Feeling out of shape? Stressed? As though you’re out of sync? Yoga could help. A practice that has been refined for more than 5,000 years, yoga helps keep mind, body and spirit in balance. We take a look at five good-karma reasons to give yoga a go.

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Patient use wheelchairs at Chinook Regional Hospital to move about inside the facility while they recover and to get safely to a waiting car when they’re discharged. On this day, the two men responsible for the newest batch of hot wheels at CRH had fun racing them in the hospital’s hallways. Ryan Thomson, Site Manager, Chinook Regional Hospital, left, and Tony Jung, Executive Director, Friends of Chinook Regional Hospital, tied at the finish line.

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Influenza: It’s not too late to get immunized

DR. CHRIS EAGLE
Alberta Health Services
President and CEO

I’d like to extend my thanks to all Albertans who have helped us meet the seasonal surge in influenza. As you know, it has hit our communities – and health care system, including emergency departments – hard. Thank you for your support – and thanks to all of our care providers – as we work to ease pressures on the system.

I’d also like to thank everyone who has taken the time to get immunized. By getting the flu shot, washing your hands regularly, and knowing your health care options if you do get sick, you’re helping your family, community and the health care system.

Because flu season comes around every year, we often forget that this can be a very serious illness. In fact, it is estimated that more than 4,000 people in Canada will die from influenza this year.

The good news? Each of us has the ability to prevent such tragedy, right here in our own communities. You can personally make a difference. Immunization is the single, most effective means of preventing influenza, and reducing the spread of illness in our communities.

Last season, more than 830,000 Albertans got immunized. That was good, but I know we can do better and it’s not too late. Get immunized and encourage others to do the same. More immunizations mean fewer people in hospital emergency departments, shorter wait times for health services, fewer sick days at work and school, and healthier communities.

When you get the flu shot, everybody wins. Immunization will continue to be offered, free of charge, to all Albertans aged six months and older, through the end of March. For clinic locations and details, visit www.albertahealthservices.ca/influenza.asp, call Health Link Albert at 1.866.408.LINK (5465), or contact your physician and local pharmacist to inquire about availability.
Influenza immunization is the best way to protect yourself, your family and your community. The influenza vaccine is still available, free of charge, to all Albertans six months of age and older.

In addition to family doctors, walk-in clinics and urgent care centres, most cases of influenza-like illnesses can be managed at home, through self-care.

Easy measures that reduce the risk of spreading illness to others, and sufficient self-care measures – for many cases, they are the best met at places other than a hospital emergency department. Influenza outbreaks, so patients may have to stay in hospital longer. During influenza season, Medicine Hat and Chinook Regional Hospitals have experienced high patient volumes; the same is also true for rural facilities within the South Zone.

We are not at a stage where other services are impacted by these high volumes and our focus continues to be to provide the best possible access to health care services. Our teams work very hard to manage our capacity issues, to ensure patients receive the right care, in the right place and at the right time.

Residents of the South Zone and all Albertans can assist by ensuring they have received their influenza immunization and knowing their care options. It is key that we all play a role in protecting ourselves from illness as well as preventing its spread.

Please remember that some health and medical needs – including the management of many seasonal illnesses – can be best met at places other than a hospital emergency department. In addition to family doctors, walk-in clinics and urgent care centres, most cases of influenza-like illnesses can be managed at home, through self-care.

If you or anyone in your household are experiencing illness, please refrain from visiting loved ones or friends in hospitals, medical care or visit www.albertahealthservices.ca/options.

GET THE CARE YOU NEED WHEN YOU NEED IT

+ Health Link Alberta
+ Family Doctor
+ Urgent Care Centre
+ Ambulatory Care Clinic
+ Emergency
+ Walk-In Clinic
+ Community Health Centre

www.albertahealthservices.ca/options

There are plenty of health care options available. Learn yours by visiting the AHS website.
In high school, Joanna Cebula knew she wanted a career in health care. She loved biology and chemistry, but wanted a profession that matched her lifestyle and future goals.

