

Health Happenings

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**Thanks to Lakes, I'm
95% healed and ready
to ride again.**

A local resident's journey from
accident to strength.

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Stay up to date on what's happening at Lakes Regional Healthcare by following us on social media! We also love it when people post messages to us – we're always looking for feedback on how to improve the care experience!

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is an Avera Partner.**

A Message from the CEO

I am writing this on a beautiful spring day with some light rain and thinking about the beauty and growth that comes with Spring. I was looking back at my previous message and noted that I was thanking all of you for your assistance during the flooding and now appreciating rain but praying for manageable amounts. Wishing you all a beautiful Spring.

Part of our mission as a community hospital is to continually assess the healthcare needs of the community as part of a Community Health Assessment (CHA). Thanks to the feedback of over 500 community members and a significant amount of additional data, we are excited to publish the results in the very near future. Prior to the publication coming out, I thought I would share the top 4 healthcare needs identified in the CHA:

- **Awareness of Behavioral Health Services**
- **Cancer**
- **Healthy Living**
- **Aging Well**

If you were not aware, and you will have an opportunity to read more about this in this publication, Iowa has the highest rate of cancer of all states. Closer to home, Dickinson County's prevalence of cancer is even higher. There are presently more questions than answers and much work to be done but early screening and prevention are high amongst the opportunities for us to change the trajectory of this.

You may also be aware, that Dickinson County is one of the few growing counties in the state with a disproportionate amount of that growth being for those over the age of 65. As a result, it seems like a strong strategy to focus on "Aging Well" and ensuring ongoing services for our aging population and ensuring we can be a part of everyone living well into their later years. Demands for healthcare services increase as we age, and we want to ensure that we continue to meet and exceed that need.

Given the increasing demands on healthcare, we also want to ensure that we are good stewards of the limited property tax draw that we receive from the community. As a reminder, we are a county hospital and are not owned by Avera Health as some get confused by. I would encourage you to read the article regarding our use of property taxes and know that we take great pride in being responsible and conservative with your taxes.

I wish you a safe and health spring and summer and want to thank you for trusting Lakes Regional Healthcare for all your healthcare needs. Your financial support, utilization of our services, donations, and volunteerism are all pieces of making us a strong organization.

If you have any questions, concerns, or ideas, I am always happy to visit. **You can reach me at (712) 336-8795 or via e-mail at jason.harrington@lakeshealth.org.**

— **Jason C. Harrington, FACHE**
President & CEO



Back on Track

How Tammy's determination—and expert care—helped her recover from a major knee injury

95%

Healed just months after surgery



It was a beautiful summer day last July when Spirit Lake resident Tammy Browning and her husband Tim were nearing the end of another 19-mile bike ride. However, the ride didn't end as it always had. That specific day, Tammy inadvertently veered a bit off the path and over-corrected to get back on the path. In doing so, she fell off her bicycle and tore the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus in her left knee. The pain was excruciating. "I knew the injury was really bad," she said. "I had to shift my calf back into place and the pain was the worst thing I had ever experienced."

Fortunately, they were close to the end of their ride and their truck was nearby. Tim quickly picked her up, put her in the truck, and drove straight to Lakes Regional Healthcare's ER. The pain Tammy felt was so overwhelming that she didn't remember much of the ER visit other than putting on a full leg brace.

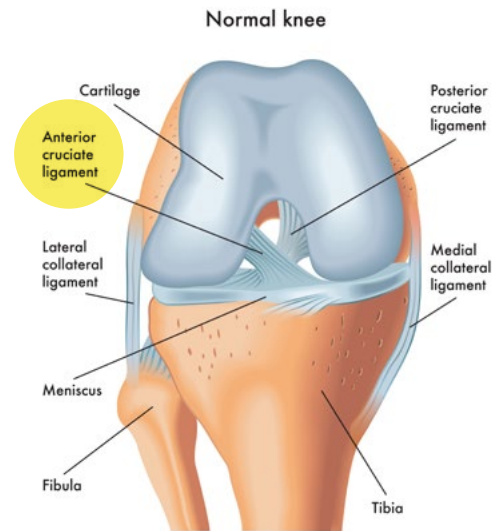
Soon after the ER visit, Tammy met with Dr. John Leupold of Northwest Iowa Bone, Joint & Sports Surgeons, had an MRI, and scheduled her surgery. She said, "I was very confident in Dr. Leupold's skill set right away. His bedside manner is excellent. He doesn't waste your time but is very friendly and professional, yet casual. His nurse Scott is great too."

Surgery was performed about two weeks after her injury and did not involve an overnight stay in the hospital. Dr. Leupold used a graft of Tammy's thigh muscle for her ACL repair and cleaned up the meniscus tear.

"We are so fortunate to have the caliber of orthopedic surgeons we do at Lakes Regional with no need to travel to get exceptional care," she said. "I had incredible care during the entire surgery experience."

After surgery, Tammy wore a smaller brace for six weeks and began physical therapy almost immediately. She worked with a physical therapist at Lakes Regional Healthcare's Spirit Lake location twice a week for four weeks, along with doing therapy exercises each day at home.

"I literally did every single thing Dr. Leupold told me to do after surgery and think that was an important step to recovering as quickly and as well as I did," said Tammy. "Now I'm at least 95% healed and couldn't be happier. I'm wary of two-wheelers now, though, so I'll be riding a large three-wheel tricycle this summer!"



