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High Blood Pressure basics

About a third of all American adults are dealing with high blood pressure.

This serious health problem, dubbed hypertension by medical professionals, often doesn't have any noticeable symptoms. Some people with high blood pressure aren't even aware of it, putting themselves at higher risk of stroke or heart disease - two of the leading causes of death in the U.S., according to the CDC.

DIAGNOSIS

Doctors will take two readings when you have your blood pressure checked. Sys-

tolic blood pressure is the upper number, and this figure indicates the pressure inside vour blood vessels as your heart beats. The lower number, on the other hand, is the diastolic pressure, which in turn measures the vessel pressure when the heart is at rest between beats. The normal range for blood pressure is 120/80, with a measurement of 140/90 and above considered high blood pressure.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

Unfortunately, the causes of

high blood pressure are sometimes unclear. Hypertension typically develops slowly over a long period of time. It can be influenced by some lifestyle choices, particularly eating an unhealthy diet, using tobacco products and lack of exercise. Age and being overweight are also risk factors, but unseen things like bles and fruit, fiber and whole genetics sometimes play a role. Secondary hypertension, a related condition, can be caused by kidney or thyroid problems, genetic defects, or sometimes medications meant to help with other issues. The secondary kind of hypertension has a more sudden onset, and may also lead to much higher blood pressure readings than primary hypertension.

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TREATMENT OPTIONS

High blood pressure isn't always preventable. Still, changes in our daily lifestyles can reduce the risk and help with managing this dangerous health condition. Switch to a diet that is low in trans and saturated fats, dietary cholesterol and salt. Eating more vegetagrains has a direct impact on heart health, while also helping vou maintain a healthier weight. Get more exercise. For most, that means at least a half hour per day of walking, biking, running, swimming, yoga or hiking. Ease into these new activities if you haven't been regularly exercising lately. Take shorter walks at first, with lots of stretching, and make sure your exercises are low-impact.



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Stress Management Techniques

Chronic stress can have a physical impact, particularly on our hearts.

The body reacts to stressors by releasing adrenaline which then causes both our heart rate and our breathing to quicken. Blood pressure increases like those aren't a concern if they only occasionally happen.

Continued high blood pressure from stress over a period of days, weeks or longer can begin to damage artery walls, while weakening our immune systems. Chronic stress is also known to lead to poor eating habits, less sleep and exercise, and increased intake of alcohol. These symptoms, in turn, are linked with more instances of heart disease.



tions to help us deal with stress. We have to create personalized approaches to identify and manage the situations that make us feel pressured.

heart and vessel systems. Doctors recommend stress-releasing exercise and techniques that encourage relaxation. Try voga or meditation, listen to calming sounds or music, or take a break for a friendly conversation or stroll around the park. Step away from a situation when you start to feel pressured. Try to avoid triggers, if possible. When they can't be avoided, try to limit the time you spend dealing © adobe stock with them.

with your weight, back pain

and generally tense muscles.

The worst of these symptoms

puts additional stress on your

REACH OUT FOR HELP

Sometimes, these situations simply become too much to manage by ourselves. Or unrelated problems begin to accumulate. These might include a loved one's chronic issues or our own, relationship issues with a partner or a child, continuing financial or career problems, or dealing with the aftermath of some form of trauma. Schedule a visit with a health care provider or counselor to discuss therapeutic options or other recommended treatment plans.

HOW TO MANAGE

Unfortunately, researchers have yet to develop medica-



ithPlan ahead to reduce them, orite per-completely avoid these issues.to iden-If stress can't be properlytuationsmanaged, there's a huge risksured.that worry, anger and depression will take hold. You mayfind it harder to focus, andthe overstressed tend to dis-

sion will take hold. You may find it harder to focus, and the overstressed tend to display less patience. Mistakes or conflict with others may follow, only making things worse.

IMPACTS ON OUR BODY

Physical symptoms are closely related to chronic stress, including headaches, an upset stomach, fluctuations

Look for the Signs

The chances of dying of a heart attack have soared over the last few years, an especially troubling fact considering that heart disease was already a leading cause of death for Americans.

That's why it's never been more important to be aware of the signs associated with a heart attack. Monitor your own health, while looking for these warning signals among family, friends and acquaintances. Acting fast could save a life.

