

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.  
F32 - URG, P.O. Box 500  
Rio Grande, Ohio 45674-0500

Phone: 1-800-582-7277  
TTY: 1-888-270-1550  
www.aaa7.org



Assistance. Advocacy. Answers on Aging.

## Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

Pamela K. Matura, Executive Director

February 2010

1-800-582-7277  
TTY 1-888-270-1550  
www.aaa7.org

### CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE NEWS

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Our Biggest Killer – Heart Disease

### Lifestyle Matters

Heart failure can happen to anyone, but it is more common in people over 65 years of age, among men and in African Americans. There are many traits and lifestyle habits (risk factors) that increase the chance of developing it. Some of these risk factors are controlled simply by changing lifestyle habits, while others are things that cannot be changed.

The best way to prevent heart failure is to **reduce the risk factors that are controllable**. If you are a blood relative of the person in your care, you are at increased risk of heart failure yourself and should take steps to control *your own* risk factors.

### Risk Factors

Lifestyle changes may help reduce some of these risk factors, however, when lifestyle changes alone don't reduce these risk factors, ask a doctor for medical help.

**Coronary Artery Disease (coronary atherosclerosis)** Coronary artery disease is a disease of the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart. It occurs when the normal lining of the arteries breaks down, causing the walls to thicken and fatty deposits (called plaque) block the flow of blood through these arteries. This is a major contributor to high blood pressure.

**High Blood Pressure** Many people with hypertension (high blood pressure) don't even know they have it, hence the nickname “the silent killer” because it usually has no specific symptoms and no early warning signs. Both you and the person in your care should have your blood pressure checked regularly.

**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 and alter your lifestyle accordingly.

**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. Therefore, in people with heart failure are advised to quit drinking alcohol.

**High Blood Cholesterol** A high level of total cholesterol is a major risk factor for coronary artery disease, which raises the risk of developing heart failure. Total cholesterol levels should be less than 200 mg/dL; LDL (“bad”) levels (think of the L as *less desirable or lousy*) should be less than 100 mg/dL, while HDL (think of the H as *highly desirable or healthy*) should be between 40–60 mg/dL.

**Physical Inactivity and Obesity** Inactivity and obesity can increase the risk of high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, stroke and heart disease. Depending on his limitations, exercise may be difficult for the person in your care; nonetheless, it is very important.



### Change What You Can

Start modifying all of the risk factors that you *can* (weight, activity, smoking, blood pressure). Implement a diet, exercise, and weight-loss program and check with your doctor before starting an exercise program.

**Medication** Be sure to fill the prescription on time (to avoid running out) and be diligent that the person in your care takes medicine *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. Heart failure medication must be taken as prescribed and NOT just when someone has symptoms. DO NOT stop taking any prescribed medication without the approval of the doctor.

**Cholesterol and Salt Consumption** Because cholesterol is a major factor in coronary artery disease, it is important to get it checked for you and the person in your care. High 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.

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 are high in sodium. When an individual consumes too much sodium, extra fluid builds up in the body, which causes the heart to work harder.

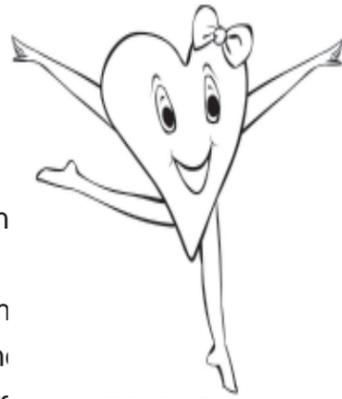
### NEXT ISSUE...GOOD NUTRITION FOR HEALTHY BODY AND MIND

The Ombudsman program can handle your concerns about areas such as elder abuse, client care, consumer rights, etc. For more information, call 1-800-582-7277.

For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medicaid fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.

**February is American Heart Month**

Cardiovascular disease kills more people than all cancers combined and is the No. 1 cause of death and disability in the United States. One in three American adults — a total of 150 million people — has high blood pressure, which is also called hypertension. High blood pressure increases the risk for heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death in the United States. One in every six Americans age 20 or older has high cholesterol.



Source: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

**Cardiac Health Improvement and Rehabilitation Program (CHIRP)**

Your doctor may encourage the person in your care to participate in a hospital's cardiac rehabilitation program. A cardiac rehabilitation program is designed to help the patient exercise safely and maintain a heart-healthy lifestyle. Most programs generally include:

- Exercise training that helps the person in your care learn how to exercise safely, strengthen their muscles and increase stamina. All exercise programs are tailored to each person's individual ability and needs.
- Education
- Changing risk factors (such as diet)

**National Children's Dental Health Month**

Each February, the American Dental Association (ADA) sponsors National Children's Dental Health Month to raise awareness about the importance of oral health.

According to ADA developing good habits at an early age, regular visits to the dentist helps children get a good start on healthy teeth and gums for most of their lives.

To help ensure oral health and a lifetime of good oral care habits:

- \* Limit the sugar intake
- \* Make sure children get enough fluoride, either through drinking water or as a treatment at the dentist's office
- \* Teach children how to brush and floss correctly
- \* Sometimes with their small hands flossing can be a challenge, supervise brushing sessions and help with the flossing.

**Age of Children can be a Major Obstacle to Children's Oral Health**

\* **Babies-** Begin cleaning the child's teeth daily by wiping gums with gauze or a clean washcloth and water after feeding. As soon as teeth appear, brush daily with a pea-sized amount of fluoride toothpaste. If your child insists on taking a bottle to bed make it water, not juice or milk.

\* **Toddlers-** toddlers have a fear of the dentist; hold them your lap during an exam. Toddlers may also have difficulty with an oral care routine. Involve the whole family, brush together at the same time each day to create a good habit.

\* **Gradeschoolers-** have the love of sweets, give children healthy snacks like fresh vegetable, plain yogurt, and cheese. Speak to your child's pediatrician before any medication is prescribed due to some antibiotics can cause stains.

\* **Teenagers-** this is about the time that you see a need for braces; if they have to have them make sure that they brush well around the braces, and use a floss threader to remove all food particles. This is also the time they become more involved in sports, always make sure that they use the proper mouth guards during sports.

**Taking Care of Yourself—Depression in Heart Disease**

People with heart failure 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. One important reason to treat depression is that it is associated with increased risk of cardiovascular disease. This affects both you and the person in your care. Fortunately, depression responds well to treatment. It can be difficult to talk about either about your own depressed feelings or the feelings of the person in your care. Nonetheless, it is important to have that talk with a health care provider and discuss a treatment plan.



**Inspiration**

The best doctors are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merryman.  
~Proverb

**Live Life Laughing!**



**Resource for You**

American Heart Association (214) 373-6300 or 800-AHA-USA1 [www.amhrt.org](http://www.amhrt.org)

Provides information and tools for a better understanding of heart treatment options such as *Answers by Heart*, a series of downloadable patient information sheets presented in a question-and-answer format.

For information about Ohio Medicaid programs or to report suspected Medical fraud, you may call the Ohio Medicaid Fraud Hotline at 1-800-324-8680.