What Are ACL & Miniscus Tears?

The anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus are important for the stability of the knee. The ACL is a ligament that connects your thigh bone (femur) to the shin bone (tibia); it runs diagonally in the middle of the outside of the knee. It prevents the tibia from sliding out in front of the femur and provides rotational stability to the knee, especially during quick directional changes, sudden stops, and more. Injured ligaments are considered sprains and are graded on a severity scale, basically from a stretched ACL to a loosened/partial tear, to a complete tear.

“

“We are so fortunate to have the caliber of orthopedic surgeons we do at Lakes Regional with no need to travel to get exceptional care. I had incredible care during the entire surgery experience.”

— **Tammy**

The ACL can be injured in several ways:

- Changing direction rapidly
- Stopping suddenly
- Slowing down while running
- Landing from a jump incorrectly
- Direct contact or collision, such as a football tackle

The meniscus is the C-shaped cartilage that cushions between the femur and tibia. There are two menisci per knee – one on the inside and one on the outside. The meniscus absorbs shock and stabilizes the knee to help prevent wear and tear over time. Meniscus tears are among the most common knee injuries. The meniscus can tear from acute trauma or as the result of degenerative changes that happen over time.



Another Successful Grape Escape



In February, Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation hosted their annual Grape Escape event. It was held at the Roof Garden Ballroom, where people enjoyed hors d'oeuvres, wine, bourbon, dinner, a lively auction, and dueling pianos. The event sold out with 300 guests and raised over \$65,000 for the foundation.

Special thanks to the following sponsors for making the Grape Escape possible!

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Other Ways to Make a Difference

Scholarship Endowment Fund

Make it possible for a local high school or college student to achieve their dream of having a career in healthcare. Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation's Scholarship Endowment Fund provides scholarships each year in hopes of having those students return to the Iowa Great Lakes to provide care to those who helped them.

Hospice Fund

This fund is utilized to support a service that cares for people who have a terminal illness. Hospice works with patients and their families

to maintain quality of life and support the patient's loved ones during a difficult time.

Engraved Pavers

Engraved brick pavers and seat walls at Lakes Regional Healthcare's outdoor garden patio are available for purchase as a gift to Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation. Your gift would memorialize your loved one and positively impact others who receive care at Lakes Regional Healthcare. To learn more, contact Sonja Hamm at 712-336-8791 or sonja.hamm@lakeshealth.org.

Caring for Life Fund

This fund is utilized to support just-in-time support for our patients and their families. It is our "area of greatest need" fund and supports programs, services, and equipment in all areas of Lakes Regional Healthcare.

Your gift to the Lakes Regional Healthcare Foundation supports lifesaving services that hospital revenue alone cannot provide. Choose a project that is close to your heart and know you are making a difference in the lives of others.

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%

LRH Maintains Low Tax Rate

Earlier this year Lakes Regional Healthcare's (LRH) Board of Trustees approved the hospital's fiscal year tax rate, maintaining it at \$0.48 per \$1,000 of property value – the same as the previous fiscal year. This underscores the hospital's commitment to fiscal responsibility while continuing to provide essential services to Dickinson County residents and visitors. Notably, this tax contribution represents just 2% of the average property tax bill in the county, ensuring minimal impact on taxpayers.

Among Iowa's 44 county tax-supported hospitals, LRH boasts the second-lowest tax rate, ranking 42nd with its \$0.48 rate. This stands in stark contrast to the state's median rate of \$1.98 per \$1,000 of property value. Most tax-supported hospitals in Iowa are smaller Critical Access Hospitals, offering fewer services than LRH, which continues to deliver comprehensive care at a fraction of the typical tax burden.

This approved \$0.48 tax rate generates vital funds for two key areas. Of this, \$0.27 – or \$1.1 million – supports the hospital's ambulance service. This funding covers roughly 50% of the service's expenses, with patient payments accounting for the rest. The allocation also

facilitates the purchase of replacement ambulances, which the 2025 cost runs around \$300,000 per ambulance.

The remaining \$0.21, totaling \$850,000, bolsters the hospital's general fund. These dollars primarily address staffing costs and inflationary pressures. Healthcare salary costs continue to outpace inflation, and national staff shortages have forced hospitals including LRH to rely on contract workers at significantly higher costs. Meanwhile, inflation peaked at 9% in fiscal year 2023, while insurance reimbursement rates only increased 2-4%. This funding allows LRH to continue to provide high quality care by narrowing the financial gap created by these economic challenges. Additionally, the funds are used to offset care that is provided to patients who are unable to pay for them. Over the years, that number has been between \$1 million and \$2 million annually.

"We're proud to maintain one of Iowa's lowest tax rates while delivering high quality healthcare," said LRH President and CEO Jason Harrington. "This tax rate reflects our dedication to balancing community needs with fiscal stewardship."

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Dr. Thomas Lambert

to Join LRH's Emergency Department

Lakes Regional Healthcare's (LRH) Emergency Department has a few full-time physicians, including Nalini Jagram-Payer, MD, Laith Mahdi, DO, and Ojiaku Ikezuagu, MD. This summer another physician will join the team. Thomas Lambert, MD, will join LRH's Emergency Department on August 1, 2025.

