

heart

healthnews®

Building a healthy community

by Cindie Rice, MSN, RN

CENTRAL MAINE MEDICAL Family's (CMMF's) vision of "Uncompromised pursuit of excellence in health care" is exemplified by five pillars; people, quality, customer service, growth and finance. Recently a sixth pillar, **community**, was added.

The sixth pillar's goal is for Central Maine Healthcare (CMHC) to "play a leadership role in strengthening the overall health of the communities we serve."

Communities have the ability to yield good health for their residents. Baseline needs include jobs and recreational opportunities, good housing, safe neighborhoods, availability of fresh foods, excellent public schools and a clean environment. The health system can support social services, empower local businesses and leaders and invest in community development. CMHC can serve to improve the community's health by partnering with agencies to identify needs and prioritize programs and services.

In May 2007, Healthy Androscoggin released "Androscoggin County Profile: A Portrait of Our Communities." Androscoggin County has an alarmingly high prevalence of diabetes, while heart disease, stroke and adult obesity are also areas of concern based on all forms of data. This profile should serve as a community healthcare planning tool.

Currently, Lewiston and Auburn counties lack a depart-

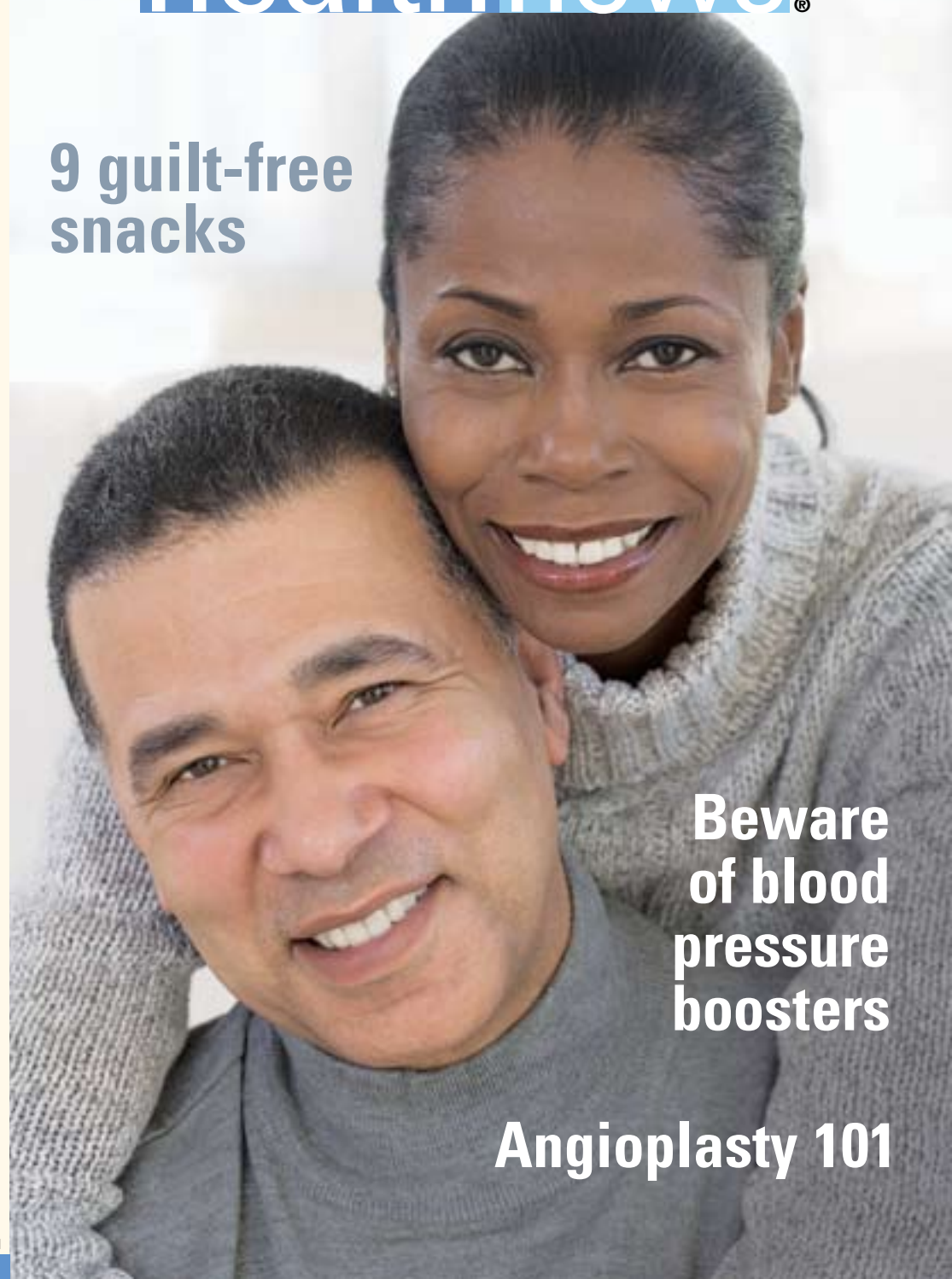
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For more information, call
207-753-3910, write to
Central Maine Heart and Vascular
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or visit us online at
www.cmhvi.org.

