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## Small doses

Tiny shots of news you can use



### Mistletoe as medicine

Some native Americans believe mistletoe induces labor. They use dwarf mistletoes for everything from treating stomach aches, tuberculosis and rheumatism to endowing women with long, black hair. Today, extracts from various mistletoe species are under study for their immune-boosting and anti-cancer activity. Research continues on the use of mistletoe to treat AIDS patients. The leaves and berries of mistletoe are poisonous, so self-medication is not recommended.

### Ape's clock ticks longer

Scientists have found no evidence female chimpanzees go through menopause in the way human females do. "It looks like chimpanzees may actually be reproducing better than humans in their 40s," said researcher Melissa Emery Thompson, of Harvard University. "The oldest chimpanzee known to give birth in the wild is estimated to have been 55. She began reproductive cycling again shortly before her death at the age of 63." Unlike humans, female chimpanzee fertility tends to decline along with their survival odds. Healthy females maintain high birth rates late into life. These findings in chimpanzees, along with wild gorillas and orangutans, indicate "menopause is not part of the life cycle of living apes but has been uniquely derived in the human lineage."



2007 FLORIDA TODAY file

Up all night. The bright lights of the emergency/trauma entrance at Holmes Regional Medical Center can be a welcome sight for those who need immediate medical attention when normal doctor's hours are over.

### Can it wait until morning?

Symptoms indicating the need for immediate emergency care include:



- Sudden or unexpected loss of consciousness
- Chest pains
- Severe shortness of breath
- Coughing up or vomiting blood
- Numbness in the face, arm or leg, or difficulty speaking — signs of a possible stroke



- High fever, accompanied by a stiff neck, mental confusion or difficulty breathing
- A cut or wound that won't stop bleeding



- Possible broken bone — Mayo Clinic

# The ER will see you now

On Christmas, doctors' offices and urgent-care centers close

BY SUSAN JENKS  
FLORIDA TODAY

"Nobody wants to work Christmas," said Dr. Marty Brown, who will spend part of his own holiday working in the emergency room at Holmes Regional Medical Center.

But Brown, medical director of emergency medicine at the Melbourne hospital — and other emergency-room doctors, nurses and technicians in Brevard County — know that they serve as pretty much the only medical option out there if someone falls gravely ill, at least on Christmas Day.

Doctors' offices are closed. And so are local urgent-care centers, which normally provide care for minor medical problems, but not life-threatening ones, such as heart attacks or strokes.

But when the "doctor's not in," does that mean you should simply rush to the closest hospital emergency room?

Not necessarily, emergency-room physicians say.

If the medical problem isn't acute in nature, such as sudden chest pains, shortness of breath or difficulty speaking — one possible sign of a stroke — then you might want to wait an hour or two before deciding whether to go to the hospital.

"Just because you have a fever, don't rush to the emergency room right away," said Dr. David Williams, director of Wuesthoff Health System's emergency department. "Take a Tylenol and see what happens."

"I would urge people to call their primary-care doctors first before coming here," said Dr. LeeAnne Martin-Lee, an emergency-room physician at Parrish Medical Center in Titusville, who also is working the Christmas shift.

"Even if the office is closed," she said, "they have on-call services, and the doctor on call can tell you whether or not you can, or should, wait."

Still Martin-Lee, Williams and Brown all stress that, in the end, a medical emergency is up to the



Michael R. Brown, FLORIDA TODAY

**Bedside exam.** Dr. LeeAnne Martin-Lee, who works in the emergency room at Parrish Medical Center in Titusville, assesses patient Lahoma Spears Vance for hospital admittance.

"I get to work the afternoon shift. So, we'll celebrate Santa in the morning, and then I'll come in here."

Dr. LeeAnne Martin-Lee, emergency-room physician, Parrish Medical Center, Titusville

patient to decide — using a prudent standard.

"Keep in mind the College of Emergency Room Physicians defines an emergency as any time a patient feels that they have an emergency," Brown said.

The college intentionally defined the term liberally, he said, so that insurance companies would pay, even if a patient has chest pains, for example, which turn out to be indigestion — and not a heart attack.

