

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR HEALTH FROM
THE NEBRASKA MEDICAL CENTER

advancing health

What Women Need to Know About Heart Disease

It's the leading cause of death in both men and women and its incidence in women is increasing. See page 2 to learn what you can do to reduce your risk for heart disease.

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Women: Take Prevention Tactics to Heart



Hear disease is not just a man's disease. It's the leading cause of death in both men and women, accounting for more deaths than all cancers combined.

"Although heart-related deaths in our country have fallen in the past 30 years, they have not fallen as much for women," says Leslie Hershkowitz, MD, cardiologist at The Nebraska Medical Center. "As women adopt more lifestyle behaviors such as smoking, obesity and a sedentary lifestyle, we are seeing heart disease rise in both premenopausal and postmenopausal women."

The major difference between men and women is in how it affects women. Signs and symptoms of heart

disease tend to be more vague and atypical in women. They may have generalized fatigue, shortness of breath or burning in the chest rather than chest pressure as their first symptoms. "As a result, women are more likely to have silent heart attacks and ensuing heart damage before they even come to the emergency room or consult their doctors," says Dr. Hershkowitz. This may also explain why women are more likely to die of long-term complications after their first big heart attack.

"As a population, we tend to underestimate the risks for women," says Dr. Hershkowitz. "As a result, many women do not even think about heart disease until it's too late." The

truth is, women have a significant risk of long-term cardiovascular disease that increases with age if they do nothing to prevent it.

"Many of the previous studies for the symptoms and risk factors for coronary artery disease were done in men," she says. "We're now finding that it may not have been correct to extrapolate them to women."

Having just one of the following major risk factors increases a woman's risk for developing cardiovascular disease: smoking, poor diet, physical inactivity, carrying excess weight around the middle, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and family history of premature heart disease (under the age of 40 in men and before age 50 in women). Cigarette smoking has been shown to increase the death rate in young women (under the age of 45) to a greater degree than their male counterparts, says Dr. Hershkowitz.

Women should consider screening for risk factors as early as their 20s. A thorough evaluation includes a

medical and family history for early heart disease (appearance before age 50), screening for high blood pressure and diabetes, body mass index and waist size, which may be early warning signs for the development of diabetes. Cholesterol and lipid levels are also important.

"We've found that low levels of the good cholesterol, or high density lipoprotein (HDL), may be as risky as high levels of the bad cholesterol, known as low density lipoproteins (LDL)," says Dr. Hershkowitz.

Education and awareness are the most important tools women have to prevent heart disease, notes Dr. Hershkowitz. "Women can take the following steps to help prevent heart disease: exercising regularly, eating a heart healthy diet, taking a baby aspirin before age 65 and maintaining a healthy weight.

"Women need to take heart disease just as seriously as men," says Dr. Hershkowitz, "and that means adopting healthy lifestyle habits when they are young." ■



REQUEST A BROCHURE

Our free brochure, *What Every Woman Needs to Know About Heart Disease*, explains your risk for coronary artery disease and discusses ways to protect your heart. To order a copy, please call **800-922-0000**. Supplies are limited, so call today!

Prehypertension Signals Early Warning Signs of Heart Attack

The next time you're told your blood pressure is a little high—don't dismiss it. People with prehypertension are at much higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome, which increases your risk for diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Research has found that people with prehypertension are more than three times more likely to suffer a heart attack and 1.7 times more likely to have heart disease than a person with normal blood pressure. In addition, postmenopausal women with prehypertension were found to have a 58 percent higher risk for cardiovascular death than those with normal blood pressure.

Normal blood pressure is anything lower than 120/80 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). Prehypertension is considered 120/80 to 139/89. High blood pressure or hypertension is a blood pressure of 140/90 mm Hg or higher. "Research shows that heart disease risk begins to rise at blood pressure levels of 120 or higher," says Scott Shurmur, MD, cardiologist at The Nebraska Medical Center.

About a third of U.S. adults have hypertension, but at least the same number, and possibly as many as 37 percent, are prehypertensive.

