The American College of Surgeons states that obtaining a second opinion before surgery is a part of good medical practice and that competent physicians shouldn’t be offended when patients decide to seek further advice and consult with another surgeon.

Why seek a second opinion? Physicians often have differing viewpoints as to how a particular medical problem should be managed, whether through surgery or through less invasive treatments. Medicine is not a “black and white” science, and a physician’s education and experience will likely influence his or her recommendations.

When a second surgical opinion confirms initial findings, it gives patients reassurance, reducing anxiety and uncertainty. From a cost-savings perspective, a second opinion can save health care dollars by confirming the certainty of a clinical need (or lack of need) for the proposed surgery. Some insurance companies require a second opinion before non-emergency surgery.

In certain cases, several different surgical techniques may be viable options, some offering additional benefits to the patient. For example, arthroscopic surgical techniques (instead of conventional “open” orthopedic surgery) can involve less trauma to surrounding muscles and tissue, since smaller incisions are made. Patients typically experience a faster recovery with less scarring and less post-operative pain.

As an added benefit, this type of operation can often be done on an outpatient basis, saving the costs associated with an overnight hospital stay.

Because surgery is a major procedure with associated risks that should not be taken lightly, second opinions are an important element of the decision-making process. Patients should know and clearly understand all of their surgical options beforehand. However, a second opinion is not necessarily “better” than a first opinion. Whether there is agreement or disagreement, the final decision is always up to the patient.

Patients should remember that it is their right to seek a second opinion before committing to surgery or any treatment plan. A competent physician will likely consider the patient to be an informed, proactive health care consumer who is taking responsibility for his or her own health care.

Loren Potter, DO, is an orthopedic and hand and upper extremity surgeon. He practices at the Aurora Health Center in Oshkosh and the Aurora Health Center in Fond du Lac. Dr. Potter has extensive fellowship training and surgical expertise in arthroscopic rotator cuff repair, shoulder/elbow arthroplasty, hand surgery, nerve surgery, and tendon and ligament and upper extremity surgical procedures, using minimally invasive techniques whenever possible.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Potter, contact the Aurora Health Center in Oshkosh at 920-303-8700 or in Fond du Lac at 920-907-7000. To inquire about an orthopedic surgeon in your area, please call the Aurora physician referral line at 888-863-5502.
"Homecoming" not just for students anymore

At the Aurora Adult Day Center, we have helped hundreds of families delay or avoid nursing home placement. We build our programs around each individual, offering an abundance of quality support for differing levels of need. Important keys to healthier senior living are keeping active and social.

On Friday, October 29, the center hosted a homecoming event called "Autumn in Milwaukee" for participants, along with their caregivers, family members and county case managers. To kick off this gala event, clients participated in a “spirit month.” Every Friday, clients could partake in different themes, such as Pajama Day, Pink Day, Mismatch Day and Flashback Day. The day prior to the homecoming, numerous “sports” activities were offered, such as bean bag toss and darts. On the day of the homecoming, the clients enjoyed an elegant luncheon, followed by a grand march, which showcased each participant’s formal attire. Bobby Jiles and his band provided live entertainment, creating an atmosphere of companionship and laughter. The homecoming was truly a memorable event for our deserving clients. One of the client’s stated, “The homecoming meant the world to me because it brought us all together. It was ‘fantabulous,’ I had a beautiful time.” Due to the success of the event, the center will be hosting a prom in May 2011.

For information about the Aurora Adult Day Center, contact Mary Pajot at 414-290-5492.

Are you bothered by acute disc pain?

What is an intervertebral disc?
It is a structure with a jelly-like center that sits between each of the bones in your back and neck. These bones are called “vertebrae.”

How can the intervertebral discs in the lower back cause pain?
The jelly-like center in a disc is called the “nucleus.” When a person is having acute disc pain, the fibers that surround the nucleus (“annular rings”) can tear to varying degrees. If the tear reaches the outer third of the disc, the nucleus may flow toward that area. Because the outside portion of the disc contains tiny nerves, pain may occur in that area.

