

# be well

A DIGNITY HEALTH PUBLICATION | FALL 2023

Mercy Medical Center Redding:  
**Local, Next-Generation  
Neurological Care**

Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta:  
**Imaging Technology  
as a Diagnostic Tool**

St. Elizabeth Community Hospital:  
**Know Where to Go  
for Rapid Care**

## Short on Time, *Not on* **Fitness**



**Dignity Health**<sup>®</sup>

Mercy Medical Center  
Redding

# Leadership Letter

HELPING YOU

## BE WELL



**As we gear up for the holidays**, we want to remind our North State community to prioritize health and safety. Whether traveling or hosting loved ones, we often let wellness take a

backseat this time of year. No matter how busy your schedule gets, keep nutrition, exercise and relaxation top of mind.

In this fall issue of *Be Well*, we offer easy exercise ideas to help you get moving. As for keeping viruses from affecting your holiday plans, we discuss the signs and symptoms of respiratory syncytial virus along with measures to help reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses. We also address factors that increase the risk of RSV infection in adults. The flu shot is also available for everyone ages six months and older to help protect people from flu illness.

We are extremely grateful for our care providers at Dignity Health and their commitment to humankindness. Every day, our dedicated health care workers shape the lives and experiences of patients in equitable and positive ways. We thank you for being stewards of well-being and justice, working toward our vision of a healthier future for all—inspired by faith, driven by innovation and powered by our humanity.

Sincerely,

Jerry Myers, MD  
Chief Medical Officer  
Mercy Medical Center Redding

At Dignity Health, we believe the two pillars of humanity and kindness are the yin and yang of healing: powerful alone, but **better together**.

## North State News

### Mercy Medical Center Redding



When neurological care is needed, Mercy Redding is ready for any patient with a complex condition affecting the brain or spine, including aneurysms, tumors and traumatic brain injuries. Under the guidance of Lars Widdel, MD, our neurosurgery program provides comprehensive services to our region. From awake craniotomies to minimally invasive surgeries, our entire team has advanced training in surgical techniques and provides expert care close to home.

—G. Todd Smith, President, Mercy Medical Center Redding

### Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta



At Mercy Mt. Shasta, we strive to provide our community with the best tools possible. That's why we're proud to offer advanced diagnostic technologies, such as nuclear medicine imaging. This noninvasive approach helps our health care providers diagnose a wide range of conditions, often at an earlier stage than other imaging methods. This also reduces the need for invasive procedures or exploratory surgeries, which means enhanced patient care and improved health outcomes.

### St. Elizabeth Community Hospital

When illness or injury occurs, it can often be confusing knowing where to go for care. In nonemergency situations, an acute care clinic is the best place to go for quick, convenient and affordable health care services. Lassen Medical Clinics in Cottonwood and Red Bluff, and Solano Street Medical Clinic in Corning, offer same-day appointments across multiple specialties. For emergent care, we are here to serve our community with our certified Stroke Center and Level III Trauma Center. Whether it's an emergency or care that needs prompt attention, we are here for our community.

—Rodger Page, President, St. Elizabeth Community Hospital and Mercy Medical Center Mt. Shasta

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## NEXT-LEVEL NEUROSURGERY

*in the* NORTH STATE

AT MERCY REDDING, PATIENTS HAVE ACCESS TO NEXT-GENERATION NEUROSURGERY SERVICES IN A COMPASSIONATE, HOMETOWN ATMOSPHERE.

### Teaming Up to Treat TBIs

Collaboration between neurosurgeons and other specialists is essential, especially when treating traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). Each case is unique and may require a neurosurgeon, trauma surgeon, orthopedic surgeon or other specialists to work together during an operation. For the neurosurgeon, the patient's needs dictate the best form of treatment, which might be removing a blood clot from the brain, taking out part of the skull, or placing a probe to monitor pressure, oxygen and blood flow in the brain.

"One of the most important things we can do for someone with a TBI is prevent additional brain damage," said Lars Widdel, MD, Neurosurgeon at Dignity Health Medical Group — North State. "Much of what we do aims to prevent damage due to excessive swelling or lack of oxygen or blood flow during the days after a TBI occurs."

