



INSIDE:
Take our
heart disease
survey



Summer 2013

Lifestyles for Heart Disease

Mental health affects your heart

Are you always stressed out? Do you often feel sad, anxious or angry? These feelings affect more than just your mental and emotional health.

According to a study in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, there is a strong connection between heart health and emotional health. Here are some of their findings:

- Even low levels of depression have been shown to increase the risk for heart problems.
- Chronic work stress has been linked to clogging of the arteries.
- Women who experienced marital stress reported more heart problems over five years than women in less stressful marriages.

Put more joy into your life

One way to improve emotional — and heart — health may be by adding more vitality to your life. Experts point to a variety of strategies that have been shown to help relieve emotional distress. These same tactics also are used to treat heart disease:

- **Exercise regularly.** If you can't seem to find the time, start off with just five or 10 minutes a day and work your way up.

- **Find a relaxation therapy that works for you.** Examples include mental imagery, deep breathing and muscle relaxation.
- **Identify ways to manage stress.** Make time to play with your pet, listen to music or engage in a hobby.
- **Find more social support, if needed.** Consider joining a walking group or volunteering.

If you feel an overwhelming sense of anxiety or feel sad most of the time for more than two weeks, consider talking to an expert. You do not need a referral to see a behavioral or mental health professional.

Get support online

Our personalized — and confidential — program **Overcoming Depression®** can help you work through your depression.

To access this program:

- Visit your plan's website.
- Log in as a member.
- Click on the *Health and Wellness* tab.
- Click *BlueHealthConnection®*.
- Click *My Digital Health Coaching* and then click *Overcoming Depression*.

Health checks

Every year, ask your doctor about these wellness checks. You may need some of them more than once a year.

- ✓ Blood pressure
- ✓ Total cholesterol (HDL, LDL, triglycerides)
- ✓ Flu shot

Also, check with your doctor to see if your pneumonia shot is up to date.

Reminder:
Plan ahead for flu season
Hard to believe, but flu season isn't that far away. Having a chronic condition like heart disease puts you at increased risk for flu complications. Be sure to make an appointment with your doctor this fall to receive your flu shot.

Real readers; real advice

Who knows more about living with heart disease than those facing the same daily issues as you? We'd love to share your feedback to help support and inspire other members living with heart disease. Just email us at bcnccm@bcbsm.com with any tips you'd like to share with other readers.

Making sense of blood pressure

You can recite your birth date, phone number and Social Security number — but do you know your blood pressure? Where your health is concerned, this number is a vital statistic.

Blood pressure refers to the force that blood exerts against the walls of your arteries when your heart beats and rests. If the force is too strong, you have high blood pressure. The only way to know whether your blood pressure is normal or too high is to get it checked.

Blood pressure monitoring should begin at age 18. At the minimum, if your blood pressure is normal, you should have it checked every couple of years. If you have a personal or family history of high blood pressure — or if you smoke, are overweight or are inactive — your doctor may advise earlier and more frequent testing.

Blood pressure readings consist of two numbers, with one number written above or before the other. The first number is systolic pressure, and it measures the pressure in blood vessels when your heart beats. The second number, diastolic pressure, measures the force of the blood in vessels when your heart relaxes between beats.

If your blood pressure is lower than 120/80: Congratulations.

This is a healthy measurement. Blood pressure can change through the years, so keep getting yours checked —and live a heart-healthy lifestyle.

If your blood pressure is between 120/80 and 139/89:

A reading in this range is considered prehypertensive. Without making lifestyle changes to lower your blood pressure, you may develop hypertension. Ask your doctor about healthy eating and exercise habits to help lower your blood pressure.

If your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher: You have high blood pressure, even if just one of your numbers is in this range. Your doctor will prescribe healthy lifestyle changes and, if your blood pressure remains high, medicine. To maintain a healthy blood pressure, you'll also need to quit smoking; follow a nutritious, low-sodium diet; cut back on alcohol; exercise more; and maintain a healthy weight. Although hypertension is a serious diagnosis, it is treatable. By working closely with your doctor, taking your medicine and making healthy choices every day, you can lower your risk for complications.



Heart attack treatment often delayed due to doubts

Each year, about a quarter of a million people die from a heart attack before reaching the hospital. A major reason for this startling statistic: Instead of calling 911 right away, many people with symptoms choose a wait-and-see response.

To learn why some people choose this tactic, researchers from the University of York interviewed women and men who had suffered at least two heart attacks. Their findings were published in the study "Decision making processes in people with symptoms of acute myocardial infarction: qualitative study," in the journal *BMJ*. Here are some reasons that influenced their decision to delay getting immediate help:

1. "I'm just having mild chest pain, so this is probably just heartburn."

The reality is that many heart attacks don't fit the profile of a typical heart attack. While chest pain is the most common heart attack warning sign, not everyone experiences it. For example, women, minorities and older adults are more likely to have heart attacks without chest pain. So are people with diabetes, heart failure and a history of stroke.

Other symptoms may include pain in the back, neck, jaw, stomach or arm; trouble breathing or even nausea.

2. "I've had a heart attack and this doesn't feel like that one did."

Not all heart attacks feel the same, even when they happen to the same person. About 90 percent of people in the study said their recent heart attack symptoms were not like those that accompanied a previous heart attack.

So, just because you experienced chest pain — or another warning sign — the last time doesn't mean you'll have it with a subsequent heart attack.

3. "I can't be having a heart attack. I've had treatment."

Some people who were treated for a previous heart attack thought they were protected against future heart problems. They thought their angioplasty, bypass surgery or cardiac rehab was a cure.

Unfortunately, treatment doesn't erase your heart problems. In fact, having one heart attack makes you more likely to have another one.

4. "I don't want to call an ambulance, cause a scene and find out it's nothing."

Embarrassment can actually prevent people from getting help. The study found that many people were simply afraid to cause a commotion over what may be a false alarm.

Even if you're not sure it's the real thing, make that call for help. Time is of the essence — don't wait more than five minutes before calling 911. The longer you wait, the more you put your health at risk.





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Health or wellness or prevention information

If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call:

1-800-392-4247 | 1-800-257-9980 (TTY)

8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

For Customer Service, please call the number listed on the back of your ID card.

HEALTHY LIVING AND GOOD EATING

Peach-Berry Crisp Servings: 4



Peaches contain compounds that reduce the effects of LDL, or bad cholesterol, and can potentially help ward off cardiovascular disease.

- 4 peaches, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger

- 2 tablespoons finely chopped walnuts
- ¼ cup quick oats
- ¼ cup flour
- ½ cup brown sugar, lightly packed
- 1 tablespoon margarine

Arrange fruit in an 8-inch-square baking dish. Sprinkle with lemon juice, sugar and ginger. In a bowl, measure dry ingredients and cut in margarine until crumbly.

Spread mixture over fruit in baking dish, lifting fruit gently so that crumbs coat evenly. Bake at 375 degrees for about 30 minutes or until fruit bubbles and topping is browned. Cool slightly.

Nutritional information per serving: 245 calories; 5 g fat; 48 g carbohydrates; 3 g protein; 0 mg cholesterol; 3 g fiber; 8 mg sodium.



To learn more about the Million Hearts[®] campaign, scan the image using the camera on your mobile device.

To read the QR code, you will need a QR reader, an app often available for free through your mobile app store.

