

HEALTH BEAT

A health and wellness newsletter published by the VA Medical Center Huntington

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Heart disease leading cause of death among women in US

by Karen Bailey, NP Cardiology

About 450,000 Americans die each year from coronary heart disease, which is caused by plaque lined vessels that reduce blood flow to the heart.

The heart has such an important job in the body-and keeping it safe and strong is your job. Simple changes in your lifestyle can make a significant difference to your health of your heart.

Try these simple suggestions to a healthier heart:

- Know your blood pressure-have it checked regularly and aim to keep it in good control. Talk to your health care provider about your blood pressure.

- Improve your diet by choosing foods that are better for you. Eat a well balanced diet with choices from all the food groups, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat more whole grains, and decrease your intake of fat and salt.
- If you are overweight, now is the time to work on losing those extra pounds. Combine a healthier diet and exercise to see results more quickly. Be determined-set a weight loss goal and a date. Keep a journal, writing down what you eat so you can see where the calories come from. Consider buying a pedometer, and counting your steps. Try to get in 10,000 steps a day. It may seem impossible, but soon you will find that you can accomplish this goal. Take the steps instead of the elevator. Eat an apple instead of a candy bar. Simple changes in your daily routine can make significant changes in your weight! A smart person once said weight control is about calories in and calories out-remember that a healthy diet and exercise are the keys to good heart health.



- Ask about our **MOVE** program.
 - Stop smoking if you smoke. There are programs available at the VA to assist you with your desire to quit and help you accomplish this goal.
 - Ask about the smoking cessation classes offered.
 - Ask to talk to a nutritionist.
- Our goal is to help you be the best you can be. You can be successful in 2010 with your goal of improving your health and preventing heart disease. Just put your mind to it and you can do it!

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COPD is the fourth leading cause of death in the U.S.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, also known as COPD, is a lung disease that makes breathing harder. COPD often is a mix of conditions: chronic bronchitis, chronic asthma and emphysema. These conditions can narrow and block your airway tubes making it difficult to get air in and out of the lungs.

COPD is a progressive disease meaning it will get worse over time and has no known cure. It is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States affecting more than 12 million people.

You are at risk for developing COPD if you are over the age of 40 and are currently smoking or used to smoke; if you are currently or have worked in an environment where you are exposed to chemicals, fumes or dust; or have heavy or long-term exposure to second hand smoke.

COPD usually develops slowly over time. Symptoms appear, and will worsen over time. Common symptoms are a constant cough, shortness of breath that worsens with activity, wheezing, and trouble deep breathing.

As the disease progresses, doing the most basic tasks, such as bathing and dressing, can lead to significant shortness of breath. Some symptoms are so severe that you may need to be hospitalized. Seek emergency treatment if you are breathing fast but cannot catch your breath or talk, lips or nails turn blue or grey, or if your heart is beating very fast.

If you have some of the risk factors or experience some of these symptoms, you should make an appointment with your health care provider. COPD is diagnosed based on a personal and family medical history and physical examination. It may also require chest x-rays or a lung function test to determine how well your lungs work.

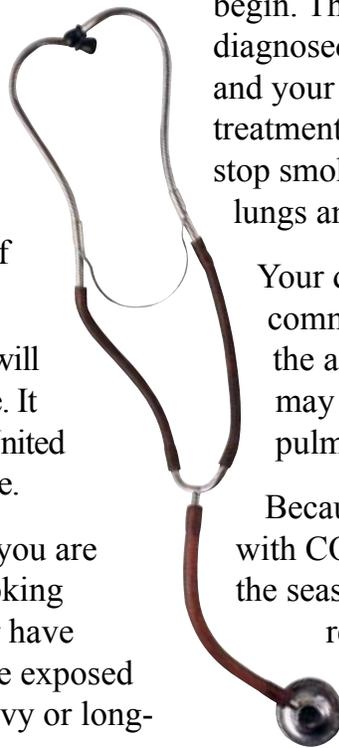
Once COPD is diagnosed, treatment can then begin. The most important thing you can do when diagnosed is to stop smoking. This can be difficult and your health care provider has a variety of treatments available should you need help. When you stop smoking you prevent further damage to your lungs and can slow the progression of the disease.

Your doctor may also prescribe medications, most commonly inhalers. These inhalers help to open the airway to make it easier to breathe. Oxygen may also be used. Other treatments may include pulmonary rehabilitation and surgery.

Because the lungs are weakened, individuals with COPD are more likely to get very sick from the seasonal flu and pneumonia. It is highly recommended that you receive a yearly flu shot and once every five years a pneumonia vaccine or pneumovax. While neither of these shots can prevent illness, they will likely lessen the severity should you get sick. Most importantly, be proactive. Have regular checkups with your provider and inform him of any changes in your overall health, take your medications as prescribed, keep prescriptions filled and be sure not to run out.

