FEBRUARY 2013 / ISSUE 6

EAP
OHIO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Frontlinefocus

Addressing the Needs of Ohio's Dedicated Public Servants and Their Families Since 1984

Did You Know? February is Heart Disease Awareness Month

Women and Heart Disease

By National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Public domain

What is heart disease?

Heart disease is a number of abnormal conditions affecting the heart and the blood vessels in the heart. Types of heart disease include:

- **Coronary artery disease (CAD)** is the most common type and is the leading cause of heart attacks. When you have CAD, your arteries become hard and narrow. Blood has a hard time getting to the heart, so the heart does not get all the blood it needs. CAD can lead to:
  - *Angina.* Angina is chest pain or discomfort that happens when the heart does not get enough blood. It may feel like a pressing or squeezing pain, often in the chest, but sometimes the pain is in the shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back. It can also feel like indigestion (upset stomach). Angina is not a heart attack, but having angina means you are more likely to have a heart attack.
  - *Heart attack.* A heart attack occurs when an artery is severely or completely blocked, and the heart does not get the blood it needs for more than 20 minutes.
- **Heart failure** occurs when the heart is not able to pump blood through the body as well as it should. This means that other organs, which normally get blood from the heart, do not get enough blood. It does NOT mean that the heart stops. Signs of heart failure include:
  - Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air)
  - Swelling in feet, ankles, and legs
  - Extreme tiredness
- **Heart arrhythmias** are changes in the beat of the heart. Most people have felt dizzy, faint, out of breath or had chest pains at one time. These changes in heartbeat are, for most people, harmless. As you get older, you are more likely to have arrhythmias. Don't panic if you have a few flutters or if your heart races once in a while. If you have flutters AND other symptoms such as dizziness or shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air), call 911 right away.

Heart Disease in Women

One in three American women die of heart disease. In 2003, almost twice as many women died of cardiovascular disease (both heart disease and stroke) than from all cancers combined. The older a woman gets, the more likely she is to get heart disease. But women of all ages should be concerned about heart disease. All women should take steps to prevent heart disease.

Both men and women have heart attacks, but more women who have heart attacks die from them. Treatments can limit heart damage but they must be given as soon as possible after a heart attack starts. Ideally, treatment should start within one hour of the first symptoms. If you think you're having a heart attack, call 911 right away. Tell the operator your symptoms and that you think you're having a heart attack.

Heart Disease in Women of Color

African American and Hispanic American/Latina women are more likely to get heart disease because they tend to have more risk factors such as obesity, lack of exercise, high blood pressure, and diabetes than white women. Women of color also are more likely than white women to die of heart disease. If you're a woman of color, take steps to reduce your risk factors.

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Relationship Basics

By liveandworkwell.com

The birds are singing. The flowers are blooming. The sun is shining. Everything is perfect! It is the beginning of a new relationship. Committed through intensity, discovery and joy, a couple's feeling of "being in love" seems like it will last forever. Unfortunately, it won't.

This lovely feeling usually lasts only 6 to 18 months. Then reality hits and the couple enters into the second stage of building a relationship, the stage of work, growth, and finding ways of dealing with differences.

Making a relationship work means shedding fantasies about "living happily ever after." Growing a relationship is work and that work can be painful. It is by discarding the fantasies and going through the tough times that real intimacy is developed, and trust is grown and deepened.

The following are some common misconceptions couples must face and overcome:

We will always be happy together

All relationships have cycles. Remembering the good times may help people stay together when things aren't going well. But expecting that everything will always go well is the first step toward disappointment in a relationship.

We must share everything

Individuality is enhanced in solid relationships, not destroyed. Respecting individuality means allowing both people to follow their personal interests.

Fighting means it's over

If a couple doesn't care enough to fight, then there is little hope they will come to understand their differences. But fighting must be fair and involve clear communication and a commitment to working through these differences. Learning to fight fair keeps disagreements from turning into major conflicts and help couples stay connected emotionally.

