



HEALTHY HEART NEWS

Volume 1 | Spring 2015

Beverly Keefer, Director of Cardiovascular Services / Mehul Patel, Medical Director of SLCH Cardiovascular Institute

St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital's Cardiovascular Institute is committed to you and our community. We pride ourselves on being an engaged partner with the many constituencies that we serve. As part of our commitment to meeting your heart health needs, we have developed this quarterly newsletter filled with information that can improve the quality of, and in some cases, help save your life. If there are topics that you would like to see covered in future editions, please e-mail Beverly Keefer, Director of Cardiovascular Services, Cardiac Cath and Interventional Radiology at bkeefer@slchospital.org.

WHY CARDIAC REHAB MIGHT SAVE YOUR LIFE

Despite the proven effectiveness of cardiac rehabilitation, fewer than half of heart attack survivors participate in these programs. Research shows those heart disease patients involved in cardiac rehab are 47 percent less likely to have a recurrent heart attack after two years. Cardiac rehabilitation helps reduce certain risk factors for heart disease, and encourages patients to have healthy eating and lifestyle habits which are essential for the prevention of heart diseases.

For more information about the St. Luke's Cornwall Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation program, call (845) 458-4760.

STAYING WELL DURING WARMER MONTHS

The arrival of spring and summer means days at the pool, family picnics, baseball and other outdoor activities. Here are some tips to keep you and your family physically active in the warmer months —

- **Hydrate!** Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity to avoid dehydration. For low-calorie flavor, add slices of your favorite fruits such as melon, oranges, berries, or even cucumber or mint to a pitcher of water and refrigerate for two hours.
- **Protect your family from the sun.** Wear wide-brimmed hats, always apply water-resistant sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and reapply every two hours.
- **Heat safety.** Avoid intense activities between noon and 3 p.m., when the sun is at its strongest.
- **Dress for the heat.** Wear lightweight, light-colored clothing. Choose light, breathable fabrics such as cotton and wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- **Head indoors.** When the heat gets unbearable, try indoor activities such as basketball, swimming, yoga or racquetball at your local recreation center.



SYMPTOMS OF HEAT EXHAUSTION

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include headaches, heavy sweating, cold and moist skin, chills, dizziness or fainting, a weak and rapid pulse, muscle cramps, fast and shallow breathing, nausea, vomiting or both.

If you experience these symptoms, move to a cooler place, stop exercising and cool down immediately by dousing yourself with cold water and re-hydrating. You may need to seek medical attention.

MAY IS STROKE AWARENESS MONTH

- Someone has a stroke every 40 seconds.
- One out of six people will suffer a stroke in his or her lifetime.
- Stroke is the leading cause of disability in the United States.
- Stroke is the No. 3 cause of death in the United States.
- SLCH received a fourth "Get With the Guidelines Gold Plus Performance Achievement Award" from the American Stroke Association.



TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR RISK FACTORS

Anyone can have a stroke at any age. The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from a stroke is to understand your risk and how to manage it. Your chances of having a stroke increase if you have certain risk factors, including high blood pressure, smoking, peripheral artery disease, carotid or other artery disease, atrial fibrillation and other heart disease, high blood cholesterol, poor diet, physical inactivity, and obesity.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

During a stroke, every minute counts! By knowing the signs and symptoms of stroke, you can be prepared to take quick action and perhaps save a life — maybe even your own.

SIGNS OF STROKE

- Sudden **numbness** or weakness in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden **confusion**, trouble speaking or difficulty understanding speech
- Sudden **trouble seeing** in one or both eyes
- Sudden **trouble walking**, dizziness, loss of balance or lack of coordination
- Sudden **severe headache** with no known cause

If you or someone else has any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately.

ACTING F.A.S.T. IS KEY FOR STROKE

Acting F.A.S.T. can help stroke patients get the help that they need. The most effective stroke treatments are only available if the stroke is recognized and diagnosed within three hours of the first symptoms. Stroke patients may not be eligible for the most beneficial treatments if they don't arrive at the hospital in time. If you think someone may be having a stroke, act F.A.S.T. and perform the following simple test —

- F—Face** Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?
- A—Arms** Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- S—Speech** Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is their speech slurred or strange?
- T—Time** If you observe any of these signs, **call 9-1-1 immediately.**

Note the time when any symptoms first appear. Do not drive to the hospital or let someone else drive you. Call an ambulance so that medical personnel can begin life-saving treatment on the way to the emergency room.

GUIDE TO ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a type of heart arrhythmia that makes your heart beat out of rhythm. In this condition, your heart experiences electrical signals that are rapid and irregular. This causes the upper chambers of your heart to contract irregularly, which leads to an incomplete pumping of blood.

CAUSES OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Most commonly, AF results from complications resulting from different conditions such as high blood pressure, heart failure coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathy, congenital heart disease and age. One of the main causes of atrial fibrillation is hypertension, or high blood pressure, as it puts varying amount of strain on your heart muscle. Viral infections, being overweight, smoking and previous heart surgery are factors that can make a person more prone to AF.

SYMPTOMS OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

As suddenly as they appear, symptoms and signs of atrial fibrillation may disappear. For some people there may be no symptoms. Those who do have symptoms may experience rapid pulse, regular or irregular pulse, and palpitations. AF can be a precursor to stroke.

TREATMENT FOR ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Diagnoses of atrial fibrillation is done via an electrocardiogram (ECG, EKG) to record the electrical activity of the heart. Following a positive diagnosis, the primary goal of atrial fibrillation treatment is to reset heartbeat rhythm and prevent the formation of blood clots. Treatment may vary and includes medicines, procedures and changes in lifestyle. Medication such as anticoagulation drugs are used to prevent stroke, which can result from blood clots forming in the heart.