

# HEALTHY HEART NEWS

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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 Keefe, Director of Cardiovascular Services, Cardiac Cath and Interventional Radiology at [bkeefe@slchospital.org](mailto:bkeefe@slchospital.org).

## TIPS FOR FALL FITNESS

Fall is a great time of year to start a fitness program, creating good habits for the holiday seasons and the upcoming winter months. With a change of seasons comes a time to rethink and restart!

Here are some ways to start making the most of the fall season and take care of your heart and health!



1. **Take advantage of the fall weather.** Fall can be a treat for the body — the crisp air, apple picking, pumpkin carving, fall foliage and the feel of leaves underfoot. The fall months are a great time to get outdoors, exercise and enjoy the cooler temperatures. Walking, hiking and cycling are all awesome in the fall and great for your heart. Raking leaves or doing some fall outdoor yard work is a great way to get the heart pumping. Remember it doesn't have to seem like exercise to be a great workout.

Your heart can benefit from as little as 60 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week. A sedentary lifestyle is bad for the entire cardiovascular system. The more active you are the more you will benefit. Walking alone can lower your blood pressure, lower your cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. Remember to be safe in the fall while exercising. If walking or running outdoors – remember to wear a reflective vest and carry a flashlight. Dress in layers. Before your body warms up you may feel chilled but once the blood gets pumping you will get much warmer and don't forget the sunglasses – fall sun can be blinding at certain times of the day.

2. **Fall is the perfect time to gain new physical skills!** Many classes at gyms get started in the fall so look around and see if there is a new activity that will interest you.
3. **Be an active TV watcher!** Many people get geared up for new TV shows in the fall. You can walk or run in place while you watch. During the commercials, get up and exercise in place. In a one-hour show, you probably have close to 20 minutes of commercial interruptions. Exercising is a great way to pass that time!
4. **Integrate exercise into your everyday life.** Try parking farther away from your destination, take stairs instead of elevators, take a walk during your lunch break, or walk around the track while the kids are at their sporting events.
5. **Rejuvenate both your mind and body.** Reduce your stress. Stress, if left untreated, can cause emotional, psychological and physical problems. The relationship between stress, heart disease and sudden death has been recognized for many years. The best thing to do is to eliminate the cause of the stress. Episodes of anxiety can cause dramatic, temporary spikes in your blood pressure.

## WHAT IS BLOOD PRESSURE?

When your heart beats, it pumps blood through your body to give it the energy and oxygen it needs. As the blood moves, it pushes against the sides of the blood vessels. The strength of this exertion is your blood pressure. If your blood pressure is too high, it puts extra strain on your arteries and your heart, which may lead to heart attacks and strokes.

It is important to follow up with your health care provider to get an accurate picture of your blood pressure. If your blood pressure reading is higher than normal, your doctor may take several readings over time. A single high reading does not necessarily mean that you have high blood pressure. However, if continual readings remain elevated your doctor will likely want you to begin a treatment program. Such a program almost always includes lifestyle changes and may include medications.

## SYSTOLIC vs. DIASTOLIC BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio like this: 117/76 mm Hg.

### Systolic

The top number measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats (when the heart muscle contracts).

### Diastolic

The bottom number, which is also the lower of the two numbers, measures the pressure in the arteries between heartbeats (when the heart muscle is resting between beats and refilling with blood).



## FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO CONTROL YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE

1. **Know your numbers:** most people diagnosed with high blood pressure want to stay below 140/90, but your health care provider can tell you your personal target blood pressure.
2. **Make a Plan:** Work with your healthcare provider to make a plan to lower your blood pressure
3. **Make a few Lifestyle Changes:** In many cases this will be your doctor's first recommendation –
  - Lose weight
  - Eat healthier
  - Reduce your salt intake
  - Get active
  - Limit alcohol
4. **Have your blood pressure checked regularly.**
5. **Take medication as prescribed.**

*High Blood pressure can be fatal so it is important to know your blood pressure reading and what you can do to keep things under control.*

## WHY GET VACCINATED AGAINST THE FLU?

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. During recent flu seasons, between 80% and 90% of flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older. "Flu season" in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May. During this time, flu viruses are circulating at higher levels in the U.S. population. An annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get seasonal flu and spread it to others.

Flu vaccination should begin soon after vaccine becomes available, if possible by October. Since it takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body that protect against influenza virus infection, it is best that people get vaccinated so they are protected before influenza begins spreading in their community.

People with heart disease and those who have had a stroke are at high risk of developing complications from the flu. Infection and fever put extra stress on the heart so it is important to discuss getting the vaccination with your doctor.