SAVING A LIFE

As many as one in five heart attacks are considered "silent," meaning they happen without much or any notice. But the other 80% are accompanied by signs that should set off alarm bells. If you notice them, be ready to leap into action. Transport the person to the hospital or call for medical assistance. The sooner help arrives, the more likely they are to survive.

WATCH FOR THIS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that the most crucial warning sign is chest pain, usually on the left

side or center. Heart attacks are usually associated with a feeling of squeezing, pressure or fullness. Pain might also radiate to other areas like the back, shoulders, arms, jaw, neck or upper torso. Be aware of any trouble breathing or shortness of breath, particularly when the person is not active. Nausea or vomiting may occur, along with a stomachache or heartburn. Another worry is persistent dizziness, or feeling lightheaded and fatigued. Some heart attacks are accompanied by a feeling of feverishness like a cold sweat.

WHAT TO DO

Of course, many of these symptoms point to other, less

urgent issues. That's why it's so crucial to understand and share your family history with a doctor. They'll also perform regular physical examinations to track your heart health journey. You may want to seek medical care even if you're experiencing new pain, having trouble breathing or feeling unusually tired. Be particularly cautious if more than one of these symptoms is experienced. Call 911 right away in the event of an emergency. EMTs will begin treatment right away. Those who've had previous heart attacks are also reminded that they are not all the same. Symptoms may present quite differently the next time.



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Heart-Healthy Exercises

Adults should get at least two and a half hours of moderately intense aerobic exercise each week.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends this activity take place in 10-minute intervals, or more. Focus on these specific areas to improve your heart health:

AEROBIC EXERCISES

Cardio helps lower blood pressure, controls blood sugar and improves circulation. Moderate-intensity exercises include brisk walking, biking on a level terrain, gardening, leisurely swimming, and dancing. For those who often find themselves overscheduled, opt for a shorter but more vigorous routine. This would include jogging, swimming laps, biking over 10 miles per hour, hiking uphill and playing soccer. The gener- intensity exercise. Just be sure



al guidelines state that one minute of these types of vigorous activities equals roughly two minutes of moderate-

to check with your doctor or personal health care professional before you get started.

STRENGTH TRAINING

This doesn't have to mean heaving huge barbells. Lowerintensity resistance training can help lower bad cholesterol levels while reducing your risk of having a stroke or heart attack. These routines include pushups, squats and sit-ups, as well as lifting weights. The CDC recommends some sort of instead of jerky, in order to strength or resistance training at least twice a week. Besides toning muscles, these exercis-

es also strengthen our bones and connective tissues, lower our risk of injury, and improve the general quality of our lives. Just be sure to work all of the major muscle groups, not just vour arms. That includes shoulders, chest, legs, hips, back and abs. Repetitions should be in sets of 8-12.

FLEXIBILITY ROUTINES

Stretching can improve your balance and flexibility, while reducing the chances of cramps, muscle pain and joint aches. The most popular flexibility-improving exercises include voga, Pilates and tai chi. Many enroll in official classes or invest in online programs, but it's not required. A few timely stretching exercises in your own living room every other morning can yield huge results. Stretch 3-5 times in a variety of poses during every session, going slowly until you can go no further without pain. Breathe normally during these stretches. Your motion should be smooth avoid injury. Hold the stretches for about 30 seconds each time.

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How to pair food with exercise

Food pairing is often discussed in terms of which wines best complement particular dishes. But pairing food with exercise merits consideration, as it can create the balance needed for overall health.

Food plays an important role in workouts, giving individuals the energy necessary to perform at their peak. Timing meals appropriately and knowing what to eat before or after a workout can make a difference.

CREATINE BENEFITS WEIGHT LIFTING

Creatine is an organic acid that is an important ingredient for short duration, high-intensity exercises, such as weight lifting. According to Kelly Pritchett, Ph.D., RDN, director of the nutrition graduate program and assistant professor of nutrition and exercise science at Central Washington University, foods rich in protein from meat, poultry and fish can help optimize stores of creatine. Creatine also may be found in foods and beverages targeted to athletes, like protein shakes and snacks.

