

## Loving Your Heart



Over the past 25 years, the United States has experienced a steady decline in the number of deaths from cardiovascular disease (CVD), primarily in deaths caused by coronary heart disease and stroke. Still, coronary heart disease is the number one cause of death while stroke is third. Lifestyle improvements by the American public and better control of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke are the big reasons for

this decline.

Coronary heart disease and stroke have many causes. Some of the factors that lead to heart disease and stroke can be changed – they include smoking, high blood pressure, blood lipid levels, obesity, diabetes, and physical inactivity. Smoking, high blood pressure, and high blood cholesterol levels among Americans have improved, but obesity and physical inactivity have not. Technology has taken the place of physical activity in many daily tasks. Too many Americans are not physically active.

Physical activity protects against the development of CVD and also improves other CVD risk factors, including high blood pressure, blood lipid levels, insulin resistance and obesity. Physical activity is also important in the treatment and management of patients with CVD or those at increased risk, as well as for cardiac rehabilitation.



## Understanding Blood Pressure

Blood is carried from the heart to all of your body's tissue and organs in vessels called arteries. Blood pressure is the force of the blood pushing against the walls of those arteries. Each time the heart beats (about 60-70 times a minute at rest), it pumps out blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is at its greatest when the heart contracts and is pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When the heart is at rest, in between beats,

your blood pressure falls. This is the diastolic pressure. Blood pressure is always given as these two numbers and both are important. Usually they are written one above or before the other, such as 120/80 mm Hg, with the top number the systolic and the bottom the diastolic pressure.

Different actions make your blood pressure go up or down.

When you are physically active, your blood pressure goes up. When you are relaxed, your blood pressure goes down. These are normal changes in blood pressure. Some people have blood pressure that stays up all or most of the time. This is called hypertension or high blood pressure. The blood pushes against the walls of the arteries with higher than normal force. If untreated this

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### Special points of interest:

- Join Diabetes Dining Club
- Diabetes Classes
- Heart Smart Trail
- Prostate Awareness Month
- Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day
- Breast Cancer Awareness Month



## Understanding Blood Pressure

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can lead to serious medical problems, such as:

**Arteriosclerosis** - High blood pressure harms the arteries by making them thick and stiff ("hardening of the arteries"). This speeds the build up of cholesterol and fats in the blood vessels, which prevents the blood from flowing through the body, and in time can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

**Heart Attack** - Blood carries oxygen to the body. When the arteries that bring blood to the heart muscle become blocked, the heart cannot get enough oxygen. Reduced blood flow can cause chest pain (angina).

Eventually, the flow may be stopped completely, causing a heart attack.

**Stroke** - High blood pressure can harm the arteries, causing them to narrow faster and less blood can get to the brain. If a blood clot blocks one of the narrowed arteries, a stroke may occur. A stroke can also occur when very high pressure causes a break in a weakened blood vessel in the brain

**Enlarged heart** - High blood pressure causes the heart to work harder. Over time, this causes the heart to thicken and stretch.

Eventually, the heart fails to function normally causing fluids to back up into the lungs.

**Kidney Damage** - The kidneys act as a filter to rid the body of wastes. Over many years, high blood pressure can narrow and thicken the blood vessels of the kidney. The kidney filters less fluid, and waste builds up in the blood. The kidneys may fail altogether. When this happens, medical treatment (dialysis) or a kidney transplant may be needed.

Blood pressure changes from minute to minute and is affected not only by activity and rest, but also by temperature, diet, emotional state, posture, and medications

## How to Control Blood Pressure

Regular exercise helps keep arteries elastic which keeps blood flowing and blood pressure low. Moderately intense exercise is recommended to lower blood pressure more effectively than high-intensity exercise. Sedentary people have a much greater risk of developing high blood pressure than physically active individuals do. Persons with high blood pressure should consult a physician before starting an exercise program

Eat a diet low in saturated fat and rich in a variety of whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Healthy eating and regularly increased physical activity help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Losing weight immediately reduces blood pressure and helps reduce heart size. Weight loss may allow patients with mild hypertension to safely reduce or go off medications

Reduce the amount of salt in your diet. Salt restriction is particularly important for those who are salt-sensitive and for elderly people. Simply eliminating table and cooking salt can be beneficial.