“Nursing? I didn’t really want to poke people,” jokes Cebula, a fourth-year University of Alberta (U of A) student pharmacist, adding that physician schedules can make juggling family life difficult.

“Pharmacy provided an equal balance. I wanted to help people and was interested in medications and how they can help.”

Cebula is one of three student pharmacists from the U of A who recently participated in an eight-week placement at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital that began in mid-October. The placements are the result of a partnership with pharmacy faculties in Alberta and Saskatchewan that provides students with hands-on learning in both community and acute care settings.

Student pharmacists are paired with preceptors, like Joyce Nishi, Pharmacy Clinical Practice Leader at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital. Preceptors are pharmacists who supervise and mentor the students during their rotations, and who assess and evaluate the students’ overall performance.

With Nishi’s support, the students joined the medical team to provide patients with bedside counselling and medication assessment. The procedure helps ensure patients have been prescribed the correct medications and understand how to take them appropriately.

“It’s really rewarding. We got to go on rounds and see which patients needed help with medications,” says student pharmacist Victor Leung, adding that he really appreciated support from the nursing staff. “The nurses know the patients. They’re with them 24/7 and are a great resource for us.”

Sheila Burkart, nursing manager, says the nurses are equally appreciative of the dedicated teaching student pharmacists provide to patients. The result: happier patients who better understand their discharge plans, less follow-up from community pharmacists saying patients are confused about their medications, and happier staff who know patients are well looked-after.

“It’s so rewarding to see how we’re all working together to provide the best care possible,” says Burkart.

Student pharmacist Cheryl Lin agrees. “I had more exposure to speak with patients,” says Lin. “We reviewed medications with them to make sure they were appropriate. We make sure we use simple language, visual aids and analogies. We ask open-ended questions to make sure they really understand.”

And what do patients think about all this attention?

“Patient Gordon Wunsch says he’s loving it. “They’ve been really helpful and thorough – just what a patient needs.”

Student pharmacists make the rounds at hospitals, teaching patients about their medications

Story and photos by Lisa Squires

A career in health care can be extremely rewarding. Visit the AHS website for career details. www.albertahealthservices.ca
I'm referred to as the ‘Golden Hour;’ the time when treatment is most crucial for a person who has had a stroke.

“Stroke causes the death of brain tissue in the area of the brain in which it is happening,” says Leona Ferguson, director of rural facilities-east, for Alberta Health Services (AHS) South Zone. “The quicker you can get to diagnosis and treatment, the better the chance of survival and recovery.”

“We talk about the Golden Hour, which is that hour starting from the time somebody is showing symptoms. The quicker diagnosis and treatment takes place, the quicker damage can be stopped.”

The Brooks Health Centre will soon be deemed a Stroke Centre, with the introduction of telehealth services for health care providers dealing with stroke patients. The centre serves communities including Tilley, Duchess and Rosemary, as well as most of the County of Newell.

To date, anyone showing symptoms of a stroke in the Brooks area is taken by ambulance to hospital in Calgary or Medicine Hat. Now, with the introduction of telehealth services for stroke, diagnosis can be done at the Brooks Health Centre. Treatment can be started, and decisions made whether the patient should continue to a larger hospital, or receive care in Brooks.

“We have a CT (computed tomography) scanner, and images of the head can be taken in Brooks by the diagnostic imaging staff, then transmitted by videoconferencing capabilities to a neurologist in Calgary,” says Ferguson. “Telehealth conferencing will be set up in the emergency department, and will allow our staff to have a real-time discussion with the on-call neurologist.

“The plan of care will be a joint decision between the doctor and the nursing staff here, and the neurologist in Calgary.”

To that end, Brooks personnel will be attending enhanced training in recognizing and treating stroke.

There are two common types of stroke, ischemic (clots) or hemorrhagic (brain bleeds).

“If it’s a clot, drugs are administered and the patient then will be transferred to Calgary for further assessment by neurologists,” says Ferguson. It is estimated that annually there are between 12 and 15 patients in the Brooks area who could benefit from this care.

