
CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTHY OUTCOMES

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What You Need to Know About Heart Disease

From Health, Ink & Vitality Communications

Heart disease is often caused by atherosclerosis, or thickening and hardening of the arteries. If an artery narrows too much, blood carrying oxygen and nutrition to the heart muscle is decreased or blocked. When there is not enough blood flowing to the heart, you can feel chest pain. A heart attack may occur if an artery closes all the way or narrows so much that a blood clot blocks the blood flow.

Some risk factors for heart disease, such as advancing age, gender and heredity, can't be controlled. But, says the American Heart Association (AHA), you can control other factors, including:

High cholesterol. Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in the body's cells. Two ways to lower your cholesterol are to exercise regularly and eat a diet low in saturated fat

High blood pressure. Your heart must work harder when your blood pressure is high. When this occurs for an extended time, the heart may enlarge and arteries may become scarred and hardened. You can treat it with changes in your diet and lifestyle. Drug therapy is also available.

Cigarette smoking. Smoking often promotes heart disease by quickening the development of atherosclerosis, reducing your HDL ("good") cholesterol and raising your blood pressure.

Physical inactivity. Lack of exercise is usually a major risk factor for heart disease because inactivity can contribute to higher cholesterol and obesity.

Obesity. Your risk for heart disease may increase if you're more than 30 percent overweight. Obesity can raise cholesterol and can lead to diabetes, another risk factor for heart disease.

Alcohol. Having one or two alcoholic beverages daily may reduce your risk for heart disease. Drinking more than this can raise blood pressure and triglyceride levels.

Preventing heart disease

you can reduce your risk for heart disease and a heart attack by seeing your doctor for regular checkups to evaluate your risk factors. If you have risk factors, you and your doctor can work together to control them.

The AHA recommends regular screening for your risk of heart disease beginning at age 20. Screening usually includes measuring blood pressure, body mass index, waist circumference and pulse every two years, and getting a cholesterol profile and glucose testing every five years.

Your doctor may want you to have more frequent screenings or visits if you have a family history of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about your screening schedule.

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The information offered in this newsletter is to increase your awareness of health related conditions and situations and not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. If you believe you or someone you support has a condition, please seek the advice of a physician.

TIPS FOR CONTROLLING ALLERGENS

From The Staywell Company

Constant exposure to allergens means constant allergy symptoms. That's why controlling or avoiding the allergens that cause your symptoms is an important part of your treatment. The tips below may help. Don't try to follow all the suggestions at once—start by choosing one or two tips for each allergen you're sensitive to. Then, try a few more. The more you do to keep all allergens away from your nose, the better you'll feel.

Pollen is in the air whenever trees, grasses, or weeds are blooming, so it's hard to avoid. But there are some things you can do to limit your exposure to pollen:

- Check pollen counts and avoid spending a lot of time outdoors when counts are high. Pollen counts tend to be higher during warm, dry weather. They also tend to be higher during early morning and late afternoon hours. In some areas, daily pollen counts are reported in the paper and on the radio.
- Keep windows closed when pollen counts are high and use air conditioning.
- After spending time outdoors, change your clothes, and wash your hair before bed.
- Stay indoors on windy days.
- During the height of the allergy season, try getting away to a place where your allergies won't bother you as much. Your doctor may have suggestions.

If you're allergic to **mold**, pay special attention to areas where water tends to collect. Here are some tips for avoiding mold:

- Drain wet areas of your yard, and clean up leaves and weeds before they begin to rot. Keep compost piles away from the house.
- Clean the bathroom shower or tub regularly with bleach, and check the shower curtain for mold growth.
- Get leaky faucets or leaks in the roof fixed right away.
- While bathing or showering, leave a window open or run a fan so moisture can escape.
- If your house is damp, use a dehumidifier.
- Remove plants from your house and keep damp areas clean and free of mold.

House-dust mites are almost impossible to get rid of. But you can keep them under control. Try some of these tips:

- Enclose your mattress, box spring, and pillows in allergy-proof casings.
- Wash sheets, blankets, and mattress pads every 1 to 2 weeks in hot water (at least 130°F).
- Remove stuffed animals and things that collect dust, such as wall hangings, knickknacks, and books—especially in the bedroom.
- Have as little carpeting as possible.
- Each week, have your home dusted with a damp cloth and vacuumed. Use HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters or double-ply bags in the vacuum cleaner.
- If someone else can't dust and vacuum for you, take your medication before doing these tasks. Wearing a filter mask may help.
- Wash bedding in hot water (at least 130°F) to kill house-dust mites. Warm or cold water won't kill them.