"Prehypertension combined with other risk factors such as excess weight around the middle, elevated fasting glucose and/or insulin resistance, should be taken seriously and treated aggressively," says Dr. Shurmur. "Prehypertension often can be reversed with lifestyle changes such as weight

loss and exercise, whereas, long-standing hypertension may not be able to be reversed and will likely require long-term medications."

Exercising regularly can lower systolic blood pressure (the top number) by an average of 5 to 10 mm, notes Dr. Shurmur. That's as good as some blood pressure medications. Combine that with 10 pounds or more of weight loss and you can lower your systolic pressure another 5 to 10 mm.

Salt intake also appears to have a significant impact on blood pressure levels. A recent statement by the American Heart Association recommends limiting salt intake to 1,500 mg after finding significant evidence that reducing salt intake by 1,800 mg per day can lower systolic blood pressure by 5 mm and diastolic by 2.7 mm.

Other important lifestyle changes include quitting smoking, lowering cholesterol, diet modifications that include reducing refined carbohydrates and refined glucose sugar and limiting alcohol use.

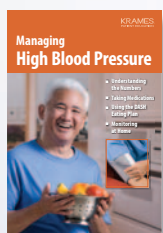
Most people with high blood pressure have no signs or symptoms and nearly one-third of these people live with the condition for years without knowing it. Some people will experience headaches, dizziness or nosebleeds, but these symptoms typically don't occur until high blood pressure has reached life-threatening levels. Talk with your doctor if your blood pressure is creeping up, says Dr. Shurmur. Early management of the problem can get it under control before more damage is done. ■

Top Risk Factors for Heart Disease

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, but that doesn't mean it's inevitable. By taking control of your health and developing healthy lifestyle habits, you can reduce your risk for heart disease.

The following factors have the greatest impact on your risk for heart disease:

- **Family history.** Your individual risk rises significantly if you have a first-degree male relative who has had a heart attack before age 45 or a first-degree female relative before age 55.
- **Diabetes.** A person who has diabetes has the same risk of having a heart attack as someone without diabetes who already has had a heart attack.
- **Smoking.** Smoking causes injury to the blood vessels, which causes blockages to form, accumulate and rupture. Smokeless tobacco, exposure to secondhand smoke, as well as low-tar and low-nicotine cigarettes will also increase your risk.
- **High cholesterol.** High levels of low density lipoproteins (LDL)—the bad cholesterol—in addition to elevated triglyceride levels, can have a greater impact on your risk than the total cholesterol level alone. Strive for a total cholesterol level lower than 200 mg/dl, LDL below 100 mg/dl, high density lipoprotein (HDL) above 40 mg/dl and triglyceride level below 150 mg/dl.
- **High blood pressure.** High blood pressure makes the heart work harder, and leads to hardening of the arteries. The optimal blood pressure level is under 120/80.
- **Diet/sedentary lifestyle.** Being overweight increases your risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.



Is Your Blood Pressure Under Control?

Learn how to make healthy changes. To order a copy of our FREE brochure, *Managing High Blood Pressure*, please call **800-922-0000**. Supplies are limited, so call today!



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Free Oral Head and Neck Cancer Screening

Tuesday, April 24

3 to 6 p.m.

The Nebraska Medical Center

Thursday, April 26

4 to 6 p.m. at Methodist Hospital

Preregistration begins March 24 and is required. Visit our Facebook page events section for more information about this screening and registration at www.facebook.com/nebraskamed.

Diabetes Center Healthy Cooking Event

Saturday, April 14

8 to 11 a.m. at Sorrell Center for Health Science Education
Emile and 42nd Streets

Take better control of your diabetes. This free event includes a cooking demonstration with samples for tasting. Preregistration begins March 14. For more information, visit [Facebook.com/NebraskaMed](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaMed) under the events section.

Free Stroke Risk Counseling

Friday, May 25

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

The Nebraska Medical Center
Durham Outpatient Center, West Atrium

Healthcare professionals will be available to discuss personal risk factors for stroke.

Preregistration is not required.

More information will be available in May at [Facebook.com/NebraskaMed](https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaMed) under the events section.



health & wellness club events

The Nebraska Medical Center's Health and Wellness Club is free to all individuals ages 50 and older. Club members enjoy occasional discounts, fitness programs, health education and screenings, social activities and a calendar of local programs to help you live a healthier lifestyle. For more information or to join the Health and Wellness Club, please call **800-922-0000** or check us out online at www.NebraskaMed.com/club. Call **800-922-0000** for more information or to sign up for these classes and events.