Dr. Lambert grew up in Anaheim, California before moving to Nebraska in his early adult life. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Nebraska in Omaha. He then spent over 18 years in emergency medical services before attending medical school. During his time in emergency medical services, he worked as a Firefighter Paramedic for 14 years along with teaching EMT, Paramedicine, and Fire Science courses. After gaining experience in the clinical aspects of emergency response and care, he began looking for ways to expand his scope of practice, ultimately deciding to become a physician and receiving his medical degree from the Trinity School of Medicine in Ribishi, St. Vincent. He completed two years of rotations in Maryland before returning to the Midwest. Dr. Lambert will be completing his three-year residency in Sioux Falls, South Dakota with the Sioux Falls Family Medicine Residency program this summer and then moving to the Iowa Great Lakes to begin work at LRH.

Dr. Lambert is interested in all areas of medicine but enjoys focusing on emergency medicine. "I am drawn to emergency medicine because it allows me to see people of all acuities at a critical time and help them through," he said. "In the emergency department I am treating not only the patient but the family unit. I am the first to make contact with the patient and that allows me to help them with their next steps and down the right path."

When asked about living in the lakes area, he said, "I am looking forward to my family spending time in the community and enjoying all of the recreational activities the lakes area has to offer." He is sure to find plenty to do because in his spare time Dr. Lambert enjoys spending time with his wife and two sons playing recreational sports and spending time outdoors.





Welcome, **Dr. Benjamin Branigan!**

Northwest Iowa Surgeons has several skilled surgeons, and we are excited to add Benjamin Branigan, MD to the group on August 1, 2025.

Dr. Branigan grew up in Omaha, Nebraska and received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He will complete his residency in Des Moines, Iowa at Iowa Methodist Center this summer and then move to the Iowa Great Lakes to begin work at Northwest Iowa Surgeons.

His decision to pursue a career as a physician was largely cultivated by the deep, meaningful experiences he had serving others throughout his childhood and during his Jesuit education. He said, "It provides me with a sense of purpose which I think is essential for happiness." When asked what drew him to becoming a surgeon, Dr. Branigan said, "Ultimately, the marriage of technical skill, love for human anatomy, culture of excellence, and

compassion for the patients is what I love most about being a surgeon. The privilege of interviewing to save or drastically impact someone's life is what initially drew me to surgery."

Dr. Branigan has a long-standing family tie to the Iowa Great Lakes dating back to his grandmother and mother regularly visiting Okoboji since the 1960s. His parents continued the tradition throughout his childhood by spending summers at the lake. In fact, Dr. Branigan took his first steps in a cabin at Crescent Beach. "Okoboji is an idyllic place for families. The sense of community and people are fantastic. The quality of healthcare and robust medical community within the rural setting is truly unique," he said. "I am excited to call it home and serve a community that holds great personal meaning to me."

In his free time, Dr. Branigan enjoys golfing, hunting, boating, playing pickleball, snowboarding, and exercising.

LRH Top in Patient Recommendations

Lakes Regional Healthcare has earned the highest rating for outstanding patient experience, including a top CMS rating based on patient satisfaction, communication, and care quality. This reflects our commitment to exceptional care and patient outcomes.

Healthcare When You Need It

We are fortunate to have several ways to receive healthcare in the Iowa Great Lakes. However, it is important to know where to go for your injury or illness that is the best for your health and your finances. Here are some tips to help you out:

QuickCare Clinic

Lakes Regional Family Medicine

2301 Hwy 71 South,
Spirit Lake

712-336-3750

Monday-Thursday, 1-5 pm
Saturday, 8 am – noon

Lakes Regional Family Medicine

2301 Hwy 71 South,
Spirit Lake

712-336-3750

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

Lakes Regional Healthcare ER

2301 Hwy 71 South,
Spirit Lake

Available 24 hours/day,
every day

Non-Emergent, Acute Health Concerns

- Minor burns and cuts
- Cold or flu symptoms
- Earache
- Allergies
- Nausea

Chronic and Routine Health Concerns

- Diabetic management
- Heart health and management
- Obstetrical care
- Well child care
- History and physical examinations
- Establishing care with a new provider

Emergent Health Concerns

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Major burns/cuts
- Complications from pregnancy
- Poisoning or drug overdose
- Stroke-like symptoms
- Suicidal thoughts

Pain Management

Available at LRH

Chronic pain can significantly impact your quality of life, and many of us have experienced it at some point. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health Interview Survey, 24.3% of American adults had chronic pain in 2023, and 8.5% of adults had chronic pain that frequently limited life or work activities in the past three months. That's why Lakes Regional Healthcare (LRH) offers a range of pain management services designed to address both chronic and acute pain, helping patients regain comfort and mobility. Our healthcare professionals provide treatments such as radiofrequency ablation, epidurals, joint injections, and physical and occupational therapy, tailored to meet individual needs.

Physical and Occupational Therapy: Relieving Pain and Restoring Function

Often when you experience pain, you are initially told to take NSAIDs such as Tylenol or Ibuprofen, rest, and wait for inflammation to subside. The next step is often receiving physical or occupational therapy. LRH's physical and occupational therapists focus on identifying the source of your pain after receiving imaging exams and performing evaluations and then strengthening muscles and improving mobility and body mechanics to reduce inflammation and pain. Therapy sessions are typically scheduled one or two times each week for anywhere from a few weeks to several months depending on the severity of and reason for the pain. Exercises to do at home are also prescribed and a critical part of recovery.