“This new service is good for the patient and the patient’s family, who will have responsive assessment and treatment quickly without having to leave their home community,” says Ferguson. “It’s also an excellent way to connect with stroke services in the city, and a wise use of the expertise of the neurologists who live and work in Calgary.”

Ferguson says the health care team is excited about being designated a Stroke Centre, which will increase care options for the community.

“Brooks is a busy health centre, where we are pleased to provide services such as these to our community. We’re never shy about working to improve our service.”

Do you have concerns about your health? Visit the AHS website for symptom information.

www.albertahealthservices.ca
FRIENDS ARE ON A ROLL

Story and photo by Sherri Gallant

There’s a proverb that says a bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses. If that’s the case, the Friends of Chinook Regional Hospital society must be a sweet-smelling bunch of folks.

It’s Friends who are responsible for the wheelchairs used by patients to get to a waiting car outside to go home when they’re discharged. And it’s Friends, too, who bought the wheels that patients use at the facility while they are recovering from surgery or illness.

A fleet of 42 new wheelchairs and accessories were recently donated by the Friends society, a non-profit group powered by staff and volunteers who work in the gift shop and manage the TV and phone-rental program on site.

The time they give provides much for many, since profits from gift shop sales and other endeavours of the Friends (including TV and phone rentals at the hospital) are donated to Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH) to support patient-care programs and services. The latest acquisition of wheelchairs is really just the tip of the iceberg.

“Friends really are unsung heroes to us,” says Ryan Thomson, Site Manager at CRH. “Wheelchairs are a constant critical piece of equipment in the hospital. We require different sizes — for bariatric patients and pediatric patients, for example — and we’re always in need of special accessories for them, like oxygen tank holders and leg extensions.”

“That’s where Friends come in and we appreciate what they do for us so much,” Tony Jung, Executive Director of Friends, says.

Chinook Regional Hospital has Friends — in deed. This non-profit group recently donated a fleet of 42 much-needed wheelchairs to the hospital.

Ryan Thomson, Site Manager, Chinook Regional Hospital (CRH), left, and Tony Jung, Executive Director, Friends of Chinook Regional Hospital, take a break from admin duties to race two of the hospital’s new wheelchairs — supplied by Friends — down a hallway at CRH.

FRIENDS REALLY ARE UNSUNG HEROES TO US ... WE APPRECIATE WHAT THEY DO SO MUCH

– Ryan Thomson, Site Manager at CRH
Millions of North Americans use yoga as part of their physical, mental and spiritual regime, reaping the benefits of a practice that has survived for more than 5,000 years.

Yoga has several scientifically proven health benefits, as well as perceived health benefits that can’t be easily measured through science. Here are just five.

**HELP REDUCE STRESS**

“With the exception of diseases caused by genetics, most diseases are caused or exacerbated by stress, including cardiovascular disease and depression,” says Dr. Hana Stastry, a Calgary medical doctor and pathology and psychology instructor in the yoga therapy extension certificate at Mount Royal University.

“Yoga helps reduce stress on numerous levels because breathing slows while in the physical postures, or ‘asanas.’” The intense focus yoga requires also takes the mind off stressors.

**HELP MANAGE PAIN**

“Yoga has had a tremendously positive impact on many of my patients,” says Cliona Corbett, a physiotherapist at Alberta Health Services’ Chronic Pain Centre in Calgary. “They tell me that the benefits of a yoga practice have improved all areas of their self – physical, mental, social, cognitive and spiritual.”

Corbett recommends yoga to her patients who suffer chronic pain because its holistic approach to health helps people make positive changes in their lives.

**IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE**

“Done properly, yoga increases flexibility, mobility and strength,” Stastry says. “That helps anyone at any age, but it is particularly important to our quality of life as we age.”

Because many yoga poses include weight-bearing elements, this can help prevent osteoporosis, particularly in women.

