
CENTRAL PA HEALTH CARE QUALITY UNIT NEWSLETTER FOR HEALTHY OUTCOMES

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Aches in Your Legs

Source: NIH News in Health

If you are past age 50, you may have resigned yourself to feeling a few more aches these days. However, if you have had pain or cramping in our legs when you are walking that goes away when you stop, don't shrug it off. It might be an early warning signal of a serious and sometimes-silent disorder called peripheral artery disease (PAD).

Just like arteries in the heart, those in the lower legs can become clogged with fatty deposits. Imagine your arteries are a complex highway system. Fatty deposits, also known as plaque, are the traffic jams that limit blood flow. Clogged arteries – blood flow traffic jams – anywhere in the body increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

Between 8 million and 12 million people over age 50 have PAD. Many never notice any symptoms. PAD symptoms include heaviness in your legs, awakening at night with pain in your lower legs, and pain or cramping in the legs when you are walking that seems to lessen with rest. A lot of people who have these symptoms don't tell their doctors. They simply accept the discomfort as part of growing older. Another sign of PAD that people may notice but dismiss is a change in the color of their feet.

Whether painful or silent, undiagnosed PAD is too dangerous to ignore. That is why NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) recently started a campaign, joining with 40 other organizers, to tell more people about the importance of recognizing the signs and alerting their doctor if they notice the symptoms in themselves.

Those most at risk for PAD are people over age 50, especially African Americans. Smokers and former smokers, and people who have diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure are also at risk. Those who have had a vascular disease, heart attack, or stroke, or have a family history of those disorders should also be on the look out for PAD.

If you are over 50 or otherwise at risk, ask a doctor about being tested for PAD. A simple test called the ankle brachial index (ABI) can identify the problem. The ABI compares the blood pressure in your arm with the blood pressure in your legs. Reduced blood flow in the legs could signal artery disease.

Once PAD is detected, your doctor will offer several treatments to help clear out the blockages before they lead to more serious problems. Your doctor may tell you to get more exercise, if you don't have an active lifestyle. Recent results from a study of people with PAD showed that daily physical activity improves survival rates. Your doctor may also recommend changes to your diet and other efforts to lower high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Medications and surgery are also treatment options that can improve blood flow in the vessels.

What is most important is to take those aches seriously and seek help from your doctor.



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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.

NOROVIRUS

From ODP, Office of the Medical Director, January 28, 2009

The Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) issued a health advisory about a higher than normal number of people getting sick with Norovirus this winter. People with Norovirus illnesses have been identified both in the community and in hospitals and nursing homes. Below is some information about Norovirus that can be used to prevent the disease.

What is Norovirus?

Norovirus is a stomach or GI virus that causes upset stomach, vomiting, and diarrhea. Vomiting seems to be more common in people with Norovirus than other GI viruses. People with Norovirus infections can also have muscle aches and fever. Usually the illness is mild, with GI symptoms lasting only a few days, but tiredness that may last a few more days.

Why is Norovirus a problem?

Norovirus is easily spread and people do not develop immunity to it so they can get it again and again. For people with other health problems, vomiting and diarrhea could lead to dehydration and need for treatment in the ER or hospital. Therefore, people that have vomiting and diarrhea should be watched to make sure that they are able to get enough fluids and are not getting dehydrated. Also, Norovirus lasts on surfaces for as long as a month and it is not killed by many of the common disinfectants that are used. This leads to prolonged exposure and more likelihood of getting infected.

How is Norovirus spread?

Norovirus is shed in stool and vomitus. It can be spread by food, water, or contact with hands or surfaces that have come in contact with infected substances. People that have Norovirus infection can shed the virus in their stool for a week.

How can you prevent Norovirus?

- Frequent hand washing with soap and water.
- Clean surfaces that have had vomitus or diarrhea promptly. Consider wearing gloves to clean.
 - Use a disinfectant approved for Norovirus by the Environmental Protection Agency or prepare a sodium hypochlorate solution by adding ½ cup (or more) of bleach to a gallon of water.
 - Steam clean carpet
 - Flush vomitus down the toilet and clean the toilet surface after
 - Increase frequency of cleaning floors, bathrooms, toilets, doorknobs, and other surfaces that people touch regularly
 - Wash sheets or clothing that have been soiled in hot water on the longest cycle and machine dry
- Exclude infected individuals from cooking or handling food
- Limit contact between infected and non-infected individuals as much as possible

What should you do if you think that people you know might have Norovirus?

- Contact your local health department communicable diseases division if there are a number of people that have the same symptoms
- Educate staff, visitors, and individuals receiving services about how to prevent Norovirus spread
- Implement the prevention strategies listed above

Where can you get more information about Norovirus?

- Los Angeles Guidelines:
www.lapublichealth.org/acd/docs/Norovirus/NorovirusControlMeasures_12_1_06.pdf
- U.S. National Park Service Protocol
www.nps.gov/public_health/inter/info/factsheets/fs_noro_r&c.htm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fact Sheet
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/gastro/norovirus-factsheet.htm
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention related to health care
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/gastro/norovirus.htm

PA Department of Health
1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)

KEEP IT OFF!

Source: Jennifer Sawyer RD, APS Newsletter, Vol 2, Issue 2

It is cold outside and dark when you get home from work so you put on some loose fitting clothes and get comfortable. The next thing you know, it is spring and those shorts from last year won't button. The following tips on weight control will help you **"keep it off"** this winter season.