**Since joining Dignity Health Medical Group — North State** and Mercy Redding in 2021, Neurosurgeon Lars Widdel, MD, has worked to build the Mercy Redding Neurosurgery Program so patients don't have to travel to Chico, Sacramento or the Bay Area to find care for brain and spine conditions. These efforts are paying off, and patients and families are benefiting from the availability of local care.

"The support of friends and family is important to the success of treatment for brain and spine conditions, but this can be challenging if patients or their loved ones have to travel long distances," Dr. Widdel said. "With the advent of telehealth and newer communication tools, we're able to reach patients who live farther away. It's still important, however, to know someone is available locally and can see you in person promptly to help with any issues or concerns that may arise."

### Stimulation to Spare

One of the most complex procedures Dr. Widdel performs is an awake craniotomy. During this surgery to remove cancerous or noncancerous tumors in the brain, the patient is alert while the neurosurgeon determines which areas of the brain are responsible for important skills, allowing him to preserve these skills as much as possible.

"With the patient awake and trained experts present to ensure the patient's comfort during the procedure, we stimulate various areas of the brain and ask the patient to perform tasks, such as identifying images, singing or solving math problems," Dr. Widdel said. "This gives us a lot of information as to how we can remove the tumor with the least impact."

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VISIT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG/OURDOCTORS](https://www.dignityhealth.org/northstate) TO FIND A NEUROSURGEON OR ANOTHER MEDICAL SPECIALIST NEAR YOU.

# The Power of Nuclear Imaging

AT MERCY MT. SHASTA, NUCLEAR IMAGING SERVICES GIVE A REAL-TIME LOOK AT WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOU.



**Nuclear imaging brings** clarity when you need it most, and Mercy Mt. Shasta is the only place in the community that offers this technology.

“Nuclear imaging is an essential exam option,” said David Hinojosa, Imaging Supervisor at Mercy Mt. Shasta. “It provides a variety of specific diagnostic information that other imaging technology doesn’t offer.”

## The Mt. Shasta Difference

While other radiology technology shows how your body looks, Mercy Mt. Shasta’s nuclear imaging technology shows how it functions. This is particularly helpful in diagnosing the following:

- Blood circulation issues
- Hematomas
- Cysts
- Infections
- Dysfunctional organs
- Tumors (benign and cancerous)
- Enlarged organs

Among the safest diagnostic imaging exams available, nuclear imaging procedures depend on a special radioactive material. A radiologist may inject this into your bloodstream, or you may swallow or inhale it.

Once in your body, the material gathers inside the organ or area of interest. A Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT) scanner then visualizes the radioactive material. As the organs move, the SPECT scanner shows the movement, making it easier to diagnose your condition.

## Your Best Imaging Experience

Mercy Mt. Shasta has offered nuclear medicine services since 1995 and is committed to providing safe, best-in-class imaging technology to the community. The hospital’s open SPECT scanner generates high-quality images and improves patient experience and outcomes.

“The scanner’s open design ensures comfort for patients of all sizes and health conditions,” Hinojosa said. “It’s just one more way we’re looking out for the health and well-being of our community.”

**WHEN YOU NEED QUALITY, QUICK IMAGING, ASK YOUR PROVIDER FOR A REFERRAL TO MERCY MT. SHASTA OR CALL 530.926.9359.**

## Mercy Mt. Shasta Wants You!

Since Mercy Mt. Shasta opened in 1976, volunteers have played a vital role in the hospital’s success.

“Our volunteers are ambassadors,” said Joyce Zwanziger, Director of Business Operations at Mercy Mt. Shasta. “They’re often the first people a patient or visitor encounters at the hospital, and their smiling faces set the tone for the visit.”

Volunteers serve inside the Mercy Mt. Shasta Emergency Room and Outpatient Surgery Department. They help at the information desk and gift shop and provide clerical support, giving a minimum of 50 hours annually.