MONTHLY HEALTH SEMINARS

Storz Pavilion, Rooms 1 & 2. Lunch served at noon; speaker begins at 12:15 p.m. Event is free. Reservations required. Space is limited. To register, please call **402-559-4996**.

WALKING CLUBS

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo Walking Club

Meets on Fridays, Nov. 1 through Feb. 28, 9 a.m.; March 1 through Oct. 31, 8 a.m. Zoo membership required.

SPECIAL OFFERINGS AT JOSLYN ART MUSEUM

Third Thursday Art Encounters Club

Enjoy docent-guided tours of Joslyn's permanent collection and special exhibitions the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. Free admission with presentation of your Health and

Wellness Club membership card. For more information, call **402-342-3300**.

Visualizing Literature Book Club

Meets four times annually, 10 a.m. to noon in the Joslyn Art Museum conference room. Free admission with presentation of your Health and Wellness Club membership card. For more information, please call **402-342-3300**.

Volunteer Opportunities

Studies show those who volunteer are happier and healthier. The Nebraska Medical Center has many volunteer opportunities. Application and minimum time commitment required. Please call **800-922-0000** for more information.

UNMC EngAge Wellness Program

Join the UNMC EngAge Wellness program to begin your journey to optimal aging through a whole person wellness approach that encompasses social, physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional and vocational wellness. Located in the Home Instead Center for Successful Aging on Leavenworth at 38th Avenue. For more information on our current specials, visit us at www.unmc.edu/homeinsteadcenter/wellness.htm or call **402-552-7210**.

Tai Chi Exercise Class

Great for improving balance and reducing your fall risk. Appropriate for all ages and fitness levels. Please call **402-896-0454** for class times and locations.



Interested in becoming a Health and Wellness Club member? Please call **800-922-0000**.

What Men Should Know About Prostate Screening

Recommendations recently announced by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force against using the prostate-specific antigen (PSA)-based screening for prostate cancer has drawn mixed reactions from the medical community.

“The PSA prostate screening is still our most important tool to reduce mortality due to prostate cancer,” says Charles Enke, MD, radiation oncologist and prostate cancer specialist at The Nebraska Medical Center.

Prostate cancer is the number one non-skin cancer in U.S. men and shares the number two spot with colorectal cancer in terms of cancer mortality. Most men ages 70 and older will eventually develop prostate cancer but because some forms of prostate cancer are slow-growing, many will never die from the disease. The Task Force feels that since the majority of deaths due to prostate cancer occur after age 75, the screening has no benefit and that the harms outweigh the benefits.

Dr. Enke feels differently. “We’ve seen a significant decrease in the death rate due to prostate cancer over the last 20 years,” says Dr. Enke, “and this is due largely to the impact of the PSA screening test that was introduced in 1992. The five-year survival for a person who is diagnosed with prostate cancer today is 99 percent. I’m concerned that these new guidelines will reverse this trend and we’ll start seeing an increase in mortality again.”

Dr. Enke recommends that all men ages 50 and older with a life expectancy of at least 10 years discuss with their physician the benefits of getting a PSA screening. “Prostate cancer usually doesn’t produce symptoms until it has become more advanced,” says Dr. Enke. “At advanced stages, treatment options are very limited and the odds of mortality are much greater.”

Dr. Enke recommends that high-risk individuals, which include African-American males and those men with a first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer at age 65 or younger, be screened starting at age 45.

Chad LaGrange, MD, a urologist at The Nebraska Medical Center, concurs with Dr. Enke.

“PSA screenings have allowed us to diagnose prostate cancer before it has spread,” he says. “Once it becomes metastatic, it’s incurable.”

Dr. LaGrange believes the bigger problem is in over-treating prostate cancer rather than over-screening. “Physicians need to use better judgment as to whom we treat based on a patient’s risk factors, test results, life expectancy and a frank discussion with the patient,” he says. “If it is determined that treatment is not supported, the tumor should be monitored every six months to a year for the patient’s remaining lifetime.” ■

Cancer Survivorship Clinic Addresses Long-Term Needs

The needs of a cancer patient can extend well beyond the completion of active treatment. Many patients will continue to deal with medical, social, emotional and physical challenges.