In acute disc-related pain, patients often feel increased pain with prolonged sitting, bending forward at the waist, and in the early morning hours. Unfortunately, due to the depth of the disc, applying heat or cold will do little to lessen the pain.

What can you do to help manage the pain?
• Avoid aggravating activates
• Avoid bending forward
• Do not slouch when sitting
• Do not try to “touch your toes”
• Use proper lifting mechanics

What about professional help?
Disc injuries can be treated in several ways. Aurora chiropractors use a combination of methods. These include:
• Cox lumbar spine distraction/decompression techniques
• Relaxation of muscles in spasm
• Back extension exercises
• Instructions on how to avoid aggravating activities

All of the above help centralize the nucleus and decrease strain to injured tissue. The combination should also help heal the injured annular fibers by forming scar tissue.

Although treatment time can vary, some patients see improvement after only two weeks of care. Treatment is usually started at three times a week, then less often as the pain improves. Home recommendations also may include:
• Using a back support to decrease pressure on the spine
• Avoiding prolonged sitting
• Restricting lifting to no more than 10 pounds
• Avoiding repetitious bending and twisting

As symptoms decrease, more extensive “stabilization” exercises may be needed to help increase the endurance of the spinal muscles.

To find an Aurora chiropractor nearest you, please call the Aurora physician referral line at 414-389-2555 or toll-free 888-863-5502.
More than skin deep

The sun is so tempting to many people, especially in states such as Wisconsin where summer only lasts about three months. There is not much time for people to get out and bronze themselves. Sunbathers are everywhere – stretched out around the community pool, at the beach or in a lounge chair in the backyard. So precious is tanned skin that people see it even before summer comes by using tanning salons. In our society, the impression is that you look better if you are tan.

But tanning can cause problems later in life. The number of skin cancers, especially melanoma (skin cancer), is skyrocketing. Much of this has to do with people wanting to be out in the sun and getting too much sun exposure. People who are especially at risk of getting skin cancer include those who have red hair, blue eyes or freckles, burn very easily or have a family history of skin cancer. In addition, people who have had severe blistering sunburns as a child or teenager have increased risk of developing melanoma.

When you are in your teenage years, you feel immortal and believe nothing bad is ever going to happen to you. But if you get three or more sunburns before you are 18, your risk of getting melanoma is much higher. When you get to be in your 40s and 50s, the damage has already been done. That is why we try to get the message out to young people to cover up and apply sunscreen.

There is also an emphasis row by the American Cancer Society and Skin Cancer Foundation to help prevent skin cancers by reducing the risks.

Here are a few common sense practices that will reduce the risk of developing skin cancer.

- Avoid direct sunlight between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the ultraviolet rays are most intense.
- Wear a brimmed hat wide enough to shade your face, ears and neck.
- Clothing should cover as much of the arms, legs and torso as possible. Fabric with a tight weave generally provides the best sun protection.
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Always follow manufacturers’ directions and reapply every one to two hours. Reapply the sunscreen after you come out of the water, and try to apply it 20 minutes before you are actually out in the sun so it has a chance to set on your skin.
- Avoid tanning beds, sunlamps and other sources of ultraviolet radiation.

By using these suggestions, you may reduce your risk of getting skin cancer.

Early detection of skin cancer is vital. Many skin cancers, if caught at an early stage, are 100% curable. If melanoma is allowed to grow deep into the skin, it can spread to vital organs and become fatal.

Sunnier days are ahead. The forecast “sunny, but maybe not safe” is the theme we should reflect on this summer. Public awareness of the dangers of melanoma and skin cancer is growing, and with diagnosis on the rise, there is an increased demand for the specialized services of dermatologists who have special interest in melanoma and skin cancer.