All the things I don't like about myself or my partner will change. Although many things can be changed through consistent effort, significant change is both difficult and rare. Promising change may stand in the way of seeing things the way they are and building on that reality. Even when the fantasies are discarded, people bring their own unique problems to a relationship and are confronted by others they never anticipated. Strong relationships are characterized by the qualities that make it easier to deal with the difficult times.

Commitment to the relationship

Both people must share a commitment to work through challenges and to weather difficult times for the sake of maintaining the relationship. Even when things look bad and the "next step" is unclear, commitment makes it possible to stay together until the appropriate action is clear.

Trust

Trust is a belief in the integrity of the other person. It is based on a realistic view of who the other person is. It doesn't rule out spontaneity or change and become a set of rigid expectations. Trust is the belief that both parties will take into account what's important for the relationship, as they understand it, in critical decisions and actions.

Flexibility

Making a commitment to flexibility means being willing to discard established patterns and try different things. It also means developing a sense of when compromise is called for and when it's time to take a stand. Just as inflexible attitudes make relationships difficult; it is also possible to become too flexible.

Communication

In the process of building a relationship, couples need to develop their communication skills. They must be able to state beliefs, values and priorities and allow their partner to do the same. Listening is the key, assuming one knows what someone else thinks or feels can be destructive. Most of us can use some help to improve our communication skills. Books, classes and counselors are available everywhere. Depending on the couple's needs at any given time, they may want to focus on communication, assertiveness or dealing with anger.

Humor

The ability to lighten up and laugh makes it possible to let go of many problems and resolve conflict more quickly. Taking ourselves, our actions and relationships too seriously weighs us down.

The third stage of a relationship is companionship. And guess what? The birds still sing, the flowers still bloom, and the sun still comes out! Ongoing companionship means continuing to use the skills developed in the second stage of a relationship, but it also brings a wonderful sense of vitality, intimacy and authenticity. Companions find fulfillment in a relationship that is equal and reciprocal, and most importantly companions can be who they really are, reaping from each other's mutual respect, empathy and support.

Committed Relationships...

Mutually-satisfying relationships that will stand the test of time require overcoming a few common misconceptions, and together building trust, commitment, humor, flexibility, effective communication, and never losing one's own identity!

Be good to your heart...

Heart-Healthy Recipes

What makes a recipe heart healthy? That means the ingredients are thought to be good for your heart. You'll notice olive oil, nuts, and even chocolate in these recipes. Heart-healthy foods also are low in saturated fat and low in salt. So get cooking and then get eating!

Chocolate Sweetheart Parfaits

Just for fun, we'll start with dessert — Chocolate Sweetheart Parfaits. This creamy treat mixes yogurt, cocoa, berries, and then adds just a hint of chocolate shavings on top.

Blueberry Oatmeal Squares

Oatmeal doesn't have to be served in a bowl. Make your own whole-grain Blueberry Oatmeal Squares, studded with good-for-you blueberries.

Mediterranean Pasta Soup

This easy soup starts out with canned chicken stock and finishes rich in vegetables and taste. Mediterranean Pasta Soup is a bowl full of yum!