LRH Physical Therapist Jason Munden said, "We work toward pain reduction by completing an evaluation on repetitive movement patterns, strength, and flexibility that lead to impairments or stress points. If there have been structural changes in the body that have caused pain, we can't undo those, but we can work on the tissues around it to offload the problems, ie pain, associated with it."

Therapists at LRH provide therapy for pain anywhere on the body – toe, knee, wrist, hand, elbow, shoulder, back, neck, hip – and have different exercises for each area and are personalized to each patient. Munden said the hospital's occupational therapists work on the elbow, wrist, and hands while the physical therapists work on all other parts of the body.

Munden added, "Education is also a huge part of physical and occupational therapy. Patients get the tools to manage flare-ups that may occur so they can reduce or eliminate their pain in the future by themselves."

Epidurals: Relief for Spinal Pain

Epidural steroid injections deliver anti-inflammatory medication directly into the spinal area, reducing inflammation and alleviating pain. This treatment is ideal for conditions like sciatica, spinal stenosis, or herniated discs, which often cause radiating back, arm, or leg pain. Relief can last from weeks to months, depending on the severity of the condition.

Patients typically receive epidurals every few months but are limited to three epidurals over a 12-month period. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has criteria for receiving the second and third epidurals. According to Radiology Practitioner Assistant Shad Helle of Midwest Radiology and Imaging, who performs the epidurals at LRH, the patient must have their pain reduced by at least 50%, change the body's location for the injection, or change the type of medication used to have a second epidural. A third epidural can be received three months after the second epidural if the patient's pain is reduced by at least 50% after the second epidural.

Joint Injections: Easing Joint Discomfort

Joint injections, often containing corticosteroids or hyaluronic acid, are administered directly into painful joints such as knees, hips, or shoulders. They help reduce inflammation and lubricate the joint, offering relief from arthritis or injury-related pain. Injections on smaller joints, such as shoulders, are often done at Northwest Iowa Bone, Joint & Sports Surgeons. Injections in larger joints, such as knees and hips, are usually done by Helle at LRH. Depending on the patient's condition, injections may be needed every three to six months. No more than three injections can be done in a 12-month period because doing them more often can thin out the lining of the joint and make pain worse.

Radiofrequency Ablation: Targeting Nerve Pain

Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) is a minimally invasive procedure that uses heat generated by radio waves to disrupt nerve signals responsible for pain. It's particularly effective for chronic conditions like shoulder, knee, or lower back pain that results in patchy, radiating pain. Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists perform the procedure in the hospital's Surgery Department, usually after other conservative measures are taken and when surgery is not an option due to the patient's age, health status, or poor bone quality. Patients often experience relief lasting six months to a year, though some enjoy benefits for even longer. This procedure may be repeated if pain returns, making it a valuable long-term management option for persistent discomfort.

For more information on these services, talk to your healthcare provider.

Planning to Have a Baby

Be-coming a parent is an incredible miracle – but it can also be stressful. We are providing this free, 28-page guide to quickly answer your pregnancy questions, from prenatal tests to car seat installation. In **Having a Baby: Your Complete Guide to Pregnancy**, you will discover the first signs of labor and how much fetal movement you can expect in each trimester. This downloadable e-book answers common questions from every stage of your pregnancy journey.

This complete guide to pregnancy covers:

- Tests and screenings you can expect
- How to perform daily activities, such as exercise, while you are pregnant
- How pregnancy will and won't impact your ability to work
- Which complications you should be alert for
- How to talk to your doctor about your pregnancy
- What to expect during delivery and childbirth
- Much more!

Download this free e-book now to answer your pregnancy questions so you feel more comfortable and confident welcoming the new addition to your family. Just hover over the QR code shown and click on the link that appears.



Location Providers That Deliver

These family medicine physicians provide obstetrical care at Lakes Regional Healthcare and can all be reached at 712-336-3750:



1. Zach Borus, MD, MPH
2. Craig Cunningham, MD
3. Christine Fricke, DO
4. Averill Fuhs, DO
5. Mike Kalkhoff, MD
6. Andrew Mueting, DO
7. Whitney Nelson, DO
8. Steve Vander Leest, DO



Common Cancers in Dickinson County

Here's an alarming statistic – Iowa has the second highest rate of new cancer diagnoses of all 50 states in the country.

In fact, 56 of Iowa's 99 counties have a higher incidence rate than the US average. And there are no Iowa counties that have incidence rates below the US average. What's worse is that Iowa's cancer diagnoses are increasing while the country overall is seeing a decrease in cancer diagnoses. The Iowa Cancer Registry and Iowa Cancer Consortium are working to identify what the most common cancers are in each Iowa county and what can be done to decrease the state's incidence of cancer.

Dickinson County is one of those Iowa counties with a higher incidence rate of cancer than the US average, and even higher than Iowa's average rate. The Iowa Cancer Registry is estimating there will be 160 new cancer cases in Dickinson County in 2025. On the relatively positive side, cancer mortality rates in Dickinson County are not statistically different from the US average. Each year there are 47 cancer deaths in Dickinson County. Here are the most common cancers in our county:



Dickinson County is one of those Iowa counties with a higher incidence rate of cancer than the US average, and even higher than Iowa's average rate.





