

Winter 2011

Health Matters

at Aspen Valley Hospital

*"Your emergency room is the best
I have ever encountered."*

AVH patient



Inside

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State-of-the-art imaging

Faster, safer, more accurate diagnosis

Since the first medical use of X-rays in 1896, advances in medical imaging technology have contributed significantly to improvements in the quality of healthcare.

Today, advanced diagnostic imaging provides faster and more accurate diagnosis, allows patients to avoid costly and potentially risky invasive procedures, and helps improve the effectiveness of treatment. In fact, research indicates that life expectancy has increased more rapidly in states where advanced diagnostic imaging procedures are used more frequently.¹

In keeping with our commitment to providing our community with state-of-the-art healthcare, Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) continues to invest in both advanced diagnostic technology and access to a highly trained on-site radiology staff and 70 off-site radiology specialists through a cutting-edge digital computer networking system.

New faster, safer CT scanning at AVH

CT (computerized tomography) scanning is one of modern medicine's most valuable tools because it provides vital diagnostic information without invasive tests or surgery. However, all CT scans involve radiation, and excessive exposure to radiation may raise the risk of certain cancers. Your physician will order a CT scan only when the benefits outweigh the risk of radiation exposure.

At AVH, providing diagnostic imaging services with the highest level of safety is of utmost importance. That's why we've invested in the new GE Discovery 750 Gemstone scanner which reduces radiation exposure by up to 50 percent. This new CT scanning technology represents a significant diagnostic breakthrough by producing higher



Judy Wilson, RN; Debbie DeMeulenaere, RT; and sonographer Cari Knautt-Lauser are members of the breast health team.

quality images faster for the quickest, most accurate diagnoses — all with the lowest dose of radiation currently available. In fact, AVH is the only hospital in Colorado that currently has this scanner.

AVH's new scanner, which became operational in October, is receiving rave reviews from physicians. Patients from other communities are also impressed, sometimes making the drive to Aspen in order to reduce their exposure to radiation during a CT scan.

A full range of diagnostic imaging services

AVH offers a full range of advanced tools and diagnostic services to provide patients and their doctors with the answers they need for early, accurate diagnosis and more effective treatment. Our diagnostic imaging services include:

- **CT (computerized tomography):** Our new low-radiation GE Discovery 750 Gemstone scanner provides diagnosis of herniated discs and spine injuries, strokes, fractures, and soft tissue damage in trauma patients, as well as detects changes in various organs. It also allows non-invasive examination of the heart and coronary vessels and early diagnosis of lung cancer.
- **Digital mammography:** This advanced technology is an essential tool for early detection of breast cancer and offers improved images with a lower dose of radiation than conventional mammography.



Diagnostic imaging technologists from left: Judy Garrison, Kathy Niemer, Amy Guem, Lisa Vantine, and director Bart Outzen.

Calendar of Events

"Matters of the Heart"

Heart Health Screening

Tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, February 8

8:30 - 10:30 a.m.

After-Hours Medical Care

234 Cody Lane, Basalt

Heartsaver CPR

Monday, February 27

4:30 - 7:30 p.m.

\$15 per person

Health Fairs

Thursday, May 31

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests only at After-Hours Medical Care

Saturday, June 2

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests only at AVH

Sunday, June 3

8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Blood tests and all screening stations at AVH

Call **544.1296** for more information.



Jim Ward was both a volunteer and a participant at the 2011 Senior Health Fair. Joseph Dunn, RN, draws his blood.

