

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



FEBRUARY 2013

A Healthy Heart

To pump blood effectively through the body, a healthy, normal heart beats between 60 and 80 times per minute.

Imagine the normal heart as the body's engine; it needs enough oil, gas, and transmission fluid to run properly. Without these fluids, the engine will not function properly, either stalling or shutting down completely. Proper maintenance keeps your engine running smoothly, just as taking care of yourself keeps your normal heart healthy. Sometimes, despite proper maintenance, problems still develop.

Change What You Can For a Healthy Heart

The best way to have a healthy heart is to reduce the risk factors that are controllable. Encourage a diet, exercise, and weight-loss program that works for the person. Make sure to check with your doctor before starting an exercise program because they might want to limit what the person in your care can do.

It is important that the person in your care take as much responsibility as possible for making and

maintaining these changes. An individual is more likely to change their lifestyle and stick with the changes if they are a partner in the process. Sometimes, people resist change if they feel they are being forced and were not a part of the decision.

Medication

Be sure to fill the prescription on time (to avoid running out) and be diligent that the person in your care takes medication exactly as directed. More than half of all prescriptions are taken incorrectly or not at all. No drug can work as expected if it's not taken as directed.

Blood Pressure

You or the care receiver may need to monitor their blood pressure on a daily basis if ordered by the doctor.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a major factor in coronary artery disease. It is important to have it checked both in yourself and in the person you are caring for. High cholesterol numbers may be reduced through appropriate diet, regular exercise, and weight loss. If that doesn't work, check with the doctor about



cholesterol-lowering drugs.

Salt (Sodium) Consumption

When an individual consumes too much sodium, extra fluid builds up in the body, which causes the heart to work harder. The typical American diet is very high in sodium. Even if no salt is added during cooking, most people still consume too much sodium because most processed foods, such as frozen dinners, boxed noodles, and canned soups and vegetables, are high in sodium. It is very important to check labels when grocery shopping to avoid foods high in sodium.

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A Healthy Heart *(continued from Page 1)*

Diabetes

People with diabetes are more than twice as likely to develop heart failure as people without diabetes. Make sure that you and the person in your care are tested for diabetes. Alter your lifestyle as needed.

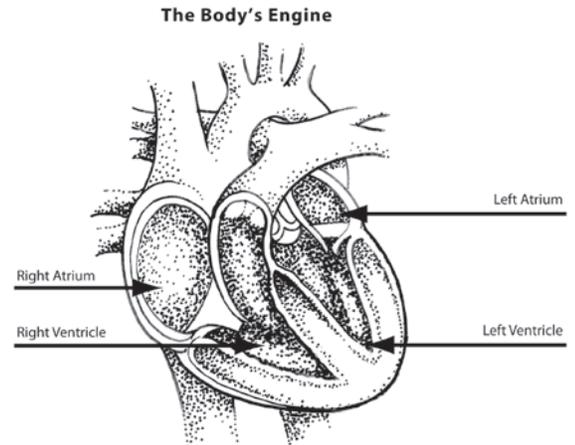
Depression

People with heart disease and their caregivers have depression at much higher rates than the general public. Both the caregiver and the person in their care need to be aware of mood changes in themselves and each other. It is important to make efforts to prevent depression and treat it if and when it develops. One important reason

to treat depression is that it is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. This affects both you and the person in your care. Depression is a real disease, not a character flaw.

Smoking and Alcohol Abuse

Cigarette smoking is a major, preventable risk factor for heart disease. The nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke reduce the oxygen in a person's blood, so smoking robs the heart of oxygen. Second-hand smoke is just as dangerous as first-hand smoke; therefore, if you



or the person in your care smoke, get help to quit now! Alcohol can also damage the cells of the heart and make it harder for the heart to pump. It is advised that people with heart failure quit drinking alcohol.

Healthy Heart Tid-Bits

When It Is Snack Time:

- Instead of fried tortilla chips, try the baked tortilla chips (reduced sodium version).
- Instead of regular potato or corn chips, try pretzels or low-fat potato chips (reduced sodium version).
- Rather than high-fat cookies and crackers, look to fat-free or low-fat cookies and crackers (such as graham crackers, rice cakes, fig and other fruit bars, ginger snaps and molasses cookies).
- Rather than regular baked goods, try cookies, cakes and pies made with unsaturated oil or soft margarines, egg whites or egg substitutes, and fat-free milk.
- Instead of devil's food cake, try angel food cake.
- Replace ice cream bars with frozen fruit bars.
- Rather than pudding made with whole milk, have pudding made with fat-free or low-fat milk.
- Instead of ice cream, have sherbet, ice milk or frozen, fat-free or low-fat yogurt.
- In the morning, have a bagel or toast instead of a doughnut.