1

Breast Cancer

This is the most common cancer in Dickinson County and our incidence is higher than the national average and ranks 38th out of Iowa's 99 counties. Residents are diagnosed earlier here than the US average, and fewer are diagnosed at a later stage than the national average. This is important because when cancer is found earlier than later, it is easier to treat, and the patient has a higher chance of survival. Roughly 78% of Dickinson County women ages 50+ are up to date with their breast screening, which is like the national average.

2

Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is Dickinson County's second most common cancer and ranks 35th out of Iowa's 99 counties. Like breast cancer rates, residents are diagnosed earlier here than the US average, and fewer are diagnosed at a later stage than the national average. Again, early-stage diagnosis leads to the cancer being easier to treat and a higher survival rate.

3

Melanoma

Melanoma is the third most common cancer diagnosis in Dickinson County, and we rank highest in melanoma cancer rates in the entire state. The reason is unknown, but perhaps our tendency to spend time outdoors, especially in the summer around the lakes, is something to consider. Fortunately, about 80% of diagnoses are during the early stage when it is easier to treat and has a higher survival rate.

4

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer is Dickinson County's fourth most common cancer diagnosis and ranks 76th out of Iowa's 99 counties. The incidence of lung cancer in our county is similar to the national average. However, residents with lung cancer are usually diagnosed at a late stage instead of an early stage compared to national averages. This means it is generally more difficult to treat those with lung cancer in our county and the survival rate may not be as high.

5

Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is Dickinson County's fifth most common cancer diagnosis and ranks 90th out of Iowa's 99 counties. Roughly 50% of residents with this type of cancer are diagnosed at an early stage versus roughly 35% nationally. Fewer are diagnosed at a late stage compared to the national average.

Work needs to be done to determine why cancer rates in Iowa are so high, but until then taking preventive measures and getting routinely screened is important. Do this sooner than later and together we can start to reverse the incidence of cancer in our state.

Cancer: When and How to be Screened

Breast

Age: 40+
Mammogram every year

Colon

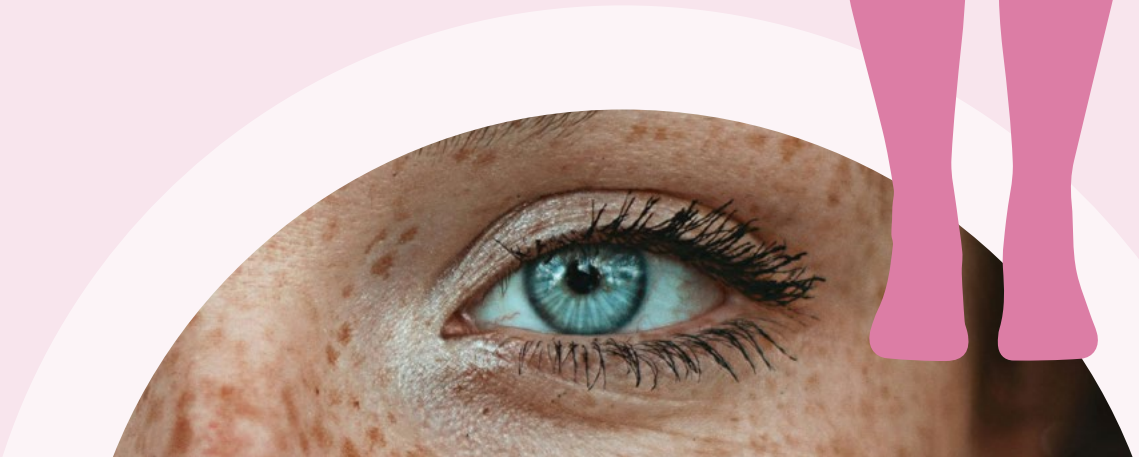
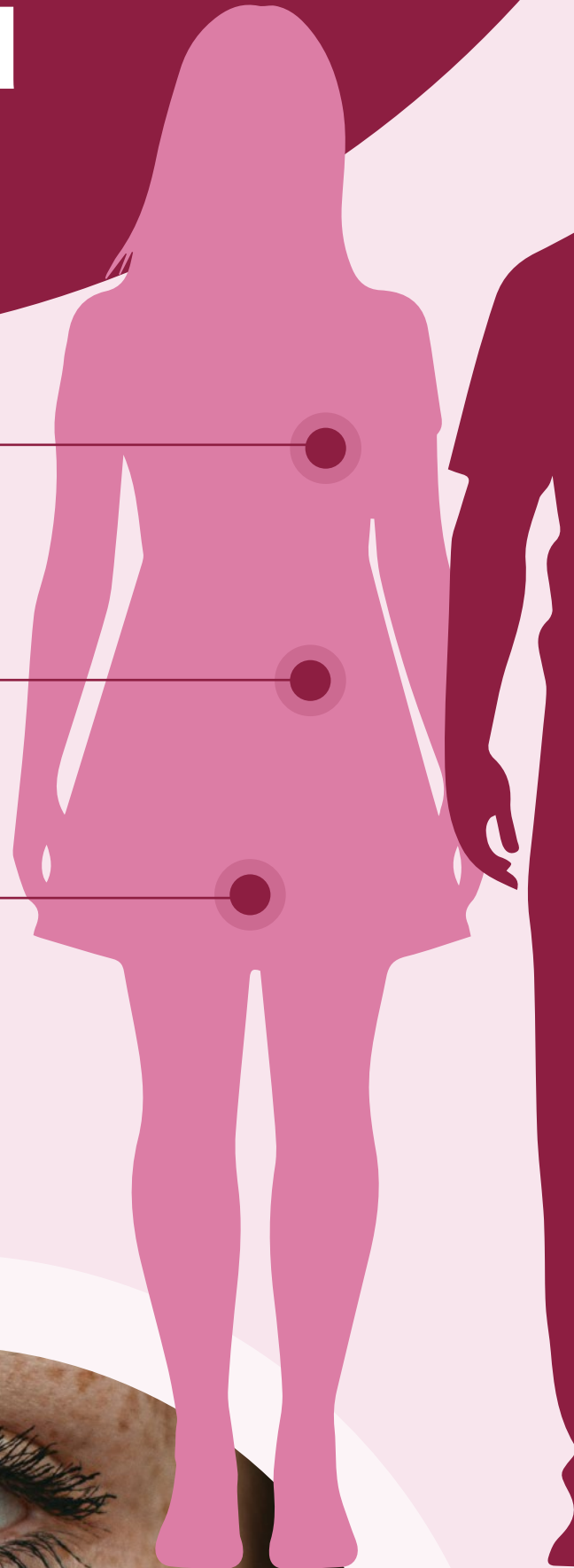
Age: 45-75
Colonoscopy every 10 years