To help these patients deal with the aftermath of cancer care, The Nebraska Medical Center offers a multidisciplinary Cancer Survivorship Clinic to help meet their special needs. Patients are seen by a multidisciplinary group of clinicians that includes Deb Darrington, MD, internal medicine specialist at The Nebraska Medical Center and director of the program, a social worker, physical therapist, RN case manager and nutritionist, who perform an assessment and develop a “survivorship care plan” based on the patient’s special medical, physical and nutritional needs. This plan serves as the patient’s long-term care plan to share with their primary care physician and addresses long-term medical issues such as diabetes, heart disease, blood cholesterol and bone mass.

“Our goal is to aid in the transition after treatment—to provide support and serve as a point of care before the patient returns to their primary care doctor,” says Dr. Darrington. “We are there to listen, to develop a plan to meet their unique needs and communicate these needs to their primary care doctor or provide primary care needs for patients who don’t have a physician.

“Because we specialize in seeing cancer patients, we are in better tune to their unique needs and long-term medical problems and these patients really appreciate that. We are the bridge that will ensure their needs are met long after treatment has ended.”

! We’re Here for You

To learn more about cancer support groups, visit us at www.NebraskaMed.com/cancer/support-groups.

Get the Facts About Prostate Health

To learn more about prostate cancer, visit us at www.NebraskaMed.com/cancer/prostate-cancer.



“My new wig was the perfect color, the perfect texture and the perfect cut. It picked me up at a time when I was really low.”
Rhonda Peterson



Life Renewal Center Promotes Positive

The Life Renewal Center provides personal care services geared toward people with or recovering from cancer.

About halfway into her six-month treatment regimen, Rhonda Peterson arrived on schedule at the Village Pointe Cancer Center for her weekly chemotherapy treatment.

Peterson usually left feeling tired and fatigued. But today she left with a renewed sense of self-confidence, a smile on her face and a new beautiful head of silky blonde hair.

Peterson's new look came about as a result of a new program offered at The Nebraska Medical Center's Village Pointe Cancer Center called the Life Renewal Center.

The Life Renewal Center, which opened last spring, is a space that goes beyond the clinical care of patients and allows for a more holistic approach to cancer care. Patients may experience many physical and emotional changes in their bodies while going through cancer treatment. The Life Renewal Center is designed to help them cope with these changes.

The Center provides personal care services such

as wig fittings, cranial and breast prosthetic fittings, oncology massages and exercise classes as well as items such as skin care products specifically geared for people with or recovering from cancer. In Peterson's case, the wig was made possible through a grant from the Susan G. Komen Foundation of Nebraska.

When Peterson walked into the Life Renewal Center that day, a short, sassy wig sitting on the shelf quickly caught her eye. “I loved it right away,” says Peterson, whose own wig had grown worn and tired-looking. “It was the perfect color, the perfect texture and the perfect cut. It picked me up at a time when I was really low.”

Providing a more positive and healing experience for patients by supporting their personal and physical needs during treatment and recovery is the goal of the Life Renewal Center.

“These products and services are a huge convenience to our patients,” says Ann Yager, director of

Compassionate Cancer Services

To learn more about the services offered at the Life Renewal Center, visit us at www.NebraskaMed.com/cancer/Life-Renewal-Center.



Experience

the Village Pointe Cancer Center. “Normal retail products are not geared for the needs of cancer patients. We have products that can ease the side effects of treatment and make cancer patients feel good about themselves again. Providing supportive products and services like these are important components in supporting a patient’s full healing and long-term recovery process.”

Beth Reed, MD, oncologist and medical director of the Village Pointe Cancer Center, says the Life Renewal Center was a welcome addition to the services provided to patients. “When people are happier and feeling good about themselves, that can help them tolerate therapy better,” says Dr. Reed. “Our goal is to help them get through their cancer experience in the best way possible and to be able to confidently go back to work or to the other parts of their lives.”