When you have COPD, it is not uncommon to be depressed knowing that you have a condition that will worsen. Anxiety can also develop especially when episodes of shortness of breath can make it difficult to breathe. Counseling, medications, and support groups can help individuals cope. Also, be sure to talk with your family and health care provider about end of life issues. This can provide peace of mind at a difficult time.

Talk to your primary care provider for more information about COPD.



What to expect from a cardiac catheterization at Huntington VAMC

by Lyla Gothard, RN, CCRN

Are you expecting to have a heart catheterization soon? Here are some basic facts for your journey:

- An appointment before your heart catheterization will be scheduled and the following information will be gathered by our staff:
 - Health history — including all your medication-2nd floor EKG/Cardiology Department.
 - You will be given instructions concerning which medication to take and which medication you are not to take.
 - Blood work-ground or 1st floor Labs.
 - ECG/EKG-2nd floor in EKG/Cardiology Dept.
 - Chest x-ray-2nd floor Radiology
 - An informed consent will be signed-2nd floor EKG/Cardiology Dept. or the day of the heart catheterization
 - Surgical clinic education-3rd floor Surgery Clinic
 - An appointment will be made for your heart cath.-2nd floor EKG/Cardiology Dept. by the manager or ward clerk.
 - You will be given many opportunities to ask questions
 - You must bring a driver with you the day of the procedure and have someone to stay with you for 24 hours
- On the day of your heart catheterization you will start out on the 3rd floor as follows:
 - You must have a driver with you.
 - Register with the clerk in Same Day Surgery (SDS).
 - You will be taken to SDS Recovery Room.
 - If you are an inpatient the catheterization lab will call the floor for you or we will come and get you ourselves.
 - Then you will be taken to the catheterization lab holding area.
 - Your next stop is the catheterization lab.
 - The doctor will go over the results of your heart catheterization in the catheterization lab holding area.
 - You will be given specific instructions for do's & don'ts following your heart catheterization.
 - Upon completion of your heart catheterization you will return to your room or SDS Recovery Room. You will be checked frequently until your bed rest is completed.
 - Bed rest can last from 2-6 hours depending upon what method of closure is used at the end of your heart catheterization and the doctor's orders.
 - You will be given discharge instructions by the SDS Recovery Room staff.
 - You must have an adult to stay with you for the next 24 hours, because you have received sedation.

Have questions about your heart catheterization? Ask us at any time before, during or after your heart catheterization.

Timeliness is Important to Us



Our 20 Minute Wait Time Goal

It's very important to us to ensure that you are seen in a timely manner. One of our primary goals is for our providers to see you within 20 minutes of your scheduled appointment time. We know that sometimes that isn't possible due to unforeseen events. However, if you are not seen within 20 minutes, we want to know about it! Please tell the clinic clerk if you have been waiting more than 20 minutes past your appointment time. Keep in mind, the 20 minute wait time starts at the time of the scheduled appointment, not the time you arrive.

Help us meet our goal by being on time and by calling at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to keep your appointment! If for any reason you are not able to rate our service as excellent, please let us know before you leave.

Exercise, cardiovascular wellness can help reduce risk of heart disease

by Paula Solar, RN, C

Did you know that inactivity is one of the four major risk factors for heart disease? Smoking, unhealthy cholesterol, and high blood pressure are the other three major risk factors most often discussed in the provider's office, but you should be concerned about inactivity as well. Exercise helps improve heart health in people with many forms of heart disease and can even reverse some risk factors.

A person who exercises routinely has the lowest risk for heart disease, but any amount of exercise is beneficial. If you are active for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week, you can lower your risk of heart disease and control other risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. Exercise such as swimming, bicycling, jogging, or walking helps build up endurance. The frequency, duration, and intensity of the activity should be personalized for you, as should the kind of activity and progression. Remember, exercise is benefiting you in the following ways:

- Strengthens your heart and cardiovascular system.
- Improves your circulation and help your body use oxygen better.
- Improves your heart failure symptoms.
- Increases energy levels so you can do more activities without becoming tired or short of breath.
- Increases endurance.
- Lowers blood pressure.
- Improves muscle tone and strength.
- Improves balance and joint flexibility.
- Strengthens bones.
- Helps reduce body fat and helps you reach a healthy weight.
- Helps reduce stress, tension, anxiety and depression.
- Boosts self-image and self-esteem.
- Improves sleep.
- Makes you feel more relaxed and rested.
- Makes you look fit and feel healthy.





