

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

March 2014

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Do Not Forget These Other Great Resources:

Healthwise® Handbook, the 24-Hour Nurse Line, Nurse Online Chat, Audio Health Information Library® and you can go online to www.express-health.com for links to reliable health information.

CHALLENGE:

Stress is an overlooked factor that contributes to poor heart health. This week focus on stress reducing activities like deep breathing, just take long deep breaths when you feel stressed.

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Cardiovascular disease (CVD), a.k.a heart disease, is a very broad term. Because it is a major cause of death in the U.S. it deserves extra attention. The heart is responsible for keeping every organ in the body alive and functioning. Virtually every one knows someone who has CVD or who has died from CVD, be it a stroke or heart attack.

Having high blood pressure, high cholesterol or high triglycerides are not forms of CVD itself; rather they are risk factors for CVD. In addition to tobacco use, obesity, inactivity, poor diet, diabetes and even stress. CVD may run in families and have a genetic link, but for the most part issues with the heart and vessels are completely manageable. Take your risk factors seriously. Your risk factors and symptoms are your only way of understanding what is happening inside your body.

CVD is an umbrella-term that refers to a range of diseases that affect the heart and blood vessels. There are many types of CVD:

- **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD):** the most common type of CVD, which accounts for the most deaths. It refers to the build up of plaque in the heart's arteries, which is a direct result of atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is soft deposits of fat that attach to the walls of the arteries and harden over time. Ultimately hardening the artery and constricting blood flow. People with CAD may also develop stable, intermittent chest pain, called angina.
- **Peripheral Artery Disease:** Your peripheral arteries can also develop atherosclerosis on the inside of the walls causing lost blood flow. Lost blood flow can eventually lead to stroke, heart attack, angina, leg cramps, and abnormal kidney function.
- **Aortic Aneurysm:** An abnormal bulge, formed most commonly in the wall of the aorta. An aneurysm increases the risk for plaque build up and clots. The aneurysm itself can rupture and be life threatening.
- **Heart Valve Diseases:** There are a few issues that can occur. The heart valves may not open enough to allow blood to flow through as it should, the valves may not close properly and allow blood to leak through, or the valve leaflets can bulge or prolapse back into the upper chamber allowing blood to flow backward through them.
- **Arrhythmias:** The abnormal rhythm of the heart. Could be too fast, too slow or irregular. It affects how well the heart works and supplies blood to the rest of the body.
- **Heart Failure:** Sometimes called congestive heart failure, means the heart isn't pumping blood as well as it should. It does not mean that it has stopped beating. However, the body's need for blood and oxygen is not being met.