The Life Renewal Center became a reality due to proceeds donated by the University Hospital Auxiliary’s annual fundraiser, Kaleidoscope. ■

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My husband snores loudly at night. Should I be concerned?

William Baumann, MD, pulmonologist

Loud snoring places a patient at risk for sleep-disordered breathing. In addition, loud snoring with repeated interruptions of breathing and excessive sleepiness during the day could be signs that your husband has sleep apnea. Sleep apnea, which is two to three times more common in the elderly compared with middle-aged people, is a potentially serious sleep disorder in which breathing repeatedly starts and stops during sleep. About half of people with sleep apnea develop high blood pressure, which raises the risk for heart failure and stroke.

Sleep apnea’s impact may be even greater on elderly individuals, regardless of whether they have high blood pressure. Research shows that elderly people with severe sleep apnea have more than two times the risk for ischemic stroke than elderly people with no or mild apnea. Individuals with sleep apnea tend to be overweight, may have a large neck circumference, a narrow throat and/or a family history of sleep apnea. Individuals with suspected sleep apnea should be evaluated by their doctor. Getting treatment can help reduce the risk for stroke and high blood pressure. **Call 800-922-0000 to make an appointment with one of our sleep specialists.**



My sinuses always seem to be bothering me. How do I know if I have a cold or allergies?

Michelle Johnson, MD, internist

Do you feel like you’re sneezing and congested more often than not? Are you having trouble sleeping? Determining if your symptoms are due to allergies or the common cold can be difficult, especially if you suffer seasonal allergies. Both allergies and colds due to viruses cause swelling in your sinuses, making it difficult for your sinuses to drain. This leads to the symptoms of coughing, sneezing and nasal congestion. Other common symptoms for colds and allergies include fatigue and a sore, scratchy throat. More unique to colds are low-grade fevers and muscle aches. Allergy symptoms, on the other hand, often include itchy, watery eyes and clear nasal drainage. The most important difference is that colds don’t usually last longer than 14 days. You should contact your doctor if you develop a high fever, have severe pain in your face and head, and have trouble seeing or concentrating. Also consider contacting your doctor if your symptoms continue to persist, indicating an allergic cause. An allergist can help identify specific allergy triggers and recommend a treatment plan for you. Successful treatment of allergies can prevent development of chronic sinus inflammation and swelling and improve asthma symptoms in certain people. **To make an appointment at our Allergy Clinic, call 800-922-0000.**

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Eat More, Gain Less, Be Healthy

Can eating more actually translate into gaining less? It can—as long as you're eating more of the right types of foods. New research reported in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, reveals that eating certain foods with or before your meals can fill your belly, curb cravings and cut your calories. According to the study:

- Adding pureed vegetables to meals reduced calorie intake in study participants by 200 to 350 calories.
- Adding 1 gram of chili pepper to meals reduced calorie intake as well as reduced cravings for salty, sweet and fatty foods.
- Eating vegetables and/or a broth-based soup to begin your meal can fill your belly so you eat less.

Sarah Tagel, a medical nutritionist at The Nebraska Medical Center, says that most people can reduce their calorie intake by increasing their intake of fiber, lean proteins and non-starchy vegetables. "Make these foods the bulk of your meal as they are lower in calories, fill you up more and take longer to digest," she says. "The new 'My Plate' model recommends that one-half of your plate be filled with vegetables." You can use this advice to give your favorite recipes a new look by adding colorful fruits and vegetables to the mix.

Tagel offers these additional tips to help fill you up and assist with weight loss:

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day and while preparing dinner.
- Double the amount of vegetables in recipes.
- Sprinkle food with hot pepper,



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which can rev up your metabolism and help you burn additional calories.

- Increase fiber intake by choosing whole-grain pastas, cereals and crackers.
- Eat more fruits such as apples, oranges, melon and grapes that have a high water content and tend to fill you up more.
- Eat small, healthy snacks throughout the day.
- Eat breakfast. Research has shown that breakfast eaters lose weight more successfully.
- Add additional vegetables to your sandwich or frozen meal.
- Eat slowly and eat only until you are satisfied, not until you are stuffed.
- Weigh yourself once a week.

- Decrease your leisure screen time.
- Exercise for at least one hour on most days to achieve the best weight loss results.

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