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Announcements & Meetings

The Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service offices have moved

The Prosthetics check-in is now combined with Rehabilitation Medicine in Room 1B125 on the first floor in the south addition. The Prosthetics offices across from the south elevators are now closed for renovation. This change in the Prosthetics check-in is a permanent change as part of this renovation. The waiting area that is now combined with Rehabilitation Medicine is a much larger, comfortable, and more functional area for both ambulatory and wheelchair patients.

Troops to Teachers Program

The West Virginia Troops to Teachers program is helping professionals of the armed forces prepare for a secondary career in the classroom. Many Veterans have made the decision to attend institutions of higher education to become certified professional educators. Veterans interested in a teaching career may go to the Troops to Teachers web site at wvde.state.wv.us/troopstoteachers for more information.

Mental Health Consumer Council Meeting

If you are a Veteran who receives mental health services, come check out the **Mental Health Consumer Council**. The council is looking for interested members. The purpose of the Council is to work with the **Mental Health Clinic (MHC)** of the Medical Center to improve our services, by listening to the needs of the Veterans we serve, and exploring solutions together. This Council is NOT a treatment group. The Council meets the third Friday of each month in the large group room of the MHC (ask at check-in desk for directions), from 1-2:30 p.m. Contact **Chuck Weinberg**, ext 3721, or **Mike Ellis**, ext 2804, for more information.

SAFE (Supportive and Family Education) Group Meetings

The **SAFE** (Supportive and Family Education) group, for family members of Veterans with mental illness meets the second and fourth Fridays of each month, and offers education and group support about mental illness. This group, which is only for family members (not Veterans), is held from 3-4 p.m. in the large group room of the MHC. (Ask at the check-in desk for directions). Contact **Chuck Weinberg**, ext. 3721, for more information.

Veterans Chapel Service Held Weekly

Weekly Chapel Services are held in the Veterans Chapel, located in room 1C106 on First Floor of the Medical Center. These interdenominational services are held every Sunday at 8:30 a.m., and open to all patients, families, visitors and employees. We look forward to seeing you there!

VA updates online application for health benefits

Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that the **Department of Veterans Affairs** has updated its online Form 10-10EZ, “Application for Health Benefits.”

“VA is committed to tapping into the best that technology has to offer to ensure Veterans receive the benefits they have earned,” said **Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki**.

This revised online application provides enhanced navigation features that make it easier and faster for Veterans to apply for their health care benefits. This new version also allows Veterans to save a copy of the completed form for their personal records.

The most significant enhancement allows Veterans to save their application to their local desktop and return to the application at any time without having to start over. Previously, Veterans had to complete the form in a single session. In addition, the revised form reduces the collection of information by eliminating some of the questions. There are also minor changes to simplify the wording of questions and provide clarity in the instructions.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at the VA health eligibility website at <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez>. Veterans may also contact VA at 1-877-222-8387

American Dietetic Association’s Top Ten Reasons Why Consulting with a Registered Dietitian Can Benefit You

1. You have diabetes, cardiovascular problems or high blood pressure. A **Registered Dietitian (RD)** serves as an integral part of your health-care team by helping you safely change your eating plan without compromising taste or nutrition.
2. You are thinking of having or have had gastric bypass surgery. Since your stomach can only manage small servings, it’s a challenge to get the right amount of nutrients in your body. An RD will work with you and your physician to develop an eating plan for your new needs.
3. You have digestive problems. A registered dietitian will work with your physician to help fine-tune your diet so you are not aggravating your condition with fried foods, too much caffeine or carbonation.
4. You’re pregnant or trying to get pregnant. A registered dietitian can help make sure you get nutrients like folate, especially during the first three months of pregnancy, lowering your newborn’s risk for neural tube or spinal cord defects.
5. You need guidance and confidence for breastfeeding your baby. A registered dietitian can help make sure you’re getting enough iron, vitamin D, fluoride and B vitamins for you and your little one.
6. Your teenager has issues with food and eating healthfully. A registered dietitian can assist with eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia and overweight issues.
7. You need to gain or lose weight. A registered dietitian can suggest additional calorie sources for healthy weight gain or a restricted-calorie eating plan plus regular physical activity for weight loss while still eating all your favorite foods.
8. You’re caring for an aging parent. A registered dietitian can help with food or drug interaction, proper hydration, special diets for hypertension and changing taste buds as you age.
9. You want to eat smarter. A registered dietitian can help you sort through misinformation; learn how to read labels at the supermarket; discover that healthy cooking is inexpensive, learn how to eat out without ruining your eating plan and how to resist workplace temptations.
10. You want to improve your performance in sports. A registered dietitian can help you set goals to achieve results — whether you’re running a marathon, skiing or jogging with your dog.

