

TO YOUR HEALTH

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IT'S MORE THAN A VALENTINE

By Barbara Chenoweth, NP

February, the Valentine's month, brings to mind the heart: on cards, candies and gifts. And while the "heart" radiates love and affection, it also is a muscle, beating steadily day after day, keeping us alive. It is so important and essential to life that most of us try to make sure it is fed and cared for properly.

The care and feeding of the heart seeks to prevent coronary heart disease or to prevent it from worsening. Coronary artery disease occurs when plaque or fatty deposits build up in the coronary arteries that supply oxygen to the heart. If any of these arteries become clogged enough to prevent adequate oxygen, a person experiences symptoms, usually chest pain, referred to as "angina." If a coronary artery becomes completely blocked, a "heart attack" occurs.

Interestingly, 50% of all heart attacks happen to people under the age of 65. However, it is expected that as the baby boomers age, the percentage over 65 may increase. Nonetheless, as we age, the incidence of heart disease increases and it remains the #1 cause of death in the United States. Recognizing the symptoms of a heart attack is the next best thing to preventing it.

Symptoms of a heart attack for men are different from those for women. Men are more likely to experience chest pain such as chest heaviness or pressure than women. The chest pain may radiate into the jaw or down the arm. The chest pain is often accompanied by shortness of breath,

nausea and/or sweating. It frequently is mistaken for indigestion or heartburn. Women, on the other hand, often present without chest pain or heaviness but with shortness of breath, fatigue and weakness. Only 30% of women experience chest pain. For many people, a heart attack is the first symptom of heart disease. For this reason, symptoms that suggest a possibility of a heart attack are taken seriously and require a medical evaluation at a hospital emergency department.

The hospital emergency department is the best place to determine if a heart attack is occurring or not. If a heart attack is confirmed, the emergency department can quickly arrange for a cardiac catheterization that visualizes the heart and its vessels. It can identify the problematic area of the heart and often can fix it on the spot with a heart "stent." Stents open up blocked coronary arteries and can prevent additional damage to the heart. These days, if a blocked coronary artery is identified quickly, medical treatment is quite successful.

For those with known coronary artery disease and for those hoping to prevent it, lifestyle measures are the cornerstone of prevention:

- Healthy weight (BMI 27 or less for older people)
- Exercise at least 20 minutes six days/week
- No smoking
- Alcohol in moderation...one drink/day for women and two/day for men...may have a protective effect, especially red wine
- Normal blood pressure
- Low cholesterol



Volumes have been written about the importance of a heart healthy diet. As we learn more, it seems clear that modern diets are associated with the rise of heart disease and obesity in cultures throughout the world. The epidemic of processed food with the use of saturated fats and sugars is one of the primary causes. Any food that is white, that is, made with white flour and white sugar, should be avoided! Instead healthy diets are rich in:

- Fruits and vegetables, at least 5 servings per day
- Soluble fiber: oatmeal and beans
- Soy products: tofu, soy milk, tempeh, and miso
- Omega-3 fatty acids such as cold-water fish (salmon, tuna, trout and herring) twice/week
- Lean meats — infrequently eaten
- Low salt canned broths and other low salt products
- Salt intake limited to 2,300 mg./day or 1,500 mg/day for those with high blood pressure (read the labels!)
- Walnuts, ground flaxseed and avocados

On Valentine's Day, it's still okay to celebrate with dark chocolate, but just for the day! Everyday, keep your heart healthy and well fed! For more information, check out the website for the American Heart Association:

www.americanheart.org

HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURE

Our February Health Education Lecture topic is "Update on Age-Related Macular Degeneration ." Dr Wiegand, a specialist in diseases and surgery of the retina and vitreous, from EyeBoston, will discuss the latest treatment for macular degeneration and detached retinas. Join us Tuesday evening, February 19, 7:00-8:00 p.m. in Auditorium Center.

NEWS FLASH!!

By Muire Lindahl

On August 1, 2007 the updated recommendations for physical activity were released by the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and The American Heart Association (AHA). The new guidelines are based on the findings of a committee of renowned experts including Miriam Nelson PhD of Tufts University in Boston.

The updated recommendations were broadened to include strength or resistance training in addition to aerobic exercise. There are several reasons that strength training is recognized as being important. Strength training increases endurance which is required to sustain aerobic exercise. It also increases lean muscle mass by promoting metabolism, and with increased metabolism the body can lose excess fat.

An ideal workout based on the new guidelines might look like this:

Aerobic Exercise

Walk or swim at a moderate to brisk pace for 30 minutes, 5 times per week. More intense aerobic exercise like running or working at a competitive intensity requires 20 minutes, 3 times a week.

Strength Training

Perform 10-15 repetitions of 10 strength training exercises two or three times per week. Include exercises for arms, chest, shoulders, back, quadriceps, hamstrings buttocks and calves.

Flexibility

After every workout allow 10 minutes for stretching the major muscle groups. Stretches should be held for 30 seconds each and repeated 3-4 times.

Following the new guidelines will help put you on the road to better fitness.