Know your limit. Listen to our body's cues; eat when you are hungry and stop eating when full. Wear clothing without expandable waistbands to help remind you when to stop eating.

Enjoy your favorite foods in smaller quantities. Simply eating smaller portions can provide large calorie savings.

Eat a low-fat snack like a salad or a small bowl of cereal before going to parties. This will help curb your appetite and help you eat less calories overall.

Participate in physical activities. Burning calories is an ideal way to keep from gaining weight. Make it fun – go ice skating, cross country skiing or even have a snowball fight!

Imbibe (drink) in moderation. If you choose to drink, keep in mind that your beverage contains calories and possibly fat. One cup of eggnog contains 342 calories and 19 grams of fat.

Try new, lower fat recipes. The cold weather popularizes "comfort foods" like macaroni and cheese. Look for modified versions that provide less calories and fat. You could makeover a recipe yourself by using lower fat cheeses, milk, meats and cream soups.

Offer leftovers to your guests. If you are hosting a holiday celebration, send your guests home with some of the goodies. It is easier to avoid eating too much if it isn't right in front of you.

Find the nutrition information on the foods you eat. Many restaurant chains have nutrition information available on their websites. You might be surprised to find out how many calories and grams of fat are in the foods you eat.

Fill up on fiber. Studies have shown that those who eat more fiber were less likely to gain weight. The daily fiber recommendation is 20-35 grams for adults. To meet the recommendation choose more whole-grain breads and cereals and eat more fruits and vegetables every day. One half cup of black beans contains over seven grams of dietary fiber and one navel orange contains three grams of dietary fiber.

Quick Lemon Custard with Blueberry Topping - Serving size 4 ½ cup servings

- 1 box (4 serving size) sugar free instant lemon pudding
- 1 ½ cups cold skim or low fat milk
- 1 cup lemon yogurt (light or low fat)
- Fresh blueberries



Directions: Pour milk into a chilled bowl. Sprinkle with pudding mix and beat with a hand mixer on medium/low speed for 2 minutes until well blended. Scrape the sides of the bowl to incorporate all of the pudding mix. Add yogurt and mix briefly. Spoon into dessert dishes and chill. Before serving –sprinkle with blueberries.

Nutrition information per serving: 138 calories, 6 gm protein, 25 g CHO, 1 gm fat, 2 gm fiber, 378 mg sodium

WINTER HOME SAFETY TIPS

Source: Home Safety Council

The winter months are here, bringing challenges both indoors and out. Here are some safety suggestions to follow.

Fire safety is always important. The winter months are the leading months for house fires in the United States. Make sure smoke detectors are in working order and replace the batteries **at least** once a year. It is recommended that at least one smoke alarm be installed on every level of your home and inside or near sleeping areas. Have the home heating system checked by a professional annually. If space heaters or portable heaters are used, keep anything that can burn (including people and pets) at least three feet away. Space heaters should bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory, such as UL, ETL, CSA, etc. Turn off space heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep. Never use space heaters to dry clothing or blankets. If a fireplace or wood stove is used, burn only seasoned hardwood – not trash, cardboard boxes or Christmas trees because these items burn unevenly, may contain toxins, and increase the risk of uncontrolled fires. Open flues before fireplaces are used and have a professional chimney sweep inspect chimneys annually for cracks, blockages, and leaks and have them cleaned and repaired as needed. Use sturdy screens or doors to keep embers inside fireplaces. Keep people and pets away from working wood stoves.



Cooking is the leading cause of house fires. Make sure that pot handles are turned in, away from the front of the stove. Do not place a small pan on a large burner or a large pan on a small burner. Keep pot holders nearby. Do not use a towel to remove a hot pan from the stove or oven. Make sure that clothing does not dangle near the burners when cooking. Unplug appliances when not in use. Keep a pot lid handy to use to smother any flames. Never put water on a grease fire.

Other safety tips include not overloading electrical outlets with extension cords. If possible, turn off the power bar when leaving the house for any period of time. Never leave a burning candle unattended.

Carbon monoxide is commonly known as the “silent killer” because it is odorless, colorless and tasteless. It claims the lives of nearly 300 people in their homes each year. It is produced by fuel-burning equipment, such as furnaces, wood stoves, fireplaces, and kerosene heaters. For safety, it is recommended that at least one CO alarm be installed near sleeping areas. Never use an oven or a range to heat your home. Never use a gas or charcoal grill inside your home or in closed garage. Never use portable electric generators indoors, in a garage or confined area that can allow CO to collect.

Additional winter weather safety suggestions include keeping the walkways around the house clear of snow and ice. While doing so, take frequent breaks, use good body mechanics and dress warmly and in layers making sure that all skin surfaces are covered. Wear boots that are non-skid to avoid falling.

All homes should be prepared for winter storms that prevent individuals from leaving the house. Stock up on supplies such as flashlights and batteries, battery operated radios, non perishable foods that do not require refrigeration, non-electric can opener, bottled water and extra blankets. Use flashlights instead of candles to avoid a possible fire hazard.



Please check out our **WEB BASED COURSES** at www.geisinger.org/hcqu If you have any questions, suggestions or problems, you can call Kristy Campbell at (570) 214-4753 or e-mail her at kacampbell@geisinger.edu Check out our new course on Hypothermia .