

# HEALTHY HEART NEWS

Volume 2 | Fall 2015 Beverly Keefe, Director of Cardiovascular Services / Mehul Patel, Medical Director of SLCH Cardiovascular Institute

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 Keefe, Director of Cardiovascular Services, Cardiac Cath and Interventional Radiology at [bkeefe@slchospital.org](mailto:bkeefe@slchospital.org).

## STRESS AND HEART DISEASE

Fall seems to be about beginnings and endings. Summer has ended and the school year is beginning. Businesses are gearing up for new projects, the kids start back to school and the "To Do" list grows. For many the juggling of responsibilities in September necessitates some skillful balancing. Everyday demands combine to create a climate in which stress becomes a routine part of daily living. We sometimes pay for it with stress-related heart disease.

The relationship between stress, heart disease and sudden death has been recognized for many years. The incidence of heart attacks and sudden death have been shown to increase significantly following acute stress. Heart disease statistics are staggering — 17.6 million people have heart disease and one person dies from heart disease every minute. Eighty (80) percent of people with sudden cardiac death have had no prior symptoms. Stress, if left untreated, can cause emotional, psychological and physical problems.



Stress is also an economic issue. There are 90 million working days per year that are lost directly from stress-related illnesses. Forty-three (43) percent of all adults suffer adverse health effects from stress and up to 90 percent of all doctors office visits are for stress related ailments and complaints. Stress costs American industry more than \$300 billion dollars annually.

Stress affects most people in some way. Acute (sudden or short term) stress leads to rapid changes in the body. Almost all body systems prepare for action during the stressful event. Short term stress responses can prove beneficial in a critical situation. However, when the body is repeatedly placed in these stressful situations, over time it will put a strain on the body and will have real health consequences. Constant stress keeps your body in high gear. It increases the likelihood of cardiovascular disease and can lead to heart attacks.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

It sounds simple, and is easier said than done, but the best thing is to reduce the cause of stress. Once the causes of stress in your life are identified, it is imperative to treat the cause just as you would the other risk factors for heart disease. In addition to minimizing stress, you should —

- Exercise
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Do not smoke
- Cut down on caffeine
- Do not drink in excess
- Enjoy a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight



## HEALTHY BACK TO SCHOOL SNACKS

Ensuring that your child is properly nourished will give him or her a jump-start into the school year. Snacking after school is a big part of a kid's diet. The kids spend long days at school and typically have to wait many hours from lunchtime until they get home. Snacks should be tasty yet nutritious and healthy. Starting early with healthy snacks will help keep the heart healthy.

Here are some snack tips for parents —

- **Keep the options open.** Let the kids choose from several options at snack time.
- **Be prepared.** Your child will be coming home hungry. Have a drawer or a basket full of healthy snacks for them to choose from.
- **Save time by slicing veggies.** Store sliced vegetables in the refrigerator and serve with dips like hummus or low-fat dressing.
- **Mix it up.** Mix dried fruit, unsalted nuts and popcorn in a snack size bag for a quick trail mix.
- **Grab a glass of milk.** A cup of low fat or fat free milk is an easy way to drink a healthy snack.
- **Go for the whole grains.** Offer whole-wheat breads, popcorn and whole-oat cereals that are high in fiber and low in added sugars, saturated fat and sodium.
- **Nibble on lean protein.** Choose lean protein foods such as low-sodium deli meats, unsalted nuts or eggs.
- **Keep an eye on the size.** Snacks should not replace a meal so look for ways to help your kids understand how much enough is. Store snack-size bags in the cupboard and use them to control serving sizes
- **Fruits are quick and easy.** Fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruits can be easy grab and go options that need little preparation
- **Consider convenience.** A single serving container of low fat or fat free yogurt or string cheese can be just enough for an after-school snack.
- **Swap out the sugar.** Keep healthier foods handy so kids avoid cookies, pastries, or candies between meals.
- **Prepare homemade goodies.** For homemade sweets, add dried fruits like apricots or raisins and reduce the amount of sugar.

(Taken from the DG TipSheet March 2013 USDA center for nutrition policy and promotion)

For more information on this, or any other nutrition topic, call an SLCH Registered Dietitian at (845) 568-2454.

## CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

The term "heart disease" is also known as cardiovascular disease. It is used to identify many problems with the circulatory system from high blood pressure to abnormal heart rhythms. Coronary Artery disease is a narrowing of the coronary arteries. The arteries are thin and they deliver blood to hard working heart cells. The cause of coronary artery disease is usually plaque. Plaque is a fatty cholesterol filled deposit that forms inside the artery walls. Plaque is usually the result of an unhealthy diet, too little exercise, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and smoking. When the arteries become clogged, they cannot deliver enough blood to the heart muscle causing chest pain which can be the cause of a heart attack. Chest pain can also occur with physical exertion or stress. A healthy life style that includes exercise, a healthy diet, not smoking goes a long way to preventing heart disease, especially when starting at a young age. Lifestyle changes and medications can also reverse coronary artery disease or at least keep it from getting worse.