- **MRI (magnetic resonance imaging):** Our open bore, 1.5 Tesla, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) system combines the ability to capture high-field quality diagnostic images with a larger opening for patients who are claustrophobic or too big for conventional MRI systems.
- **Bone densitometry:** Bone density scanning can play an important role in early detection and monitoring the progression of bone loss often associated with osteoporosis.
- **Fluoroscopy:** With a continuous X-ray image on a monitor, fluoroscopy displays the movement of a body part, a surgical instrument, or dye through the body. At AVH, fluoroscopy may be used for barium X-rays and enemas, catheter insertion during angiography, blood flow studies, and orthopedic surgery.
- **Ultrasound:** High-frequency sound waves allow doctors to view the heart, blood vessels, kidneys, liver, and other organs. It can also be used to examine the fetus during pregnancy without exposure to radiation.
- **X-rays:** Traditional X-ray technology uses electromagnetic radiation to record images that may show broken bones, disorders in the lungs and abdomen, and many other problems.
- **Nuclear medicine:** Our nuclear medicine professionals diagnose or treat a variety of diseases, including many types of cancer, heart disease, neurological disorders, gastrointestinal and endocrine problems, and other abnormalities.

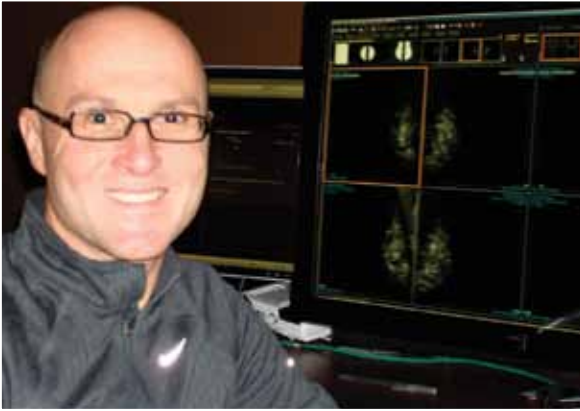
You and your doctor can count on AVH for the highest quality diagnostic imaging services and the fastest, safest technology available to provide the answers you need to ensure your good health. For more information about our imaging services, call **544.7396**.

¹"The Quality of Medical Care, Behavioral Risk Factors, and Longevity Growth" working paper issued in June 2009 by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Specialized radiologists key to quality imaging services

The diagnostic imaging department at Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) extends far beyond its resort community setting. A partnership with radiologists from the nation's most respected training programs and universities, as well as a cutting-edge digital computer networking system, enables AVH to access the expertise of 70 highly trained and specialized radiologists from Radiology Imaging Associates (RIA) located in Denver.

With state-of-the-art digital imaging equipment, AVH directs all radiology studies to a specialist best suited to read the scan and make a diagnosis in a matter of minutes. RIA provides full-time imaging services to eight Denver Metro hospitals and has a radiologist on-site at AVH most days, with daily coverage during winter months.



Radiologist Kevin Lampert, MD, of Radiology Imaging Associates.

Radiology subspecialties represented on the RIA staff — and thus available to AVH physicians — include:

- Breast imaging
- Body imaging (chest, abdomen, and pelvis)
- Pediatric imaging
- Musculoskeletal imaging
- Nuclear medicine
- Interventional radiology
- Neuroradiology

In addition, all RIA physicians are board-certified and fellowship trained.

"These doctors are a valuable resource for our community," says Bart Outzen, director of diagnostic imaging at AVH. "Our affiliation with RIA enables us to bring otherwise inaccessible specialty services to our community and improve the quality of care."



Structural steel that will form the expansion of the patient care unit was placed in the fall of 2011.

Hospital construction update

As winter begins, Aspen Valley Hospital likewise begins a new phase in its facilities expansion project. Pouring foundations and site work are winding down because of winter conditions, and in their place is the erection of steel.

By early 2012, the parking structure will take shape, and the cafeteria, patient care unit, physical therapy, and medical office space will be well underway. An immense behind-the-scenes process of upgrading all the hospital's utilities is ongoing.

"Now we're seeing the structure take form," says John Schied, facilities director and project manager. "Progress is more visible and will continue to be noticeable. The days of digging and moving dirt are coming to a close — at least for now."