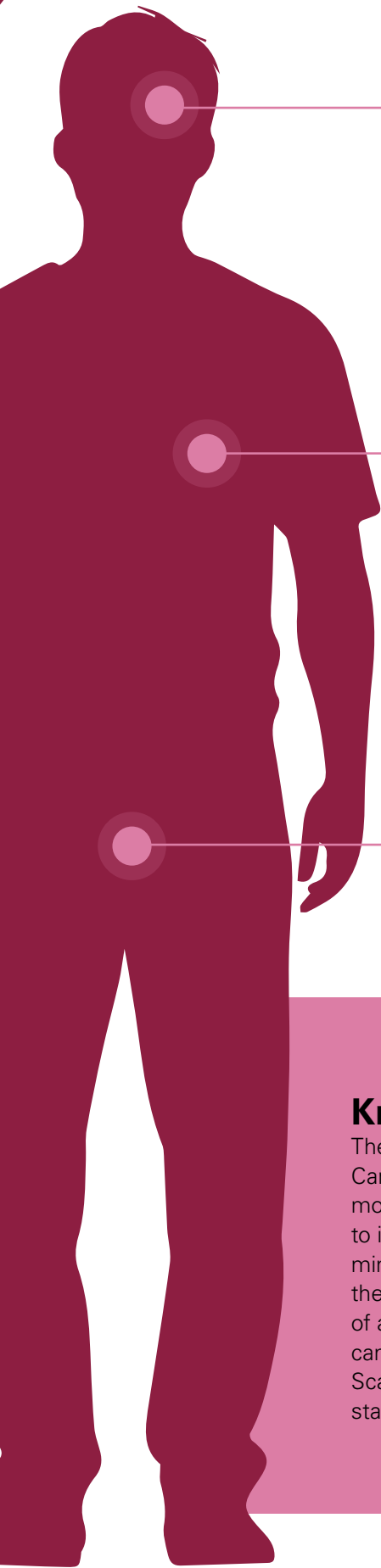
Cervical

Age: 21-30
Pap smear every 3 years

Age: 30 - 65
Pap smear and HPV test every 5 years

Age: 65+
Stop screens after 10 years of normal paps





Skin

Age: 20+
Self exams every month and full skin exam every 1-3 years based on risk factors



Lung

Age: 50-80
Low-dose CT exam if you have a 20-pack/year (one pack/day for 20 years OR two packs/day for 10 years) or more smoking history AND smoke now or have quit within the past 15 years.

Prostate

Age: 50+
Digital rectal exam and PSA blood test each year



Know Your Cancer Risk

The American Cancer Society has a CancerRisk360™ assessment to learn more about what you can change to improve your health. It takes five minutes to answer a few questions, and they'll give you a personalized roadmap of actions with helpful resources you can use to lower your risk of cancer. Scan the QR code and click the link to start the assessment.





Testing for Radon

An Important Step to Preventing Lung Cancer

Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking and the number one cause of cancer among non-smokers, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). When inhaled, radon particles can lodge in the lungs and emit radiation, which damages lung tissue over time. This exposure increases the risk of developing lung cancer.

Radon is a naturally occurring, colorless, odorless, and tasteless radioactive gas. It is formed through the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock, and water. Though it's present in trace amounts outdoors and generally harmless, radon becomes a significant health concern

when it accumulates inside homes and buildings. It does this by seeping into buildings through cracks in foundations, gaps around pipes, construction joints, and even through porous materials like concrete. Since the gas is derived from natural sources, it can affect any home, regardless of age, location, or structure type.

The only way to know if your home has a radon problem is through testing. Radon test kits are affordable and widely available or at hardware stores. These kits allow homeowners to collect air samples and send them to a lab for analysis.