The dander, saliva, and urine of **animals** are all allergens. Cats produce more of these allergens than most other pets. Animal fur may also contain dust, mold, and pollen. The best way to avoid animal allergens is not to have a pet. If you already have a pet and can't bear to part with it, try to reduce your exposure as much as possible. These tips may help:

- Whenever possible, keep pets outdoors. Never let pets into your bedroom.
- Use an air-cleaning unit with a HEPA filter—especially in the bedroom.
- Wash your hands after you touch a pet, and try to keep pets away from your face.
- Bathing pets weekly may cut down on the allergens they make and wash saliva, dust, mold, and pollen off their fur.
- Fish are a good option for people who are allergic to other animals.

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Controlling Allergens Where You Live is most important in your home, especially in your bedroom. Even a clean home can be full of allergens, so take a moment to see what you can do to cut down on allergens in each room of your home. Don't forget your car and your work area, too. And try to avoid things like cigarette smoke and perfume that can irritate your nose and make your allergies worse.



Buy an air purifier with a HEPA filter. Look in consumer magazines for recommendations. Avoid vaporizers and humidifiers, since they encourage mold and dust-mite growth.

Use shades or vertical blinds instead of horizontal blinds, which collect dust. Replace drapes with curtains that can be washed regularly.

Enclose mattresses, box springs, and pillows in allergy-proof casings. Use washable blankets and quilts. Avoid feather pillows, down comforters, and wool blankets.

Install a fan to keep the bathroom well ventilated.



Don't let wet clothing sit and grow mold. And don't hang clothes outside to dry where they can collect airborne pollen. Dry clothing immediately in a clothes dryer that's vented to the outside.

Check stored food for spoilage and mold growth. Clean up spills right away.

Avoid dust-catching clutter. Have enclosed places to keep books, toys, and clothes. Keep closet doors closed.



Use washable throw rugs wherever possible, or have bare floors.

Put filters over forced-air heating vents. Change the filters regularly.

Keep your car clean. Vacuum the seats and carpets regularly. If you have air conditioning, use it instead of opening the windows.

Keep rain gutters clean. Remove leaves and debris that can grow mold.

Avoid yard work that increases your exposure to pollen, like mowing and weed-pulling. If that's not possible, wear a filter mask. When you're done, change your clothes and wash your hair.



NURSES TRAINING DAY

November 12, 2009 9am – 3pm

Training Center – Selinsgrove Center

Featuring Jim Siberski, M.A.

“ID/Death, Dying and Grief”

To register call (570) 271-7240 or fax (570) 271-7241

Can easy-does-it exercise prevent weight gain?

From Harvard Health Newsletter

The federal government's new physical activity guidelines aren't harsh taskmasters. They come across as reasonable, flexible — downright accommodating, in fact. They recommend that adult Americans get two and half hours of moderate-intensity exercise (150 minutes) a week. Half an hour, five days a week — that's not asking too much. And you may not even need to set aside a half-hour. The guidelines say you can give yourself exercise credits for the small, 10-minute bouts of activity that may occur throughout the day. And "moderate-intensity"? Well, it's pretty mild stuff: walking at a pace of 3 miles per hour, biking at a speed of less than 10 miles per hour, playing doubles tennis, ballroom dancing, "gentle" gardening.

If time is short, that's okay. The guidelines say you can meet your activity quota for the week with just 75 minutes of exercise so long as it's vigorous, which includes jogging, swimming laps, an aerobic gym workout, or "heavy-duty" gardening (the hoeing and digging variety).

The reward for sticking to these guidelines is improved odds in the health-and-illness lottery. A slew of research has shown that getting exercise in the guideline-recommended amounts will reduce your chances (note the absence of a guarantee) of dying prematurely, having a heart attack or stroke, getting type 2 diabetes, or becoming seriously depressed.

The millions fighting the battle of the bulge may notice, though, that weight control is conspicuously absent from the benefits list. That's not just an oversight. There's not much question that if you exercise regularly, it helps counter heftiness.

But, as the guideline writers noted, it's unclear just how much exercise is needed to stay trim and keep weight off.

Much of the existing evidence, they said, suggests that it might take quite a lot — perhaps as much as five hours a week or more of moderate-intensity exercise.



It seems that our diets, and the unprecedented food supply that's available to most of us in the developed "rich" world, are just too loaded with calories for the energy input to be offset by the output of a walk in the park, light tennis, or some time working in the garden.

So much for the easy-does-it message of the activity guidelines!

But don't get too discouraged. Research showed that moderate-intensity exercise — and walking, in particular — was associated with less weight gain. Not zero, but less.

The Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults (CARDIA) study is an NIH-funded study that enrolled about 5,000 young men and women (ages 18 to 30) from four cities around the country and followed them for about 15 years. Results reported in the January 2009 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that CARDIA participants who reported walking regularly gained less weight during the study period than the non-walkers, even after taking into account other sorts of exercise, diet, and several other factors.

The women who were heaviest at the beginning of the study benefited the most: those who walked four or more hours per week had gained, on average, about 18 fewer pounds — that's about a pound per year — than their nonwalking counterparts.