"Anything acute, you should come to the hospital right away," he said.

"On the other hand, just because you can't see your doctor for a week, doesn't mean you should come to the ER."

### ER staffing

All three major health care providers in Brevard say emergency department staffing during the holidays stays the same as during non-holidays — or might be beefed up slightly, to meet the anticipated high demand.

See ER, 2F

## I-95 crash victim earns her degree

Strangers, friends helped radiologist on road to recovery

BY MARIA SONNENBERG  
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

In this season of miracles, radiologist Lisa Goetz has experienced her share.

It is a miracle she lived through a horrific automobile accident, and equally as amazing was the outpouring of love and concern she received, even from strangers.

On the morning of May 16, Goetz had dropped her children at day care before heading north on Interstate 95 from her home in Palm Bay to her job with Health First's Vital Watch office. As she approached the stretch between State Road 192 and Eau Gallie Boulevard, a southbound truck crossed the median and struck another truck that was passing Goetz.

"He took the major brunt for me," said Goetz, referring to northbound truck driver Richard Grissom, who died in the accident. "He saved my life."

When the trucks collided, they exploded into a fireball.

"They shot me out 400 feet," Goetz said. "The front of my van just caved in. I thought I was flying."

What made matters worse was Goetz's clinical knowledge of how bad off her medical condition was.

"The accident broke my left and right femur, my left and right fibula, my right kneecap, my left arm, my right tibia, and shattered my right ankle," she said. "My foot was twisted like a towel being wrung."

The Keiser University radiology graduate had spent years working in intensive-care units.

Now, she was a patient.

"My worst fear working in ICU had always been becoming a patient," she said. "I ended up in the ICU."

Early January will mark Goetz's first day on the job, after a monthlong hospital stay and a long period of rehabilitation.

"I wanted to work in a trauma unit, but I don't think I'll ever be able to run around like you need to in the unit," she said.

See RADIOLOGIST, 3F



Keiser University

Lived to tell. Lisa Goetz, who survived a horrific car accident on Interstate 95 in May, delivered the keynote speech at Keiser University's radiologic technologist pinning ceremony Dec. 13.

# Many helped victim get back to working world

## RADIOLOGIST, from 1F

She walks with a cane, and she knows pain probably will plague her for the rest of her life. But she considers herself fortunate.

Her journey back to the working world began with the help of strangers at the accident scene.

Good samaritan Steve Layton of Habitat for Humanity, rushed to help. Fearing her van would catch on fire, Layton fashioned a fire barrier from a boogie board he found in Goetz's van.

"He was trying to protect me from the fire," she said.

Two or three cars behind, Harris Corp. employee Christi Jo Gilbert witnessed Goetz's accident.

"She couldn't get my screams out of her head," Goetz said. "She came to visit me, and we became friends."

Gilbert rallied a Harris fundraiser that raised \$5,000 to help Goetz during her recovery.

"I promised her that, when I get better, we'll go to Chili's and celebrate," Goetz said.

Wuesthoff radiologist Don Washabaugh also was going to work on Interstate 95 that morning, and witnessed the accident.

Rushing to get a fire extinguisher to help Goetz, Washabaugh was knocked to the

ground by an explosion from the burning trucks. He suffered a concussion.

Her alma mater, Keiser University, also rushed to her support.

Spearheaded by the university's radiology class, the school raised almost \$3,000 for the single mother of three.

"Lisa exhibited the same determination, perseverance and dedication to her recovery as she did with her education at Keiser University," said Theresa Roberts, technology program director at Keiser's Melbourne campus.

On Dec. 13, Goetz delivered the keynote speech at Keiser's radiologic technologist pinning ceremony — the symbolic "rite of passage" for graduates of the program.

• For the students who were so moved by her plight, Goetz's arrival in the room proved emotional.

"Lisa's return to campus that evening was an inspirational surprise to the new graduates and her former instructors," Roberts said. "It was a pride-filled evening."

At Health First, fellow employees held a personal-leave drive to make sure she was covered while recuperating.

"I was blessed by all the people who wanted to help," Goetz said. ■