Here are two ways to get radon test kits:

- ✓ www.lung.org/radon-test
Test kits are \$18-\$30 from the American Lung Association
- ✓ Call 712-262-8165 to get test kits for \$8 each from Clay County's Environmental Health Department

Four Needs in Dickinson County

Identified in Community Health Assessment



Every three years Lakes Regional Healthcare and Dickinson County Public Health partner to develop a joint Community Health Assessment (CHA). The goal of the CHA is to identify services that are most needed in our community. The report also serves as a vehicle in which to develop an implementation plan to address the identified needs.

In September, Dickinson County residents were encouraged to take an anonymous online survey to provide feedback regarding their satisfaction of various services in the Iowa Great Lakes, from transportation to health care to housing. Over 500 people completed the survey and focus groups with various community stakeholders and leaders were then held for additional feedback. The results of the primary data sources along with secondary data sources were compiled, and four main areas of need became prevalent:

Awareness of Behavioral Health Resources

This was also a top need identified in the 2022 CHA. Since then, a Dickinson County Behavioral Health Coalition has been formed, and several initiatives have occurred to raise awareness about behavioral health resources. This group will continue to meet and work to develop additional awareness campaigns and increased assistance accessing behavioral health resources, primarily for youth, as well as substance abuse and ongoing care beyond crisis situations.

Cancer

Iowa has the second highest cancer rate in the United States, and Dickinson County's cancer rate is even higher than the state's average. Community feedback through the CHA identified cancer education and screenings are needed most, second only to mental health.

Healthy Living

Feedback identified the greatest need for education related to healthy living, and specifically healthy eating and overweight/obesity struggles. Like many communities in Iowa and nationwide, Dickinson County has a fair amount of food insecurity, making it difficult for people to purchase food, especially nutritious foods. Plus, nearly 40% of Dickinson County's population is obese, which is a risk factor for many health conditions.

Aging Well

Dickinson County has the oldest average age among its population than any other county in Iowa. CHA feedback repeatedly mentioned needing education, services, and awareness of issues related to aging. Examples of these issues include Alzheimer's and other memory disorders.

The 2025 CHA was recently developed and includes a wealth of information, including details about these four main areas of need, such as the biggest obstacles and potential action items to address them. Other items included in the report are Dickinson County's health rankings and social and economic factors. If you would like to see the recently developed 2025 CHA, visit www.lakeshealth.org/community-health/.

The next steps are to work with community stakeholders to develop a Community Health Improvement Plan. This plan will identify the steps that will be taken to address awareness of behavioral health resources, cancer prevention and treatment, healthy living, and awareness of resources for Dickinson County's aging residents.

Top 5 Ways to Decrease Your Risk of Cancer

Roughly 40% of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime. That's why it's important to not only get screened early and regularly, but to also take steps to prevent cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, here are the top five ways to decrease your chances of getting cancer.

1 Stay away from tobacco.

This doesn't just mean to stop smoking or using tobacco products. It means also to stay away from secondhand smoke. Both can lead to cancer and a host of other health problems. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW today.

2 Stay at a healthy weight.

Keeping a healthy weight reduces the risk of 13 different types of cancer. Overweight and obesity are complex with many different causes. Small changes over time are helpful for achieving a healthy weight. Make efforts to control your weight with better food choices without added sugars and added fats, by eating appropriate portion sizes, and by being more physically active to boost your metabolism. On the opposite side, being underweight indicates you lack adequate nutrition for optimum immune health. If you need help with achieving a healthy weight, whether over or underweight, talk with your healthcare provider about more options.

Know your body mass index (BMI) by hovering over the QR code shown and click the link to a BMI chart.





3

Move.

Adults should get at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity each week. Children and teens should get at least one hour of moderate or vigorous-intensity physical activity every day. Vigorous-intensity activity causes you to have an increased heart rate, sweating, and a faster breathing rate.

4

Eat healthy foods.

Healthy food choices include lots of colorful vegetables and fruits, whole grains, nuts and seeds, and lean meats. Talk to your healthcare provider about meeting with Lakes Regional Healthcare's Registered Dietitian Nutritionist to help you develop a personalized meal plan to include these choices and improve your health.

5

Limit alcohol.

The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk of cancer. If you drink alcohol, men should have two drinks or less per day and women should have one drink or less per day. One drink is equal to 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

Local Community Garden Offers Fresh Produce



A great way to get an abundance of fresh produce is by joining Dickinson County Community Gardens. For \$35 per individual or \$45 per family, you can be a member of the garden and have green beans, potatoes, onions, spinach, cabbage, broccoli, cucumbers, beets, lettuce, kale, eggplant, multiple kinds of peppers, tomatoes, winter and summer squashes, watermelon, pumpkins, and more.

Located at the corner of 23rd Street and Zenith Avenue in Spirit Lake, the garden has a drip-line irrigation system and equipment such as tillers and a mower and sheds to store everything. Each week there are work sessions to clean up the site, plant, weed, and harvest throughout the summer and fall seasons.



If you are interested in joining Dickinson County Community Gardens, email Carol Larson at larsonc57@hotmail.com or text her at 712-330-4140.

Low- and No-Cost Food Options Available

The Iowa Great Lakes area provides many opportunities for those who need assistance in providing food for their families. For more information, visit www.dickinsoncountyhunger.com.