“Our volunteers have a heart and desire to give back to their community,” said Kerri Gilliam, Project Assistant, Volunteer and Mission Services. “If that’s you, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss how you could be part of Mercy Mt. Shasta’s legacy of healing.”

Call **530.926.7147** or email [kerri.gilliam@commonspirit.org](mailto:kerri.gilliam@commonspirit.org) to take the first step toward volunteering.



ACUTE CARE CLINICS  
PROVIDE SAME-DAY  
CARE WHEN YOU NEED  
A DOCTOR BUT NOT THE  
EMERGENCY ROOM.

## Care When You **Need It**

**When your child** wakes up with a cough, or you accidentally cut your finger instead of an apple, an acute care clinic is the place to go.

“Acute care clinics are available for patients who may not be seriously ill or injured but feel they should be seen today, possibly for a COVID-19 test or to get stitches, for example,” said David Dahnke, MD, at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital. “This also allows the emergency rooms to be used more appropriately.”

### **Convenient Care for Rural Communities**

Dignity Health in the North State offers convenient same-day appointments at locations throughout Tehama County:

- Lassen Medical Clinic–Cottonwood
- Lassen Medical Clinic–Red Bluff
- Solano Street Medical Clinic

“We have a big responsibility in the communities we serve from South County to North County and in between,” said Randy Pennebaker, Vice President of Operations at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital.

“We work hard to provide health care services without the need to travel long distances to receive them.”

All of Dignity Health’s acute care clinics in the North State offer:

- Adult care
- Pediatric care
- Lab services, including COVID-19 testing

Lassen Medical Clinic–Red Bluff also provides mammograms, electrocardiograms and X-rays.

### **Making the Right Choice**

In an emergency, always call 911 or go to the emergency room. For nonemergency health services, acute care clinics may be a better choice, offering high-quality care often with shorter wait times and considerably lower costs than emergency rooms.

“Acute care clinics provide the care patients need when they can’t get in to see their primary care provider,” said Jeannette Lefdal, Director of Rural Health Clinics at St. Elizabeth Community Hospital and Mercy Mt. Shasta. “At an acute care clinic, they’ll be seen in a timely manner and be able to get back to their responsibilities and lives.”

VISIT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG/ACUTECARE](https://www.dignityhealth.org/acutecare) TO LEARN MORE ABOUT DIGNITY HEALTH’S ACUTE CARE CLINICS IN THE NORTH STATE.

### **Know Where to Go**

Acute care clinics can help with the following:

- + Cough
- + Diarrhea
- + Dizziness
- + Ear pain
- + Low-grade fever
- + Mild asthma-related issues
- + Minor burns, cuts and injuries, including closed fractures
- + Muscle sprains and strains
- + Nausea and vomiting
- + Painful urination
- + Rashes
- + Sore throat

Go to the emergency room or call 911 for:

- + Chest pain or pressure
- + Coughing up or vomiting blood
- + Difficulty breathing, speaking or walking
- + Dizziness or other stroke symptoms
- + Fainting or loss of consciousness
- + Head injuries
- + Seizures
- + Serious burns and other injuries, including open fractures
- + Severe or uncontrolled bleeding
- + Sudden changes in vision
- + Thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else
- + Unusual behavior or confusion

MICRO WORKOUTS,

# MAJOR BENEFITS

TIME-CRUNCHED?  
GOOD NEWS—  
YOUR HEALTH CAN  
BENEFIT FROM  
JUST 11 MINUTES OF  
EXERCISE A DAY.

## Get Moving

You can change your life and improve your overall health in enormous ways by simply taking that first step. With daily exercise, you can:

- + Alleviate feelings of depression or anxiety
- + Build lean muscle
- + Get better sleep
- + Improve thinking, comprehension and judgment
- + Lose weight more easily
- + Reduce your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers, including bladder, stomach, kidney and colon cancers

**Between family time,** work and maintaining an active social life, you might find it difficult to fit exercise into your packed schedule. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that you exercise for at least 30 minutes, five days a week, or 150 minutes a week. Fortunately, a new study published in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine* suggests that you can lower your risk of cancer and other chronic diseases by getting in just 11 minutes of moderate exercise a day, cutting your workout time in half. The health benefits are even greater with 30 minutes of daily exercise.