A sufficient intake of minerals, particularly potassium, magnesium, and calcium, are beneficial for reducing blood pressure. Most people should

obtain this mineral from potassium-rich foods that include potatoes, avocados, bananas, nonfat milk products, red beans, oranges, prunes, and cantaloupes.

Calcium regulates the tone of the smooth muscles lining blood vessels. Hypertension itself increases calcium loss from the body.

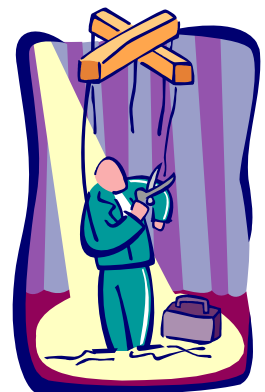
Sufficient calcium is important for strong bones.

Vitamin C has specific benefits for hypertension by helping to maintain blood vessels.

If you smoke, you should quit and if you drink alcohol, you should limit the amount. People with high blood pressure should avoid caffeine.

### Increase your physical activity.

Try the new Heart Smart Trail at the Brookside Gardens in the Wheaton Regional Park, 1800 Glenallen Avenue, Wheaton, MD 20902



## SMOKING – IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO STOP!!



"I see a number of 210. Either that's your weight, or how many times you've tried to quit smoking."

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Today, smoking is the number one preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Smoking kills more Americans than AIDS, alcohol, illegal drug use, car accidents, fires, murders and suicides combined. If you smoke, you have twice the risk of dying of a heart attack, ten times the risk of dying of lung cancer, and five times the risk of developing emphysema or chronic bronchitis. So, you still want to take a chance? The

odds are not in your favor. About half the people who smoke will die as a direct result of their habit.

If you are not worried about your life, what about the people closest to you? Your family, friends and co-workers may be at risk. Secondhand smoke is a potential killer, and can produce dangerous health consequences to a non-smoker nearby. In children, it is linked to illnesses such as pneumonia,

sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), bronchitis, asthma, ear infections and even dental cavities. In adults, it is linked to conditions such as asthma, stroke, heart disease, cancer and respiratory failure. There are no healthy consequences of smoking.

**"Cigarettes are NOT SAFE"**

## How Does Smoking Affect African Americans?

Each year, approximately 45,000 African Americans die from a preventable smoking-related disease.

If the current trends continue, an estimated 1.6 million African Americans who are now under the age of 18 years will become regular smokers. About 500,000 of those smokers will die of a smoking-related disease.

Smoking is responsible for 87% of lung cancers. African

American men are at least 50% more likely to develop lung cancer than white men. African American men have a higher mortality rate of cancer of the lung and bronchus (100.8 per 100,000) than do white men (70.1 per 100,000).

Stroke is associated with cerebrovascular disease and is a major cause of death in the United States. Smoking significantly elevates the risk of stroke. Cerebrovascular disease is twice as high among

African American men (53.1 per 100,000) as among white men (26.3 per 100,000) and twice as high among African American women (40.6 per 100,000) as among white women (22.6 per 100,000).

Levels of serum cotinine (metabolized nicotine) are higher among African American smokers than among white or Mexican American smokers for the same number of cigarettes.



## Think about the Benefits of Quitting

- Within 20 minutes your blood pressure and pulse rate decrease.
- Within 24 to 48 hours your chance of having a heart attack decreases.
- Within 2 weeks to 3 months your circulation improves.
- Within 1 to 9 months coughing and shortness of breath decreases.
- Within 1 year the added risk of heart attack decreases by half.
- Within 5 to 15 years your

risk of stroke decreases to that of a nonsmoker.

- Within 10 years the risk of many cancers such as lung, mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas, decreases substantially.
- Within 15 years your risk of heart disease decreases to that of a non-smoker and your risk of death returns to that of a non-smoker.