**AIDS ORGAN FUNCTION**

Yogic breathing involves the diaphragm, which moves downward during breathing and massages the entire abdomen. That improves digestion and blood circulation, benefiting every organ in the body including the brain, allowing clearer thinking.

Additionally, the deep yogic breath makes the lungs and thorax more flexible, helping prevent chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

**FINDS MEANING**

“Yoga practice involves meditative techniques, which affect the mind, body and emotions,” Stastry says.

“Over a long period of time, it can create a profound calmness and can give meaning to life.”

Just Breathe

Breathing is an important part of any yoga practice, and you don’t have to be on the mat to take advantage of its power. Have you ever noticed how you breathe when you feel calm? The next time you are relaxed, take a moment to notice how your body feels. Or think about how you breathe when you first wake up in the morning or just before you fall asleep. Breathing exercises can help you relax, because they make your body feel like it does when you are already relaxed.

**BELLY BREATHING**

Belly breathing is easy to do and very relaxing. Try this basic exercise any time you need to relax or relieve stress.

1. Sit in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing three to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.

**COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINES**

Many people use alternative treatments, such as herbal remedies or yoga, along with traditional medical care. Complementary treatments focus on your overall health and may help you feel better. Visit MyHealth.Alberta.ca to find out more about these options. And always discuss any treatments you are considering with your doctor to make sure that alternative treatments don’t replace traditional medical care.

**TIPS FOR SAFE YOGA**

- Consult your physician or health care provider before starting any new exercise routine.
- Always inform your yoga teacher of any physical injuries or conditions you have.
- Take a few classes to learn the basics before practising at home.
- Know your physical limitations and don’t push beyond them.
- Focus on the breath – if it’s not about the breathing, it’s not yoga.
- Don’t expect overnight results; reap the long-term benefits.

**WE HAVE THE KEYS TO YOUR HEART**

It keeps your blood pumping and other organs functioning, matching your pace, 24/7. Yup, that hard-working heart of yours sure does a lot for you, and this month – Heart Month – we’re encouraging you to ask yourself what you’re doing for your heart in return. From diet, to exercise, to stress, our day-to-day choices directly impact the health of our hearts.

Time to start showing your heart a little love! Get heart healthy today (and stay that way) with these tips and tools: www.albertahealthservices.ca/healthyheart.asp

**GOOD KARMA**
TRUE GIFT OF LOVE FOR VALENTINE’S DAY

Here’s a real heart-warmer: when Olivia Jordheim was born prematurely last February, her mom would have done anything to stay by her side— including sleep in the hallway outside the ICU. That’s when staff at Medicine Hat Regional stepped in, with the keys to a home away from home.

Story by Kerri Robins | Photo courtesy Valene Jordheim

Olivia Jordheim is a one-year-old cherub. She’s chubby in all the right places and sports the cutest, “I can do anything” look on her face.

“You’d never know she started life at just over six weeks early in intensive care, weighing in at slightly over four lbs.

“I had nothing for her other than a pair of socks that pretty much covered her whole leg,” says mom Valene Jordheim.

Four days after Olivia was born by emergency C-section on Feb. 10 last year, Jordheim was discharged.

“But I couldn’t go home and leave my baby,” says Jordheim. “I told the nurses I’d sleep in the hall and wouldn’t bother anybody.”

Any mom would be OK with the hallway, but the nursing staff at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital had a better idea.

“They gave us a ‘home’ in the family room on the Maternal Child Unit, all nicely furnished and complete with a bed, TV, fridge, microwave, room for a crib; everything my family needed so we could be together,” says Jordheim.

Furnished through donations to the Medicine Hat and District Health Foundation, the family room is used by families when their children must stay in the hospital for an extended length of time.

“We’re thrilled at the support of the community in donations to furnish this room,” says Heather Bach, donor relations co-ordinator.

“The room is comfortable and has a warm feeling and, when you walk in, you’re leaving the hospital — so to speak.”

Jordheim arrived at the hospital last February, gravely ill with a fever of 40°C, pains in her belly and was extremely disoriented.