PRE-WORKOUT MIXES INCLUDE PROTEIN AND CARBOHYDRATES

A snack or mini meal one to three hours before a workout



is ideal so that digestive issues don't occur during a workout when the body directs more blood to muscles than digestion. Food pairings that include a high quality carbohydrate, like whole grain bread or oatmeal, with a protein source, such as peanut butter or milk, can be key. Blood sugar will stay steady with whole grain carbs, and the protein will help you to feel full and avoid overeating after a workout.

GLUCOSE, GLYCOGEN AND RUNNING

Distance running or other exercises that require endurance, such as skating or biking, require ample energy stores. Although low-carbohydrate diets are popular for people looking to lose weight, they're not ideal for people who engage in endurance sports and need carbohydrates for energy, states Johns Hopkins Medicine. Endurance athletes need more carbs than those who aren't training. These activities use both glucose in the blood and glycogen, which is sugar stored in the liver and muscles. Eating plenty of healthy carbs helps bolster energy stores. Whole fruits and grains are good sources of carbohydrates.

BENEFITS OF BANANAS

For those with limited time to grab a bite before a workout, bananas might be the perfect option. According to WebMD, bananas have easily digestible carbs that will not weigh you down. The potassium in bananas also may help prevent muscle cramps during and after workouts.

POWER UP WITH POTATOES

Potatoes are whole foods, meaning they contain a balance of all the essential amino acids, despite being low in whole protein. They're also rich in vitamin B6, which is critical to protein metabolism, says Mark Anthony, Ph.D., adjunct professor of science and nutrition at St. Edwards University, Austin. Potatoes also contain the right mix of sodium and potassium to maintain an electrolyte balance in the body.

RECOVER RIGHT

A mix of carbohydrates and lean proteins also is ideal for exercise recovery. Mix in good fats like avocado and olive oil. Carbs will help replenish depleted levels of glycogen and high-quality protein will help build and repair muscle. Don't forget to drink plenty of fluids to replace what was lost while working out.

Food and exercise go hand in hand. It's important to eat well to keep the body in top form.



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The Importance of a Healthy Diet

One thing that's more certain, however, is what poor diets can do. There's a direct correlation between what you eat and your heart health.

RESEARCH BREAKTHROUGHS

As our understanding of the role diet plays has grown, so has the research behind creating a better way to eat. Experts at the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, for instance, have spent decades creating and modifying a single diet plan in order to address this critical need. The DASH diet, which stands for **Dietary Approaches to Stop** Hypertension, underwent rigorous study before being unveiled. Repeated tests found that it helped reduce so-called "bad" cholesterol and blood pressure numbers, two key risk factors in the development of heart disease. Some saw lowered blood pressure within just a few weeks. Those who cut down on salt as well enjoyed even better results.

RECOMMENDED APPROACHES

Whether on the official DASH diet plan or something similar, the concepts are universal in heart-healthy eating. Eat nutrientrich meals consisting of vegetables, whole grains, fish, fruit, lowfat dairy, poultry, nuts, beans and healthy oils. At the same time, limit your intake of fatty meat, sodium, sweets, full-fat dairy and sugary beverages. Experts recommend 6-8 servings of grains, 4-5 servings of vegetables, 4-5 servings of fruits, 2-3 servings of fatfree or low-fat dairy products. Only have six or fewer servings of meat, fish and poultry, 2-3 servings of fats and oils - and just 2,300 mg of sodium. Limit sweets to five servings or less per week.

INSIDE THE VARYING NUMBERS

How many servings a person should eat within those healthy ranges depends on an array of factors, including activity level, age and gender. In general, base your diet on about 2,000 calories a day. But you may need to consume more calories if you are more active. As we age, we naturally need fewer calories. Men generally need more calories than women. Look for a helpful chart from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute at https://rb.gy/gmf4f8 to figure out your personal caloric needs.

Sunday, January 28, 2024 9

The Role of Sleep

Not getting enough shut-eye might have wider implications.

of poor sleep or even occasional insomnia. Stress, the inability to wind down, and eating or drinking too late at night will sometimes get in the way. But regularly missing out on the required amount of rest, or suffering from sleep apnea, has been linked to significant implications for your heart by the National Institutes of Health. If falling asleep – or remaining asleep — has become difficult or impossible, discuss the issue with your doctor. Sleep can have a huge impact on your heart health.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Quality sleep is a key element of general physical and mental health, according to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. Deficient sleep patterns have obvious and immediate impacts, including attention problems, headaches and drowsiness. Your risk of accidents jumps, as does an eventual development of chronic illness. The institute recommends at least 7-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep per day. Regularly getting less can lead to high blood pressure and other potentially serious heart issues.