### How can you quit?

There are several keys to quitting, which include:

1. Get ready and set a quit date.
2. Get support.
3. Learn new skills and behaviors.
4. Get medicine (if you need it) and use it correctly.

Breaking the nicotine addiction is not easy, but with a positive attitude and a sincere desire, it can be done. Help is available, all you have to do is ask!

### We can assist with:

- ✓ Information – excellent

publications that provide valuable information and insights

- ✓ Resource lists of places holding cessation classes
- ✓ Presentations – on tobacco use prevention

For more information, **please call** Montgomery County DHHS, Debbie Gold at 240-777-1772.

**AAHP Newsletter**  
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The African American Health Program is co-sponsored by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services And The People's Community Baptist Church.



3300 Briggs Chaney Road  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904  
www.onehealthylife.org



Resources

**African American Health Program**

www.onehealthylife.org.....240-777-1833

**Black Babies S.M.I.L.E.....240-777-4471**

**Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening**

2424 Reedie Drive, Wheaton .....240-777-1750

**Church-based Health Education Programs .....240-777-1772**

**Community Clinics**

Community Clinic, Inc. ....301-340-7525

L'A.M.I. Family Health Clinic .....301-434-8400

Mobile Medical Care, Inc. ....301-493-2400

Montgomery Volunteer Dental Clinic, Inc. ....301-984-9796

The People's Community Wellness Center .....301-847-1172

- Men's Clinic
- Women's Clinic

**Colorectal, Prostate, Oral Cancer Screening.....240-777-3496**

**Diabetes Education Classes .....301-421-5767**

**HIV/AIDS Services .....2000 Dennis Avenue, Silver Spring.....240-777-1869**

**Maternity, Family Planning, Child Health Services**

**Service Eligibility Units**

Germantown.....12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown..... 240-777-3591

Rockville .....1335 Piccard Drive, Rockville ..... 240-777-3120

Silver Spring .....8630 Fenton Street, Silver Spring ..... 240-777-3066

**Quit Smoking .....240-777-1734**

**\*Can not find a Montgomery County government service, call 240-777-1000\***



## News & Events



**Diabetes Activities**

The **AAHP Diabetes Dining Club** is a support network for people with diabetes. It is designed to be a fun-filled evening of meeting new friends, fine dining on healthy foods, learning a new piece of information, and getting those 30 minutes of physical activity we all so desperately need on a daily basis. Club members are asked to contribute \$5 or more toward the cost of dinner. The Club meets 6:30 to 8:30 pm on one Monday night per month.

**Diabetes Self Management Classes** is a 4-part series of classes designed to help people with diabetes learn the skills to manage blood sugars and prevent the medical complications often brought on by diabetes. Family members are welcome to learn healthy lifestyle skills to support those with diabetes and for diabetes prevention. For more information and schedules,

For more information about the AAHP Diabetes Activities, please call Diane Herron at 301-421-5767.

**September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month**

According to the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, prostate cancer is the second most common form of cancer among American men. Every hour three African American men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Early detection is important in successfully treating prostate cancer so this September go for your prostate exam and ask your doctor about changes to your diet and lifestyle habits that can help you prevent prostate cancer.

**Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day**

On average, African Americans live about 5 1/2 years less than white people. Getting regular health care and seeing a doctor before an emergency can help keep you healthy. Make sure that you and the people in your life are consulting with a doctor about illnesses and

getting screenings to detect serious conditions early! Make an appointment for Sept. 21 and take yourself and a loved one to the Doctor.

**October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month**

African American women have the highest breast cancer death rate of any ethnic group. Early detection is key to fighting breast cancer, so this October make sure you and the women you love are doing breast self exams and, if they are over the age of 40, getting an annual mammogram.

If you need financial assistance, the Women's Cancer Control Program offers free mammogram vouchers for low income Montgomery County residents who are over the age of 40 and do not have health insurance. Call 240.777.1750 for more information.