

VBPM Connection

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Respiratory Infections

This is the season when many people start having problems with allergies, asthma and respiratory infections. Sometimes it's hard to tell if you're developing an allergic reaction or an infection particularly when it involves your sinuses.

A runny nose with sinus congestion but clear drainage and no fever usually is due to allergies. Yellow or green drainage associated with sinus pain or pressure often signifies infection. Most (>80%) of these infections are caused by viruses and don't require an antibiotic. If the symptoms are accompanied by high fever, severe pain, or if they are lasting over seven days, the likelihood of bacterial infection increases and we almost always will use an antibiotic in those



situations.

Some people are more prone to sinus and respiratory infections than others. If you have a history of chronic seasonal allergies, smoking, chronic respiratory diseases like emphysema or asthma, or if you are over 75, you may have a higher risk of getting a respiratory infection than the

average person and the infection may be more severe.

If you develop symptoms of fever, cough, sinus pain, wheezing and especially shortness of breath, don't hesitate to let your doctor know. He or she will be able to sort it out for you to decide what the best treatment will be.

Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics have been **overused** in our society and as a result the bacteria have learned ways to resist the antibiotics in many cases. We don't want to contribute to the problem

of antibiotic resistance but we don't want to avoid them when they are truly needed either. There are **certain criteria** that physicians use to decide whether a patient requires an

antibiotic like the severity of symptoms, the presence of fever, chills, purulent sputum and length of illness. The biggest factor and maybe the most important one is **clinical judgment**.

Prevention

This practice emphasizes prevention of disease as much as possible. The following are just a few suggestions. You can find more on our website at www.vbpm1.com.

--The **annual physical exam**, previously ignored by health insurance companies and others, is an excellent way to find and control problems that

patients often never even knew they had. By finding problems early, before they cause symptoms, we can often get rid of them or start treatment to control them before they get worse.

--**Colonoscopies** should be performed on everyone at least every ten years starting at age 50 and even earlier or more often in those who are at risk

because of family history of prior polyps.

-- **Yearly Mammograms** for women over 50 and periodic self-exams despite recent controversy are still the standards.

--**Vaccinations** for influenza, pneumonia, shingles, HPV, hepatitis, tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis save thousands of lives every year for adults.

“The annual physical is an excellent way to find small problems before they become big ones”.

Palliative Care

Palliative Care is the art and science of providing comfort to those patients with incurable and/or refractory conditions that are very painful or markedly uncomfortable in other ways like nausea or shortness of breath.

This is rapidly becoming a new medical specialty requiring expertise in the use of various pain medications, sedatives and other modalities of

care, the primary purpose of which is to control or prevent discomfort when there is no cure for the underlying condition. This often applies to cancer patients but could also include those with heart failure, respiratory failure, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, neuromuscular disorders and many other conditions.

We're finding that it is

helpful to expose the patient with one of these conditions to a palliative care specialist early in the disease process to help prevent suffering later.

Hospice Care is different in that it requires that the patient has a life expectancy of less than six months and provides comfort care after all other modalities of treatment have been exhausted.

Avandia Use Severely Restricted by the FDA

Avandia has been removed from the market in Europe and its use in the U.S. has been severely restricted recently by the FDA because of reports of cardiac problems - including heart attacks

and congestive heart failure. Currently, it can only be used if there is no other available drug that will work as well to control a particular individual's diabetes. The sister drug **Actos** is still available and so far seems to be a safer

alternative. From a practical standpoint, it is extremely unlikely that an equally effective drug cannot be found to substitute for Avandia. If you are on Avandia, discuss it with your doctor at the earliest opportunity.

Good News about Blood Thinners

For those of you who are on Coumadin (Warfarin), you know that the main difficulty with it is trying to maintain the right dosage. This requires blood checks periodically sometimes as often as twice a week, or if you're lucky, perhaps once a month.

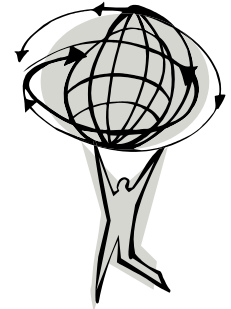
The good news is that the FDA has recently

approved a new drug called **Dabigatran** (brand name Pradaxa), which works just as well as Coumadin as far as thinning the blood is concerned. The risk of bleeding is about the same - about 6% per year.

The best thing about it, however, is that **you don't have to have your blood checked** to monitor the

dose like you do with Coumadin. It works just as well without the inconvenience of having to do blood checks and change the dose frequently.

The **down side** (There's always a down side, isn't there?) is that it will cost about ten times as much as Coumadin.



Yoga Classes

Yoga refers to physical and mental disciplines originating in India. Anyone who practices yoga is called a *yogi* or *yogini*.

The philosophy and goal of yoga is the liberation from all worldly suffering through meditation and exercise. In this country yoga has been popularized as a way to relax and become healthy and in tune with one's self.

VBPM has recently instituted **yoga classes** within our office as a way for our patients to learn the ancient methods of meditation, relaxation and exercise – all for the promotion of better, optimum health for the *whole person*.

This can also be used as a way of *preventing disease*. Relaxation, alleviation of stress and

regular exercise are all excellent ways to stay healthy and are all incorporated into yoga.

Classes of 4 people each have already started within our office. Emily Basto, one of our receptionists, and a certified yoga instructor, is running the program.

The fee is nominal. Space is limited, but if you are interested, let us know.

Educational Meetings / Support Groups

We will be using our new **conference room** to hold educational and/or special group sessions *exclusively for our patients*. These sessions will include talks on "Advance Directives", "Healthy Eating", "Coumadin Teaching", "Art

Therapy". We are also planning support groups for caregivers, cancer patients, etc.

Each session will be about an hour and will be moderated by experts in the area. Dates and times will be announced at a

later date. The success of this program will depend on the interest and how many sign up for each session. If you are interested in one of the above topics or have a new topic that you think others would like to hear about, please let us know.

"Educational sessions, therapy and support groups starting soon!"

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Internal Medicine – The way
it was meant to be practiced.



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We're on the Web!

www.vbpm1.com

Virginia Beach Premier Medical is a membership “concierge” internal medicine practice specializing in comprehensive and compassionate, individualized and personalized patient-centered care. We pride ourselves on full continuity of care – in the office, in the hospital, or even at home.

If you would like more information about our practice please call us at 757-416-6750. Ask to speak with Brittany, our office manager, or Dr. Parks or Dr. Warth. We'd be happy to talk with you anytime.



Discount Referral Program

Here's an incentive!

If you are a member of our practice and if you refer someone to us who then signs up, we will give you \$200 off your next year's fee.

Here's another plus!

You can accumulate these referral discounts so that if you refer multiple people who then sign up, you will get \$200 off the next year's fee **for each one.**

Happy Thanksgiving!