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

There's nothing to worry about eventually develop potentially if you have a restless night here

Anyone can struggle with a bout or there. But experts point to several warning signs if there is a larger problem with your sleep patterns. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine has outlined the most urgent issues. Talk to your doctor if you're experiencing unusual fatigue or sleepiness during daytime hours, consistently interrupted sleep or chronic snoring, consistent difficulty in concentration, irritability or headaches, and memory loss. A physician will do a physical examination and blood tests, but also discuss your work and life. In some cases, lifestyle choices may be recommended. If the problem persists, you may be enrolled in a sleep study.

COMMON SLEEP ISSUE

Many people unknowingly suffer from sleep apnea, a condition that prevents us from entering the deep periods of rest that are essential for brain and body health, including the heart. In fact, the interruptions associated with sleep apnea have been directly linked to the development of cardiovascular issues. The National Institutes of Health reported that men who've been diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea are 58% more likely to deadly coronary heart disease.



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Facts about women's heart health

If asked to name the No. 1 killer of women, many people might be excused for providing an incorrect answer. Various issues affect women's health, and some issues garner more attention than others. But nothing kills more women each year than cardiovascular disease, which the American Heart Association notes causes one in three deaths of women each year.

That cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of women each year is not the only surprising fact in regard to women and heart health. The following are some additional interesting facts, courtesy of the American Heart Association and other sources.

- The 2019 Global Burden of Disease study from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimated there are 275 million women around the world with cardiovascular disease.
- Awareness among women regarding the threat posed by heart disease has decreased dramatically in recent years. In 2020, a special report from the AHA indicated that, in 2009, 65 percent of women were aware that heart disease is their leading cause of death. By 2019, that figure had dropped to 44 percent.
- Heart disease is the No. 1 killer of new moms. The AHA notes that could be linked to a host of variables, including obesity. Data from a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that examined pregnancies in 48 states and the District of Columbia found that pre-pregnancy obesity increased by 8 percent between 2011 and 2015. During that same period, severe pre-pregnancy obesity increased by 14 percent. Obesity is considered a significant risk factor for heart disease.
- The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Cana-



da reports that the No. 1 cause of premature death in women in Canada is heart disease and stroke.

- More than half of all high blood pressure deaths are in women. The AHA reports that nearly 52 percent of deaths caused by hypertension (high blood pressure) occur in women.
- Nearly 58 percent of Black women have hypertension. That's the highest percentage among women of any race or ethnicity.
- Despite the significant percentage of global heart disease deaths affecting women, a 2021 study published in the journal The Lancet found that cardiovascular disease in women is understudied, under-recognized, underdiagnosed, and undertreated.
- The Canadian Women's Heart Health Cen-

tre reports that menopause before the age of 45 is linked to a 50 percent higher risk of heart disease.

- The World Health Organization reports that one-third of all ischaemic heart disease diagnoses across the globe are attributable to high cholesterol. According to the CWHHC, one in two women have elevated cholesterol.
- A 2017 study of more than 19,000 people who had cardiac events found that only 39 percent of women received CPR from bystanders in public compared to 45 percent of men. Researchers linked that disparity to fears of being accused of inappropriate touching, potential lawsuits and concerns that administering CPR to women could cause physical injury.

Did you know?

According to the Canadian Women's Heart Health Centre, 80 percent of the risk factors for heart disease are within women's control. That's a significant point of interest, as the 2019 Global Burden of Disease Study from The Lancet Commission concluded there are approximately 275 million women across the globe with cardiovascular disease. The CWHHC reports that heart disease is the No. 1 killer of women worldwide, but recognizing controllable risk factors could decrease cases of heart disease in women by a potentially significant margin. Among the controllable risk factors are:

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Physical inactivity
- Unhealthy diet
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol





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The Dangers of Cholesterol

You've likely heard about the problem of high cholesterol, even if you don't quite understand it. After all, it lurks silently in things we consume every day and there often is no way to know if your numbers are out of balance without a trip to the doctor.