When Eating Out:

- Instead of cream-based soups, try broth-based soups with lots of vegetables.
- Rather than chicken wings, have peel-and-eat shrimp.
- Instead of bread, muffins and croissants, have melba toast, pita bread or whole-grain rolls.
- Have grilled chicken instead of fried chicken.
- Instead of French fries, have a baked potato, brown rice or steamed vegetables.
- Skip the gravy on your potatoes and go for the baked version. If you must have sour cream or margarine, ask for low-fat or fat-free versions on the side.
- Instead of creamy coleslaw, have sautéed or steamed vegetables and a tossed salad.
- Instead of ice cream or a hot fudge sundae for dessert, have non-fat yogurt, sherbet or fruit ice.



"A loving heart is the beginning of all knowledge." - Thomas Carlyle

Taking Care of Yourself - Valentines

New research found that men who eat a moderate amount of chocolate each week may be less likely to have a stroke compared to men who don't eat any chocolate.

Most studies suggest that health benefits come mainly from dark chocolate, but the new research seems to extend these perks to milk chocolate. The study took place in Sweden, where about 90 percent of the chocolate is milk chocolate

Chocolate contains heart-healthy antioxidants called flavonoids, which may be responsible for some of its health benefits. Other studies have shown that eating a moderate amount of dark chocolate may protect against heart disease and also help with memory.



Source: WebMD; Neurology

♥ **Don't Fall - Be Safe!** - Place a seat at the entrance of your home to remove or put on your shoes and boots.

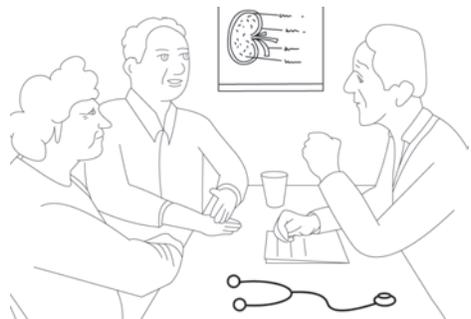
♥ **Snow Shoveling Danger** - Snow shoveling places heavy demands on the cardiovascular system and can raise heart rates to dangerous levels after only two minutes. Freezing temperatures that constrict blood vessels place more stress on the heart.

Source: American Journal of Emergency Medicine

♥ **Guard Your Heart** - Women who walk at a brisk pace for a least two hours a week reduce their risk for heart attacks and other coronary events by 35 percent compared to women who walk infrequently.

Source: Strong Women, Strong Hearts; Miriam E. Nelson

Live Life Laughing



"People are living longer. This is nature's way of helping you pay off your mortgage."

Uncontrollable Risk Factors for Heart Failure

♥ **Increasing Age** - People 65 years of age and older have the highest rate of heart failure, and the risk of heart failure increases with age.

♥ **Gender** - More men than women are affected by heart failure; however, in terms of actual numbers, more women have heart failure because many more women live into their seventies and eighties when heart failure is more common.

♥ **Heredity** - Blood relatives of people who have cardiomyopathy (disease that weakens and enlarges the heart muscle) are at increased risk for heart failure.

♥ **Race** - African Americans are two to three times as likely as Caucasians to have heart failure. This may be due to the fact that African Americans have higher rates of high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity. Increased rates of poverty and poor access to healthcare may also contribute.

Source: The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.

Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the

Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Medication Safety Tips

COUMADIN® (warfarin sodium)

Anticoagulants, also known as blood thinners, are prescribed to help prevent blood clots. But, they can cause bleeding which can be serious and sometimes lead to death.

- Carry a card that indicates you are taking COUMADIN.
- Tell your healthcare provider about all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements you take. Some of your medicines may affect the way COUMADIN works, affect the dose of COUMADIN you need, or increase COUMADIN side effects.
- Call your healthcare provider right away if you take too much COUMADIN, are sick with diarrhea, have an infection or fever, or fall or injure yourself, especially if you hit your head.
- Be sure to get refills on medications before they run out.
- Do not skip doses, but if a dose is missed, do not double up on it the next time it is due.
- Dark greens, such as broccoli and spinach, have high vitamin K count which can interfere with the benefit of anti-coagulants. Check with your doctor on the safe amount to eat.



Source: *The Comfort of Home for Chronic Heart Failure*; www.coumadin.com