Mark Knabel, MD, is board certified in dermatology and dermatologic surgery. He received a scholarship to study skin surgery in Munich, Germany, and is active in teaching family medicine residents at Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center about procedural dermatology. By educating the doctors on the frontlines of patient care about skin cancer and what skin cancers look like, we may be able to catch patients at earlier stages.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Knabel, call the Aurora Health Center in Plymouth at 920-907-7000 or Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center at 414-649-6380.
Take better care of your eyesight

According to a recent survey, 82 percent of Americans fear losing their vision more than any other of the five senses. However, misconceptions and misunderstandings about eye-related health are putting many individuals at risk.

The same survey reports that the No. 1 reason individuals do not get a routine eye exam is because they do not have any obvious trouble with their vision. The fact is, a comprehensive eye exam can detect conditions that may threaten your eyesight well before you notice any signs or symptoms.

Eighty percent of vision loss is preventable
Eye examinations are a critical part of a preventive health care routine and are the most important steps to preserving vision. With the aging of the baby boomer generation, there is a growing prevalence of diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and age-related macular degeneration. All of these diseases increase the risk of serious vision loss. Routine, comprehensive eye exams provide early diagnosis and treatment that can help you preserve healthy eyesight.

Other factors that can contribute to vision problems include:
- **Ultra-violet rays** – Wearing sunglasses with UV coating works like sunscreen for your eyes.
- **Smoking** – Another reason to quit smoking: the rate of age-related macular degeneration increases by 11% in smokers.
- **Computer screens** – Computer eyeglasses, proper computer ergonomics and limiting computer use can help reduce eye muscle strain and its affects on healthy vision.

Seeing well into the future
Too often we don't realize the value of what we have until it's taken away. Instead of waiting for a problem to develop, consider a routine eye exam to help prevent vision loss and protect healthy eyesight.

Eighty percent of vision loss is preventable

Aurora has 13 convenient vision center locations providing professional care. Our highly-skilled, certified optometrists examine, diagnose, treat and manage diseases, injuries and disorders that can affect your vision. When needed, they can assist you in selecting the appropriate lenses and frames to meet your individual vision needs, as well as your personal style.

To find an Aurora Vision Center site near you, call 866-986-2777 or visit www.Aurora.org/VisionCenter.

Reflecting on end-of-life issues

Discussing end-of-life issues can be a difficult matter; it stirs emotions and raises profound questions. Talking about the subject before there is a health crisis may make it easier for yourself and your loved ones and can serve as a way to examine life, establish priorities and renew or strengthen relationships.

While it is important to have these discussions, equally significant is the need for an advance directive. Amazingly, only 30 percent of Americans have an advance directive that details their health care plan should they become unable to voice their wishes.

Advanced care planning involves:
- Understanding your choices
- Assessing your choices in reference to your individual values and beliefs
- Discussing your decisions with family, loved ones and health care providers
- Putting your advance directives in writing so that they are clear and available when needed

An advance directive also gives you the opportunity to designate an advocate that could make decisions on your behalf, if needed.

Before opening a discussion with your family and loved ones, you may want to initiate a conversation with your primary care provider. They can answer questions and explain treatments, procedures and options that may help you develop a plan of care.

See Reflecting on page 6
Aurora QuickCare wants you to know the importance of adult immunizations

It is recommended that adults receive immunization against at least 12 to 14 infectious diseases. But for different reasons, many adults do not receive the proper vaccinations and miss out on the health benefits they provide.

All adults need immunizations to prevent serious infectious diseases. In fact, some vaccinations are more important for adults than children. Approximately 50,000 Americans die every year from vaccine-preventable diseases, and 95 percent of these deaths are adults.

While travel does sometimes require special vaccines, the need for comprehensive immunization exists for all adults.

Other concerns that contribute to the lack of properly vaccinated adults are fear of the safety of the vaccine itself, and fear of needles. Aurora QuickCare helps to make patients aware that the risk of serious adverse effects is minimal and that almost all vaccines are made from nonliving viruses or diseases, so transmission of the disease cannot occur. More than 25 percent of adults fear they can get the flu from the flu vaccine and that just isn’t true – the vaccine is composed of dead virus strains.