## Think Outside the Gym

Having a gym membership, taking an exercise class, getting on the elliptical machine, swimming laps or working out with a trainer are good ways to get your heart pumping. If a gym is not for you, choose activities that fit your life, such as:

- Biking to work and other locations
- Walking with your friends or co-workers during your lunch break
- Jogging in place or doing jumping jacks while you watch television
- Parking farther away from your destination to get extra steps in
- Taking brisk walks around your neighborhood or local park
- Washing your car, raking leaves or performing other moderate-intensity chores

## Make Exercise a Habit

Gradually increase the time you spend working out each day until you can exercise for 20 or 30 minutes regularly. Remember, you don't need to meet your goal all at once—exercising for 10 minutes two or three times a day counts, too.

Choosing a goal, such as running a 5K, can give your workouts added purpose. Teaming up with a friend, your spouse or kids helps make exercise something to look forward to and a part of your healthy life.

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FIND A DOCTOR WHO CAN HELP GUIDE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHANGE AT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG/OURDOCTORS](https://dignityhealth.org/ourdoctors).



# Are You Ready for RSV Season?

KNOW THE SIGNS AND WHEN TO GET MEDICAL CARE.

**If you've got a young child**, chances are they'll get respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) before they turn 2 years old. For most kids, RSV is no worse than a cold—you might not even know the difference. But for some children, RSV can be severe.

## Signs of RSV

Symptoms of RSV often look like a common cold, including:

- Cough
- Fever over 100.4 F
- Fussiness
- Lack of appetite
- Runny nose
- Sneezing

If RSV is causing a lower respiratory tract infection, your child may be more seriously ill. Symptoms include:

- Bobbing head or flaring nostrils while breathing
- Fast breathing or grunting while breathing
- Wheezing

If your child's rib cage looks like it's caving in while breathing, this is a sign of a lower respiratory tract infection. You should call your pediatrician immediately with any of these signs, or if your child:

- Appears dehydrated
- Can't breathe
- Has gray or blue lips or tongue

Also call your pediatrician if symptoms last several days or if your child's fever is above 104 F.

## RSV Affects Adults, Too

Older adults can experience severe RSV infections just like infants. People especially at risk are those who:

- Are over 60 years old
- Have heart disease or lung disease
- Have weakened immune systems from other conditions or their treatments, such as cancer
- Live in assisted living or nursing homes

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NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RSV? MAKE AN APPOINTMENT AT [DIGNITYHEALTH.ORG/NORTH-STATE](https://www.dignityhealth.org/north-state).

## How Can You Prevent RSV?

Protect yourself and others by taking everyday measures to help reduce the spread of RSV and other respiratory illnesses. Follow these tips:


- + Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.
- + Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth.
- + Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- + Disinfect hard surfaces that are touched often and by multiple people, such as doorknobs, counters and toys.
- + Limit time spent in enclosed and crowded spaces, such as grocery stores and shopping centers.
- + Stay home if you or your child is sick.



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# Simply the most advanced care in the region.

When you or a loved one faces a serious health condition, access to advanced treatment can make all the difference. So it's reassuring to know that the most advanced care in our region is provided at Dignity Health – Mercy Medical Center Redding, offering clinical distinctions that include:

- The most advanced cardiac care with Stanford Medicine cardiac surgeons who treat patients locally
- Shasta County's only obstetrics services and neonatal intensive care unit
- Comprehensive cancer care with a nurse navigator who guides patients every step of the way
- Nationally recognized orthopedic and spine surgery program
- Certification by the Joint Commission as a Primary Stroke Center
- Highest level of trauma care from Glenn County north to the Oregon border

At Mercy Medical Center Redding, we're proud to have served as the region's leader in care for generations. Learn more about what sets us apart at [DignityHealth.org/MercyRedding](http://DignityHealth.org/MercyRedding).

**Hello humankindness®**