You can easily have a huge problem without even knowing it. One of the main impacts of high cholesterol is blood pressure, which is a similarly silent danger to your health.

DEFINING THE TERM

As many as one in six American adults has high cholesterol, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This fatty, waxy substance is produced naturally in the liver, and is needed to digest some foods and in the creation of hormones. It's found in our diets too, when we eat meat, butter, cheese and eggs, among other things.

Experts have more recently divided cholesterol into so-

called "good" and "bad" categories. Low-density lipoproteins - referred to simply as LDL are considered the bad kind, while high-density lipoproteins (HDL) are known as good cholesterol. When LDL reaches excessive levels in the body, it can begin to attach to blood vessel walls. This narrowing from plaque increases the risk of stroke and heart attacks. HDL, on the other hand, can absorb LDL and then carry it back to the liver where these proteins are then flushed out of the body. In this way, LDL lowers your risk of heart disease.

RISK FACTORS

Diets that are high in trans and saturated fats can contribute to high cholesterol, along with lack of exercise, tobacco use and excessive alcohol. Chronic health conditions like obesity and diabetes are also risk factors. Talk to relatives to better understand family history, since that can play a role in the incidence of high cholesterol, as well.

WHAT TO DO

Schedule a doctor's appointment where a series of tests will be performed. Those num-

bers will help you gauge your blood pressure and cholesterol levels — both good and bad. If you are out of balance, changes in lifestyle will likely be recommended, and perhaps a prescription. Often, doctors recommend lowering the fat content in your diet, along with animal products and sugars. Increase high-fiber foods like whole grains and beans, along with vegetables, fruit and lean meat.





Get the skinny on triglycerides

People who see their doctors for routine wellness exams typically undergo certain blood tests during that process. In addition to a complete blood count (CBC), doctors frequently request lipid panels that indicate cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

While cholesterol is a familiar term, triglycerides may be more of a mystery to the average Joe.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, triglycerides are lipids (waxy fats) that provide energy to the body. The body produces triglycerides and also gets them through food. Triglycerides are actual fats, while cholesterol is a waxy, odorless substance made by the liver. Since cholesterol cannot mix or dissolve in the blood, the liver puts cholesterol together with triglycerides to move the fatty mixture (lipoproteins) throughout the body.

When a person eats, any extra calories not used for energy are converted into triglycerides, which are stored in fat cells. Later, hormones release these triglycerides as energy between meals. Individuals who regularly eat more calories than they burn, particularly from high-carbohydrate foods, may have high triglycerides.

According to the Mayo Clinic, high triglyceride levels ple carbohydrates, such those made with white f may contribute to a hardening or thickening of the arteries, which is a condition known as arteriosclerosis.

For healthy adults, normal triglyceride levels should be under 150 mg/dL. Values of 151 to 200 mg/dL are considered borderline high, and anything over 201 is high or very high. In addition to arteriosclerosis, high triglyceride levels can raise the risk of cardiovascular disease and pancreatitis.

Overeating, having a family history of high cholesterol, drinking alcohol to excess, being overweight or obese, and having unmanaged diabetes can contribute to high cholesterol levels. Smoking, the presence of thyroid disease and certain medications, like diuretics and hormones, also may raise the risk of developing high triglyceride levels.

Lifestyle changes similar to those recommended to manage high cholesterol can help people lower their triglyceride levels. These include eating a nutritious diet, doing aerobic exercises regularly and maintaining a moderate weight. Individuals should avoid simple carbohydrates, such as those made with white flour, fructose, trans fats, and hydrogenated oils or fats. Low triglyceride levels are not typically a cause for concern. But in these instances malnutrition or malabsorption could be the culprit.

Individuals should undergo routine health screenings to determine if high triglycerides are part of their lipid panels.