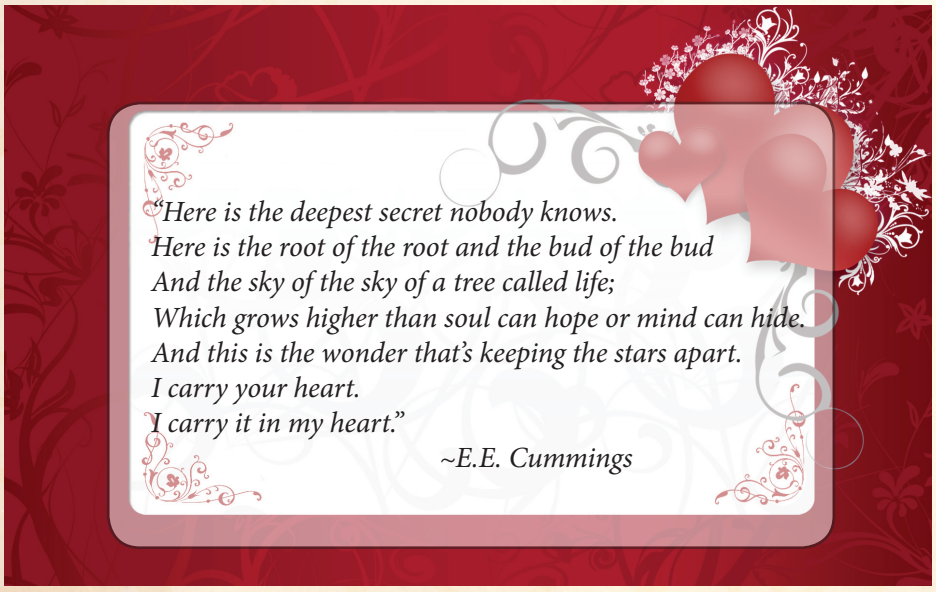
Olive-Crusted Salmon

Fish contains healthy, unsaturated fats, but Olive-Crusted Salmon packs a double punch when it comes to nutrition. The olives are heart-healthy, too!

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Salad

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Salad will fill your plate with color and flavor. Season it hot or mild, depending on how you like it.

www.womenheart.org



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Heart Disease Prevention

You can reduce your chances of getting heart disease by taking these steps:

- Know your blood pressure.
- Don't smoke.
- Get tested for diabetes.
- Get your cholesterol and triglyceride levels tested.
- Maintain a healthy weight.

Find healthy ways to cope with stress. Lower your stress level by talking to your friends, exercising or writing in a journal.

How do I know if I have heart disease?

Heart disease often has no symptoms. But, there are some signs to watch for. Chest or arm pain or discomfort can be a symptom of heart disease and a warning sign of a heart attack. Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air), dizziness, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), abnormal heartbeats or feeling very tired also are signs. Talk with your doctor if you're having any of these symptoms. Your doctor will take a medical history, do a physical exam, and may order tests.

What are the signs of a heart attack?

Not everyone has all of the warning signs of heart attack. And, sometimes these signs can go away and come back.
Symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Pain or discomfort in the center of the chest
- Pain or discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Other symptoms, such as shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air), breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) or feeling faint or woozy

Some women have more vague symptoms such as:

- Unusual tiredness
- Trouble sleeping
- Problems breathing
- Indigestion (upset stomach)
- Anxiety (feeling uneasy or worried)

If you think you or someone else may be having a heart attack, wait no more than a few minutes-five at most-before calling 911.

For More Information About Heart Disease

Contact: the **National Women's Health Information Center** at (800) 994-9662 or the following organizations:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
(301) 592-8573
Website: www.nhlbi.nih.gov

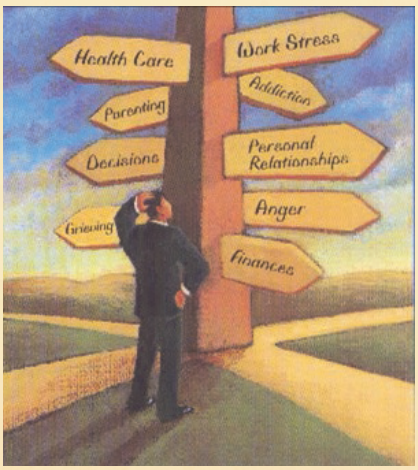
The Heart Truth
National Awareness Campaign for Women about Heart Disease - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
Website: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/hearttruth/index.htm

American Heart Association
(800) 242-8721
Website: www.americanheart.org

Women Heart:
The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease
(877) 771-0030
Website: www.womenheart.org

OEAP OHIO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression, or all three? Late for work too often? Has use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line: Never wonder if your concern is suitable for the OEAP. So, if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give the OEAP a call today.



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