There have been many steps in the past few years to decrease pain sensation. Some needle manufacturers have developed a special coating around the needle to ease the pain and there are also topical pre-treatments that can be applied to the skin prior to needle insertion that have been shown to reduce needle discomfort.

As a community health care partner, Aurora QuickCare recognizes the importance of immunization. With proper vaccination, patients not only protect themselves, but they also safeguard against spreading disease to others.

Aurora QuickCare provides ongoing education and offers the opportunity for patients to take advantage of quality health care options, including vaccinations. Open days, evenings and weekends at 10 convenient locations, we are a fast, convenient, affordable way to get your immunizations and other common health concerns diagnosed and treated. Call 877-784-2502 or visit www.Aurora.org/QuickCare for locations, hours and more information.

Your one-stop-shop for discounts

With the ease of clicking a mouse, Aurora Freedom+ members can get great discounts from some of the best locally and nationally known companies. For more information or to begin taking advantage of this exclusive member discount program, log on to www.AuroraFreedom.perkspot.com and simply register with your e-mail address and follow the quick instructions to start saving!
MRSA infection: working together to prevent it

What is MRSA and why is it serious?
MRSA is a germ that lives on the skin. Most of the time it does not cause any problems, but sometimes can cause serious infection.

MRSA stands for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. It is a common germ that many of us have. But if it causes infection, it is harder to treat than other germs. If someone who is already sick gets a MRSA infection, he or she can become much sicker.

How does MRSA spread?
The MRSA germ can:
• Pass from hands to other people, surfaces or objects
• Pass from person to person through:
  - Contact with someone who has MRSA
  - Sharing sports equipment
  - Sharing personal hygiene items

Are you at risk for MRSA infection?
Anyone can get a MRSA infection, but people at highest risk are those who:
• Are ill or are recovering from surgery
  • Have the MRSA germ in their body and become ill with something else
  • Are very young or elderly
  • Are in close contact with someone who has a MRSA infection (especially if you have an open wound or cut on the skin)

What are the symptoms of MRSA infection?
Call your doctor if you or a family member have these symptoms — especially if you are at higher risk for, or have already had, a MRSA infection:
• Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
• Skin that is painful, tender and red
• Red bumps on the skin (may look like pimples or spider bites)
• Bumps that are filled with pus

What can you do to help prevent MRSA infection?
• Clean your hands often, using sanitizer gel or soap and water (for 15-20 seconds), especially:
  - After touching a bandage
  - After blowing your nose or covering a cough or sneeze with your hand
  - After using the bathroom
  • Before eating
  • Keep your skin healthy
  • At the gym, wear sports gloves or use a towel between your skin and the equipment
  • Wear long sleeves and long pants during activities that can be rough on your skin
  • Keep cuts or scrapes clean and covered
  • Use lotion to keep your skin from cracking
  • Do not touch other people’s cuts or bandages
  • Do not share items such as towels or razors
  • Take antibiotics only as your doctor prescribes

It’s okay to ask your doctors, nurses or any health care professional if they have cleaned their hands before caring for you. We need to work together to prevent the spread of MRSA.

The information presented is intended for general information and educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care provider. Contact your health care provider if you believe you have a health problem.

Reflecting from page 4
An expression of love and concern
Sharing and discussing end-of-life issues with family and loved ones can be uncomfortable at best. However, it is the best way to help ensure that your wishes are respected.

One way to approach the subject with family and other loved ones is to discuss why you have decided to take control and direct the specific details of events. Developing a plan for end-of-life issues is no different. It is an opportunity for us to reflect on life, as well as address the concerns, values and beliefs most important to us.

For more information, talk to your primary care provider or call 800-862-2201 to find out how the Aurora Visiting Nurse Association can help you.
Omega-3 fatty acid — a favorable fat

Everyone has heard the saying, “You are what you eat,” and it has been proven that the type, quality and amount of food that you eat plays an important role in your overall health. While a general recommendation is to eat a wide variety of foods to help ensure that you get all the necessary nutrients, many health experts and researchers believe that omega-3 fatty acids are the one essential nutrient group most missing in our modern-day diet.