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Understanding resting heart rate

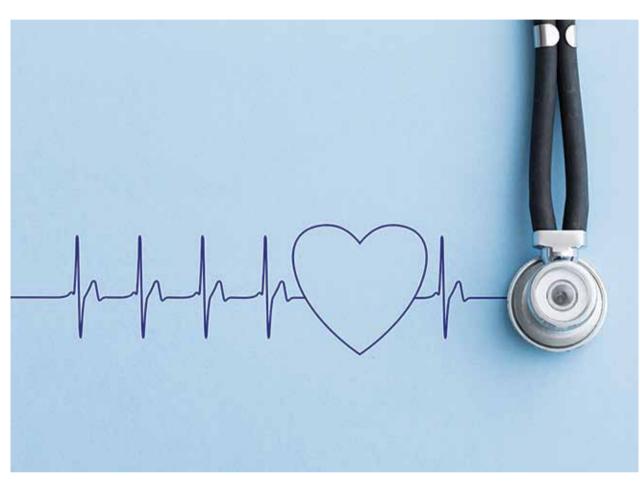
Understanding how the heart works can help people become more attuned to their personal health and wellness. For example, recognition of the importance of heart rate may shed light on aspects of heart health that people may otherwise never think about.

According to HealthDirect, heart rate, or pulse, is the number of times the heart beats per minute. A resting heart rate refers to the heart rate when one is relaxed, sitting down or lying down. For normal, healthy adults, a resting heart rate ranges between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

The American Heart Association indicates that resting heart rate is the heart pumping the lowest amount of blood needed because the body is not exerting itself. A lower resting heart rate is common among people who are very physically fit – sometimes as low as 40 bpm. This results from the heart muscle being very athletic and not having to work very hard to maintain a steady beat.

Resting heart rate differs according to age. Verywell Health says babies and children have higher resting heart rates because their hearts are smaller. Resting heart rate will gradually decrease until about age 10, at which point it stabilizes through adulthood. Here's the expected resting heart rates based on age.

0-1 month; 70-190 bpm 1-11 months; 80-160 bpm 1-2 years; 80-130 bpm 3-4 years; 80-120 bpm 5-6 years; 75-115 bpm 7-9 years; 70-110 bpm



10 years+; 60-100 bpm Athlete; 40-60 bpm

Knowing one's typical resting heart rate can help people stay apprised of their personal health. A lower-than normal resting heart (bradycardia) could indicate a congenital heart defect, a heart blockage, heart damage, or abnormally high blood calcium. It also may indicate hypothyroidism, hypothermia or air temperature, body position, emoother conditions.

A higher resting heart rate may suggest other issues, such as anemia, obesity, dehydration, fever, heart failure, hyperthyroidism, or overconsumption of stimulants like caffeine or nicotine.

Resting heart rate is not directly linked to blood pressure and is not an indication of blood pressure. Heart rate is measured on the inside of the wrist or on the artery in the neck at the base of the jaw. Pulse should be counted for 30 seconds and then multiplied by two to find beats per minute.

Individuals should keep in mind that tions, body size, and medication use can affect heart rate. Checking heart rate several times can provide a more accurate perception of resting heart rate. Any concerns should be discussed with a doctor.

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Diabetes Wellness Program: Pre-Diabetes and Diabetes Wayne HealthCare, Harrison Street Entrance, Community Rooms RSVP by February 12 | 937.569.6750 or karen.droesch@waynehealthcare.org

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 | 1:30-2:30 PM

Health & Wellness Event: Let's Get to the Heart of the Matter Chestnut Village Community Center, Brethren Retirement Community 750 Chestnut St., Greenville, OH 45331 Questions? 937.569.6504 or robyn.feitshans@waynehealthcare.org

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20 | 5:30 PM

Healthy Moments: Heart Matters–Exploring Atrial Fibrillation & Your Heart Journey Wayne HealthCare, Harrison Street Entrance, Community Rooms 1-2 RSVP by February 16 | 937.569.6504 or robyn.feitshans@waynehealthcare.org

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 | 12:00-1:00 PM

Cooking Demonstration: Cooking for the Heart Wayne HealthCare, Harrison Street Entrance, Community Room 2 RSVP by February 26 | 937.569.6750 or karen.droesch@waynehealthcare.org

THURSDAYS, FEBRUARY 1 - MAY 16 | 3:00-4:00 PM*

LifeSteps® Weight Management Program | \$150/program fee

*14 group sessions + 11 clinical exercise sessions (scheduled for a later time) Wayne HealthCare, Harrison Street Entrance, Community Rooms Questions? 937.569.6750 or karen.droesch@waynehealthcare.org