

HEALTHY HEART NEWS

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St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital's Cardiovascular Institute is committed to you and our community. We pride ourselves on being an engaged partner with the many constituencies that we serve. As part of our commitment to meeting your heart health needs, we have developed this quarterly newsletter filled with information that can improve the quality of, and in some cases, help save your life. If there are topics that you would like to see covered in future editions, please e-mail Beverly Keefer, Director of Cardiovascular Services, Cardiac Cath and Interventional Radiology at bkeefer@slchospital.org.

HOLIDAY HEART HEALTH TIPS

Heart Disease is the leading killer of both men and women in the United States, but most of its effects can be prevented or delayed through small, ongoing lifestyle changes.

The holidays can really take a toll on the heart even if you are healthy the rest of the year. The following are a few tips to keep you and your heart healthy this holiday season —

1. Splurge on healthy treats like berries instead of sweet treats, and try to do one healthy thing every day.
2. Fit in small bits of exercise throughout every day - shoot for at least 30 minutes - While shopping or returning holiday gifts, instead of cramming into the elevator, take the stairs. Pass up that parking space closest to the store and take a longer walk. Every step helps.
3. Don't go overboard with alcohol. According to research, binge drinking can result in heart palpitations, light-headedness and difficulty breathing.
4. Before a party, eat a high-protein snack such as non-fat yogurt and a piece of fruit. The protein will give you extra energy and make it easier to pass up party foods that are high in saturated fat and salt, which can lead to high blood pressure and blood cholesterol. The fruit will fill you up and help give you the vitamins you need.
5. Start with a glass of bubbly water with a squeeze of lemon or lime. Many of us drink more alcohol than we want because we start out thirsty and want something in our hand. Replace one of those drinks with water, and you've cut 100 or more calories from the evening.
6. Can't resist chocolate? Don't. Instead, look for dark chocolate with intense flavors and savor a small piece.
7. If you feel your blood pressure rising and stress coming on, stop right then and take a few minutes for yourself.
8. And finally, remember the spirit of the season. Whether you practice a religion or not, this is a time to pause, reflect on priorities and spend time with people you love. These actions alone will help you not only survive the season, but create a lifetime of wellness.

IT'S FLU SHOT TIME!

People with heart disease, and those who have had a stroke, are at high risk of developing complications from influenza (the flu). Among adults hospitalized with the flu during the 2014-2015 flu seasons, heart disease was among the most commonly occurring chronic condition, resulting in 50 percent of the hospitalizations. Studies have shown that influenza is associated with an increase of heart attacks and stroke. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, you need to take steps to fight the flu. Check with your doctor regarding the flu vaccination. Infection and fever put extra stress on the heart.

Get the flu vaccine — Vaccination is the first and most important step in protecting yourself against the flu. Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including doctors' offices, clinics, health departments, pharmacies, college health centers and increasingly by a number of employers and public schools.

Take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of flu. Remember to:

- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue instead of your hand;
- Wash your hands. This is one of the best ways to avoid catching a cold or giving one to someone else;
- Drink up! Be sure to stay hydrated and drink plenty of water;
- Stay at home when you are sick especially if you have the flu-like symptoms;
- Get rest! Stay ahead of illness by getting plenty of rest

If you do have flu symptoms, call your doctor and begin the treatment as soon as possible because the antiviral drugs work best when started early, usually within 48 hours of symptoms.



WHAT IS THE HOLIDAY HEART ATTACK PHENOMENON?

For many years researchers have been intrigued by a disturbing pattern — deadly heart attacks increase during the winter holiday season. Doctors have long known that the cold weather is hard on the heart. Blood vessels constrict, which raises blood pressure. Blood also clots more readily. Frigid temperature increase the strain on the heart and too much physical exertion can worsen the burden and trigger a heart attack. Research indicates that the increase in the number of cardiac deaths is shown to start around Thanksgiving and peaks on December 25. December 26th and January 1st are second and third on the list, respectively.

6 WAYS TO AVOID A HOLIDAY HEART ATTACK

1. **Don't drink too much.** Alcohol tends to increase the blood pressure and can trigger AFib — an irregular heart beat that can cause weakness, dizziness and chest pain
2. **Use caution in bitter weather.** If you have heart disease or are at high risk use caution during outdoor activities on cold days. Cold weather can constrict the blood vessels and trigger the release of hormones, which may increase the risk of heart attack. Although the snow needs to be shoveled, if you are at risk, avoid shoveling.
3. **Don't overeat.** Eating a big meal, particularly one high in fat, could potentially trigger a heart attack. The two-hour period after a heavy meal is risky. Diverting blood from the heart to aid digestion may bring on angina or heart related chest pain.
4. **Don't assume it is acid reflux.** Holiday sweets, alcohol and big meals can trigger acid reflux, but if the pain is not relieved have it checked out.
5. **Get prompt treatment.** The quicker you get help, the less likely heart muscle cells will die due to lack of blood supply. People wait especially around the holidays to get treatment as they do not want to spend time away from their family in an emergency room or doctor's office. **Remember, TIME IS MUSCLE!**
6. **Respiratory issues also may also trigger heart disease.** Burning wood in fireplaces, a popular activity during the winter holidays, releases toxins into the air. These airborne particles have been associated with an increase in cardiac events and an increase in blood pressure.

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Knowing your cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure numbers goes a long way to maintaining your health and reducing your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Cholesterol is a fatty substance that is found in animal based foods such as meats, poultry, egg yolks and whole milks. Total cholesterol is the total measured cholesterol in your blood. This number includes all other types of cholesterol including HDL and LDL. HDL stands for high density cholesterol. It is often referred to as "good" cholesterol because it helps carry cholesterol away from your body's organs and to your liver where it can be removed. LDL stands for low density cholesterol. It is often referred to as "bad" cholesterol because it is the type of cholesterol that is linked with a higher chance of heart disease.

Total Cholesterol level should be < 200 mg/dL
HDL 60 mg/dL or above is optimal
LDL < 100mg/dL is optimal

Blood sugar, or glucose, is the main sugar found in your blood. It comes from the food you eat and is your body's main source of energy. Your blood carries glucose to all of the body's cells to use for energy. Diabetes is a disease in which your blood sugar levels are too high. Over time having too much glucose in your blood can put you at risk for heart disease and stroke. Your glucose level should be between 99-130.

Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries as the heart pumps blood. If this pressure rises and stays high over time it can damage the body. High blood pressure is a serious condition that can lead to heart disease. Blood pressure is measured as systolic and diastolic pressures. Systolic refers to blood pressure when the heart beats while pumping and diastolic refers to blood pressure while the heart is at rest. Blood pressure should be <140 systolic and <90 diastolic, according to individual physician recommendations.

Check with your MD to review your numbers!