John notes that this fall a road was built for access to the employee housing units that will be constructed on the campus, and erosion control efforts are complete for the winter. "We will be ready to seed and revegetate next summer," he adds.

For information about the hospital's Master Facilities Plan or any aspect of the construction, please contact community liaison Frank Goldsmith at FGoldsmith@avhaspen.org.



The underground parking structure is now easily identified.

Tips to stay safe and healthy this winter

Here in the Roaring Fork Valley, winter means crisp cold weather and plenty of fresh powder on the slopes. But winter here is also a season with unique health and safety risks. These tips can help you avoid some of the most common health risks.



Sean Nevin, PA-C, will care for many patients with seasonal health problems in the ER this winter.

Hypothermia and frostbite

Exposure to cold can cause life-threatening hypothermia or serious frostbite in a matter of minutes. To keep warm:

- Wear a hat, hood, or scarf, as most heat is lost through the head.
- Wear layers of clothing, as they provide better insulation and warmth.
- Keep fingertips, earlobes, and nose covered when you go outside.
- Keep clothing dry; if a layer becomes wet, remove it.

Influenza (flu)

Mid-winter is the peak of cold and flu season. Cold and flu symptoms can be similar, but flu symptoms develop more suddenly, are more severe, and pose greater risk for complications. Some very simple practices will help you avoid colds and flu and help prevent their spread this winter:

- Get your flu shot — it's not too late!
- Wash your hands frequently, and keep them away from your nose and mouth.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, not your hand.

Ear, nose, and throat problems

Sinus congestion, ear infections, and sore throats are more common in winter. Low humidity and cold, or heated indoor air, can dry out and irritate membranes causing swelling, congestion, and an increased risk of infection. These steps may help:

- Use a humidifier in your home. Clean your humidifier regularly to prevent the spread of bacteria.
- Irrigate nasal passages with warm saline solution (salt water).
- Use a saline nasal spray to help keep membranes moist.

Carbon monoxide

To prevent poisoning from this deadly, odorless gas:

- Install a carbon monoxide detector and check the batteries regularly.
- Make sure your heating system is clean and properly vented; replace worn or defective parts.
- Open your garage door before starting your car, and do not leave the motor running in an enclosed area. If you are parked outside and it snows, clear exhaust pipes before starting your vehicle.

While we wish you a safe and healthy winter, if you need medical care or a flu shot, our physicians, the hospital's emergency department, and After-Hours Medical Care in Basalt (open evenings and weekend days) are all ready to help.



AVH employee health coordinator Amy Covington, PA-C, gets her flu shot from Judy Wilson, RN.

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Join our Facebook page to stay current on events and news at Aspen Valley Hospital.

This publication in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Please see your physician if you have a health problem.

For good healthcare, ask the right questions

Whether you're having a checkup, getting a diagnostic test, or being treated in the hospital, research shows that good communication with your healthcare provider builds trust and leads to better results, quality, safety, and satisfaction.

Asking the right questions is one of the best ways to communicate with your doctor and healthcare team. Because your time with the doctor is usually limited, it can be easy to forget something. To help you remember, jot down a list of your questions and concerns ahead of time.

Though your specific questions will depend on your health concerns and symptoms, here are 10 general questions to get you started:

1. What do you think is causing my symptoms?
2. Is there more than one condition (disease) that could be causing my symptoms?
3. What tests will you perform to diagnose my condition?
4. How accurate and safe are the tests?
5. When will the test results be available and how will I get those results?
6. What is the likely outcome of this condition, and what is the long-term outlook with and without treatment?
7. What treatment options are available and how effective is each option?
8. What are the possible risks of each treatment option?
9. Can any of the medications I currently take adversely interact with any new medications you are prescribing?
10. What are the potential side effects of the medications or treatment prescribed?

The healthcare professionals at Aspen Valley Hospital welcome patient questions and encourage all our patients to take an active role in their care. If you have questions about your own or a loved one's care, just ask. We can help you get answers.