“I think my bones are all crumbling,” she remembers telling the nurse. “I wasn’t in a position to make any decisions,” Jordheim says. “But with the support and knowledge of a great team of doctors, my husband was a rock.”

Jordheim was suffering from a rare bacterial infection of the amniotic membranes and fluid in her placenta; ‘chorioamnionitis’ in medical terms. Occurring in about one to two per cent of pregnancies, the baby’s survival rate to term is tenuous.

But preemie status doesn’t seem to hold much weight in Olivia’s world. Despite the odds, mom says she’s doing fine with no long-term concerns.

“I’m indebted to the caring staff at the hospital,” says Jordheim.

“The doctors took charge and calmly guided my husband through all the information he needed to come to the best decision in our situation.

“And the nurses who took such good care of Olivia when I couldn’t, the family room that allowed us to bond as a family right away – I can’t say enough how grateful we all are,” says Jordheim. “I still have Olivia’s first gift – a tiny knitted tuque, handmade by a member of the foundation volunteers group.”

For more information, please visit Medicine Hat and District Health Foundation, www.inyouroccmunity.ca or call 403.528.8133.

THE ROOM IS COMFORTABLE AND HAS A WARM FEELING, AND WHEN YOU WALK IN, YOU’RE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL — SO TO SPEAK

– Heather Bach, Medicine Hat and District Health Foundation

Kurt Jordheim gazes at his early Valentine’s present, his premature daughter, Olivia, born a year ago on Feb. 10, at Medicine Hat Regional Hospital.

NEW MEMBERS BRING IN FRESH VIEWPOINT

Story by Kristin Bernhard | www.albertahealthservices.ca

Alberta Health Services (AHS) is forever growing and changing in an attempt to bring the best health care to the province.

Albertans need and expect to be heard and consulted when it comes to local health care decisions and priorities, and Health Advisory Council (HAC) members are among those who make that happen.

“One of the biggest things with AHS is there are so many changes taking place,” says Margaret Kargard, one of Palliser Triangle’s newest HAC members.

“It’s exciting to have community involvement when those changes happen.”

Kargard volunteered to be on the HAC because she saw it as a chance to represent her community.

“I live in a very rural and diverse area,” she says. “I want to provide a voice for members of my community who otherwise may not have the opportunity to have one.”

AHS has made it a priority to increase local decision-making and community consultation. The 12 HACs across the province help communities focus on local health issues and provide feedback to AHS on community needs.

And that’s a positive start, says Kargard.

“It’s an opportunity for the community to say, I am a part of this.”
In brief

Southern Alberta residents struggling with obesity can now better manage their weight thanks to a new Bariatric Specialty Clinic in Medicine Hat that opened in January. Operating out of the River Heights Professional Centre, the clinic is staffed by a range of experts – including physicians, registered nurses, dietitians, mental health specialists and rehabilitation professionals – who collaborate to create specialized, weight-management strategies for their patients. Clinic patients must be referred by their physician.

Local leadership

Zone Medical Director Dr. Vanessa MaClean
Senior Vice-President Sean Chilton

AHS embraces local leadership and zone-based decision-making. Right here in southern Alberta, front-line physicians and other clinical leaders at every level of the organization have joint planning and decision-making authority with operational leaders, meaning faster decision-making closer to where care is provided.


A visit to an AHS Travel Health Clinic is a prescription for healthy vacationing.

Book your appointment today.

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To see South Zone News online, please visit
www.albertahealthservices.ca/8827.asp

LAYOUT AND DESIGN: Kit Poole
IMAGING: Michael Brown

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Clinic opens

South Albertans struggle with obesity can now better manage their weight thanks to a new Bariatric Specialty Clinic in Medicine Hat that opened in January. Operating out of the River Heights Professional Centre, the clinic is staffed by a range of experts – including physicians, registered nurses, dietitians, mental health specialists and rehabilitation professionals – who collaborate to create specialized, weight-management strategies for their patients. Clinic patients must be referred by their physician.