Monthly Food Pantries

(some items in the food pantry are income restricted, while most items are donated locally and are distributed freely):

1. Crossroads Food Pantry

2014 Central Ave., Estherville, 712-362-4390
Second Tuesday of the month, 4:00-6:00 pm

2. Downtown Church

2105 N Ave., Milford, 712-338-4740
Third Thursday of the month, 4:30 pm

3. First Lutheran Church

1525 Three Cross Road, Milford, 712-338-4514
Monday-Thursday, 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Saturday, 8:30 am – 12:00 pm

4. Good News Community Church

1010 Julia St., Okoboji, 712-332-5698
First and third Saturday of the month, 9:00-11:00 am

5. Mobile Food Pantry, United Methodist Church

1471 135th Ave., Lake Park, 712-348-0475
First Thursday of the month, 4:30-6:30 pm

6. Spirit Life Pantry

2504 Enterprise Ave., Spirit Lake, 712-336-0114
Second and fourth Saturday of the month, 8:00-10:00 am

7. Upper Des Moines Opportunity

1575 18th St., Spirit Lake, 712-336-1112
Every Wednesday, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

8. Wonderful Wednesday, United Methodist Church

Wesley Place, 1815 Hill Ave., Spirit Lake, 712-336-3115
Every Wednesday, 5:30 pm



Low- and No-Cost Food Options Available Continued

Emergency Food Pantries with 24/7 Year-Round Access

1. Harbor of Joy Lutheran Church: Blessing Box
1204 L Ave., Milford

2. Milford Randy's Pantry, LRH Physical Therapy
1003 21st St., Milford
Located behind the building

3. Spirit Lake Randy's Pantry, Lakes Area Senior Center
2101 Zenith Ave., Spirit Lake
Located outside the building

Dinner Dates

1. Dinner Date, Lake Park Community Center
903 Market St., Lake Park, 712-832-3540
Tuesday and Thursday, 11:30 am

2. Dinner Date, Lakes Area Senior Center
Every weekday, serve at 12:00 pm
2101 Zenith Ave., Spirit Lake, 712-336-5247

Meals on Wheels

1. Iowa Great Lakes Meals on Wheels, 712-336-4444
2. Lake Park Meals on Wheels, 712-832-3691

Additional Resources

1. SNAP: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of needy families so they can purchase healthy food and move towards self-sufficiency. To find out if you are eligible for SNAP, visit <https://hsservices.iowa.gov/apsspssp/ssp.portal>.

2. Upper Des Moines Opportunity: Food is available beyond pantry hours these days:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday 8:30 am – 4:00 pm
Wednesday, Friday 10:00 am – 3:30 pm

3. Dickinson County Department of Health and Human Services
1802 Hill Ave., Suite 2401, Spirit Lake
712-336-2555 or 1-886-336-2555
Monday-Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

4. Dickinson County Community Gardens
Memberships: Single, \$35; Family, \$45
712-330-4140

Volunteers Provide Valuable Service

Volunteering has been part of our history since before the first patient received care and is still an integral part of the organization. For over 60 years, Lakes Regional Healthcare volunteers have assisted patients and staff in various ways, such as escorting and transporting patients throughout the facility, providing companionship to patients, delivering patient meal trays to cancer patients as they receive chemotherapy, and assisting Gift Shop customers.

We currently have approximately 5+0 volunteers that give of their time and talents based on their availability and desires. Depending on the area, volunteer shifts are three or four hours long. Some volunteers work every week and others work once a month. Some take the winter off, and some take the summer off.



Volunteer opportunities include:

- **Gift Shop Volunteer**

Gift Shop volunteers are the frontline staff that greet and assist customers, ring up their purchases, and straighten up and restock shelves. Shifts are weekdays between 9:00am and 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm.

- **West Entrance Volunteer**

West Entrance volunteers greet patients and visitors as they enter the hospital and help escort and direct patients to various locations within the organization, including occasionally transporting patients via wheelchair. Shifts are weekdays from 8:00 am until 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm until 4:00 pm.

- **East Entrance Volunteer**

Similar to the West Entrance volunteers, the East Entrance volunteers greet patients and visitors as they enter the hospital's east side. Shifts are weekdays from 8:00 am until 12:00 pm and 12:00 pm until 4:00 pm.

- **Hospice Volunteers**

Hospice volunteers provide companionship, read, write letters, run errands, prepare meals, do housework or yard work, provide respite care for hospice patients and relief for their caregivers, and do clerical duties for the hospice program.

There are also volunteers that donate their time and talents from home by sewing teddy bears for pediatric patients in our ER and knitting baby caps for newborns in our Birth Center.

Highway 71 South
Spirit Lake, IA 51360

What Our Patients Say

“

“A VERY good experience from beginning to end! We are so lucky to have Lakes Regional Healthcare and its staff available to us!!”

“The surgical team was very positive. Loved the vibe!”

“Spirit Lake is a new facility for me as I just switched primary care doctors two months ago. I was very impressed with the speed of being able to see MY doctor and the ability for the surgeon to get me in for my procedure as fast as possible as well as a follow-up CT with one day notice. The nurses were great and my whole family will be switching their primary care to Spirit Lake. Thank you for the good as possible experience!”

“Unbelievably professional and extremely confident care. Had a first-rate experience all around. Very impressed with everyone we came in contact with.”

“Amazing from the first moment to walking out! I came from Sioux City to choose you!”

“Way above my expectations. Wonderful hospital and grounds. The nurses and doctors are the best I have ever seen. Everyone there is very kind. Thank you!”