The family of omega-3 fatty acids, also known as polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), includes eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and A-linolenic acid (ALA). They are necessary for human health, but since our bodies do not produce them, you have to get them through food or supplements. EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish, particularly fatty fish such as mackerel, lake trout, herring, sardines, albacore tuna and salmon. ALA can be found in other sources such as krill, flaxseed, walnuts, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, winter squash, kidney and pinto beans.

Balance

Years ago, our ancestors’ diet included a greater amount of fish, nuts, seeds and plants, which provided plenty of omega-3 fats in blood circulation. It is estimated that in western civilization today, people consume roughly 10 times more omega-6 fatty acids than omega-3 fatty acids. Our modern day diet tends to contain more omega-6 fats from vegetable oil found in snack foods, sweets, processed food and fast food. Both omega-3 and omega-6 are essential to good health, but it is an imbalance between the two that researchers believe has contributed to an increase in diseases such as asthma, heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Balancing a diet with the proper omega-6 and omega-3 fat ratio has proven to lower triglycerides and reduce the risk of heart attack, abnormal heart rhythms and strokes in people with known cardiovascular disease. Research also shows that a healthy balance between omega-3 and omega-6 can slow the buildup of plaque in our arteries, prevent deadly clots and lower blood pressure slightly.

Eating foods high in omega-3 fatty acids is an ideal way to reach the appropriate balance, but depending on personal tastes, this may be difficult for many individuals. Taking a supplement is one way to ensure a proper balance of omega fatty acids in your diet. However, supplement brands may be made differently, vary in their ingredients and require different dosing. The pharmacists at Aurora Health Care promote safe and effective use of supplement therapy and, as an accessible and knowledgeable resource, they can work with you and your physician to address your questions and concerns.

If you are considering any dietary supplement, it is important to discuss proper use with your health care provider or pharmacist. For a list of Aurora Pharmacy locations near you, please call 888-973-8999 or visit www.AuroraPharmacy.org.

Volunteers needed

We are currently recruiting volunteers for Aurora St. Luke’s South Shore to help in various area. If you love being with and helping people, please call 414-489-4017 to receive more information or an application form.

To learn more about volunteering at any Aurora Health Care hospital or clinic, please contact your nearest Aurora facility.
Ask a librarian!

Do you have a health-related question? Do you want to learn more? Dig deeper? Cope better? To find the answers, you only need to ask a librarian!

Submit your health information requests online at www.Aurora.org/Services/Library and our professional librarians will send information back to you in 24 to 48 hours. Aurora Libraries offer:

- Free, confidential service
- Professionally trained and experienced librarians
- Information sent to your home or e-mail address

Note: Information provided by Aurora Libraries is not medical advice and may not represent all that is available. Please discuss the information with your health professional. If your question concerns symptoms you are experiencing now, call your primary health care provider or an Aurora community nurse at 414-342-7676.

Looking for health information on the Internet?

Come learn which are the best, most credible websites, and how to determine if your favorite website is reliable. Classes are held at a variety of Aurora Libraries and are taught by professional librarians.

**Tuesday, March 1**
2 to 3 p.m.
Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center
2900 W. Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee

**Wednesday, May 18**
10 to 11 a.m.
Aurora Sinai Medical Center
945 N. 12th Street, Milwaukee

**Tuesday, May 3**
5 to 6 p.m.
Aurora Sinai Medical Center
945 N. 12th Street, Milwaukee

**Wednesday, May 11**
10 to 11 a.m.
Aurora Medical Center
36500 Aurora Drive, Summit

**Wednesday, June 22**
1 to 2 p.m.
Aurora West Allis Medical Center
8901 W. Lincoln Avenue, West Allis

For more information on additional classes or to register, please call 414-649-7356.