being out of control. The average lawyer who sues doctors receives 40 cents of every dollar awarded to the injured patient; the more money awarded to the injured patient, the more money the lawyer makes.

What can YOU do? Write to your local representative and senator and tell them that you are concerned that you may not have access to quality care because of this medical liability crisis. Tell them you don't want to pay frivolous lawsuits. Legislators will listen to you. There are sample letters and helpful points located on the website www.pamedsoc.org/lrac or call 1-800-566-TORT (8678) for more information. You can help us "Save PA Medicine".

Dr. Thatcher....

(Continued from page 1)

Souderton Mennonite Home, Peter Becker Community, Grand View Hospital and Pearl Buck Estate for the Grand View Health Foundation. (The "buzz" is that he's quite good. Don't miss an opportunity to hear him perform!)

Other interests of Dr. Thatcher include gardening, reading and his pets. He and his wife Terri share their Hilltown home with 8 cats and 3 birds. An admitted non-athlete, Dr. Thatcher recently trained for and completed the "Heart to Heart" 5K run in (his) record time! He adds another dimension to "primary care" in our TriValley family.

Caring for Wounds....

(Continued from page 1)

Antibiotic ointments help healing by keeping the infection out, bandages do the same thing. Most minor cuts and scrapes will heal fine without an ointment, but their use may reduce scarring.

Most wounds are able to be cared for at home, but call your doctor if you note any of the following:

- * The wound is jagged.
- * The wound is on your face.
- * The edges of the cut gape open.
- * The cut has dirt in it that can't be washed out.
- * The cut becomes tender or inflamed.
- * The cut drains thick, creamy grayish fluid.
- * You start to run a fever over 100 F.
- * The area around the wound is numb.
- * Red streaks form near the wound.
- * It's a puncture wound or deep cut and you haven't had a tetanus shot in 5 years.
- * The cut bleeds in spurts, blood soaks through the bandage or the bleeding has not stopped in 10 minutes of firm pressure.

Some common rashes are insect bites, irritant dermatitis and allergic contact dermatitis. *Insect bites* are recognized by their randomly sprinkled pattern of red bumps. Usually these are not harmful and can be effectively treated with hydrocortisone creams, antihistamines (oral or topical) and ice for the itching. *Irritant contact dermatitis* can be caused by a reaction to detergents, perfumes or other substances. The rash is usually red and scaly in appearance. Avoid the offending agent and apply hydrocortisone cream for relief. *Allergic contact dermatitis* is the description for poison ivy, oak and sumac that is commonly seen in the summer months, but can be trouble during fall yard clean up. The rash is red, itchy and blisters often form. Anti-itch creams or lotions can be applied for relief, and antihistamines will help with the itching. If you are in great discomfort, call your doctor. The fluid from the blisters is not the "poison" and we are not allergic to it. The oil from the plant causes the rash when exposed to our skin, and can hang around on clothes and other surfaces for up to a year.

Most Asked Billing Questions....

Q: I am a Medicare patient. Why do I have to pay a deductible at the beginning of every year?

A: Every Medicare patient has an annual \$100 deductible that must be met prior to Medicare paying for any doctor's visits. While many Medicare patients have a secondary insurance policy, most secondary policies do not cover the Medicare deductible. If this is your scenario, you are personally responsible for your \$100 deductible, and your doctor's office will bill you as directed by Medicare.

Q: My Insurance company mailed me a new card. It now has Capital Blue Cross on the card. Does this mean my insurance has changed?

A: Yes, Blue Shield and Blue Cross have split. When checking in at the doctors office it is very important to present your new card to insure that your insurance file is updated. Your file could still have your old insurance, Blue Shield, and would cause all office visits to be denied by your insurance. Presenting your new card to the office staff will eliminate this from happening.

Website

Visit us at
[Http://www.trivalleypc.com](http://www.trivalleypc.com)

Comments?

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