You can contact a registered dietitian at the **Huntington VAMC** 1-800-827-8244.

Medical Center welcomes new staff members to its leadership team

Suzanne Jené joined our team as Associate Medical Center Director. She transferred to Huntington from Bay Pines VA Health Care System in Florida. Jené began her career at Bay Pines in 1989 as a contract specialist trainee.



Janine Shaw, PhD, is our new Chief of Mental Health Services. She transferred here from the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, TX, where she worked for more than 24 years.



Juan D'Brot, MD, recently joined our staff as the Associate Chief of Staff for Ambulatory Care. Dr. D'Brot formerly served as medical director of the ICU at the VA Medical Center in Albany, NY.



Bill Lanning was named Chief of Social Work. He formerly worked as the Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff here at the Huntington VA Medical Center.



The connection between heart disease and diabetes

by Paula Solar, RN,C

If you are diabetic, you are twice as likely as someone who does not have diabetes to have heart disease. People with diabetes tend to develop heart disease at an earlier age than other people. A middle-aged person with type two diabetes risk of having a heart attack is as high as someone without diabetes that has already had one heart attack.

Women who have not gone through menopause usually have less risk of heart disease than men of the same age. But women of all ages with diabetes have an increased risk of heart disease because diabetes cancels out the protective effects of being a woman in her child-bearing years.

People with diabetes who have already had one heart attack run an even greater risk of having a second one. In addition, heart attacks in people with diabetes are more serious and more likely to result in death. High blood glucose levels over time can lead to increased deposits of fatty materials on the insides of the blood vessel walls. These deposits may affect blood flow, increasing the chance of clogging and hardening of blood vessels (atherosclerosis).

You can lower your risk by keeping your blood sugar (glucose), blood pressure, and blood cholesterol close to the recommended levels suggested by your health care provider. Reaching your targets also can help prevent narrowing or blockage of the blood vessels in your legs, a condition called peripheral arterial disease. You can reach your targets by choosing foods wisely, being physically active, stop smoking, and taking medications your provider prescribes. If you have already had a heart attack, taking care of yourself can help prevent future health problems.



Do you know the signs of a heart attack?

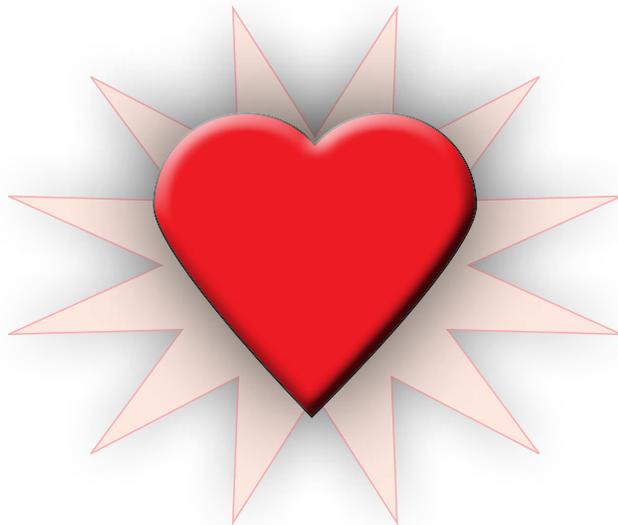
Symptoms from a heart attack are often described as:

- Oppressive-hard to get a breath in
- Crushing-elephant on my chest
- Tightness-like a band around my chest
- Squeezing-or gripping
- Twisting or wrenching-like wringing a wash cloth
- Dull ache or Deep ache

Women may have the same type of symptoms, but may in fact have a different set of warning signs that she may be experiencing a heart attack. These symptoms are included below:

- Indigestion
- Unusual fatigue
- Weakness
- Possibly chest pain
- Shortness of breath

If you or someone you know experiences these warning signs call 911 and go to the nearest hospital emergency room. “Time is muscle” when it comes to the heart and prevention of heart damage is the key to a strong cardiac system. Early recognition of heart attack symptoms can improve the outcome, and prevent complications associated with heart damage. Take care of your heart, learn the signs and know what to do when a heart emergency occurs.



2010 National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic Sept. 18-25

Setting your course for the future is the theme for the **3rd National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic** to be held in beautiful San Diego from September 18 – 25, 2010.

We're seeking recently injured Veterans to participate in this rehabilitative event. Help us get the word out to potential Veterans and volunteers.

For more information about the Summer Sports Clinic or to request an application, contact **Tristan Heaton** by email at Tristan.heaton2@va.gov or call 858-642-6426, or please see the Web site at http://vaww.sandiego.va.gov/home/ssc_home.asp, .