9 guilt-free snacks

Beware of blood pressure boosters

Angioplasty 101



MAKE MIDLIFE CHANGES FOR YOUR HEART'S SAKE

Midlife isn't too late to start making heart-smart changes, say researchers from the Medical University of South Carolina after a 12-year study of nearly 16,000 people, ages 45–64. Adopting new lifestyle behaviors—eating at least five fruits and vegetables every day, exercising two and a half hours a week, not smoking and maintaining a body mass index between 18.5 and 30—resulted in 35 percent fewer cardiovascular disease (CVD) incidents and a 40 percent lower mortality rate than people with less healthy behaviors.



did you know?

- ▶ High blood pressure is the no. 1 cause of congestive heart failure.
- ▶ Cigarettes do double damage: Not only does smoking increase the heart's need for oxygen, it restricts the amount of oxygen the heart receives.
- ▶ A trans fat-free food isn't necessarily healthy—it may be loaded with saturated fat instead.

PUMPING IRON IMPROVES HEART HEALTH

If you have cardiovascular disease, lifting weights—or pumping iron—is no longer a banned activity. Weight lifting can provide you with multiple benefits if you work out within guidelines, says an updated American Heart Association (AHA) statement. When undertaking a resistance training program, the AHA recommends you:

- Perform exercises rhythmically at a slow to moderate speed.
- Exhale during the exertion of lifting and inhale during relaxation instead of holding your breath and straining.
- Alternate between upper- and lower-body training.
- See your doctor before beginning a weight-training program.



THE ROAD TO CLOGGED ARTERIES

Living near noisy, heavily trafficked streets may do more than bother your ears; the long-term exposure to air pollution may put your heart at risk. Those are the findings of a German study of nearly 4,500 adults, ages 45 to 74. After laboratory tests and clinical examinations, study subjects underwent electron-beam computed tomography to determine coronary artery calcification (CAC), or hardening of the fatty plaques in an artery's inner lining. After taking other risk factors into account, researchers found that people living within 160 feet of heavy traffic faced a 63 percent greater risk of atherosclerosis than those living more than 640 feet away. CAC can lead to heart attack or stroke. The study appears in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*.

SOFT DRINKS MAY BE HARD ON YOUR HEART

Enjoying a can of diet soda will help you avoid the 150 or so empty calories in 12 ounces of regular soda. However, diet or not, soda is associated with a 44 percent increased risk over four years of developing a group of cardiovascular and diabetes risk factors known as metabolic syndrome. Framingham Heart Study researchers observed more than 6,000 participants, comparing those who consumed less than one soft drink a day with those who consumed one or more. Soda drinkers paid for their pleasure with higher blood sugar, lower levels of HDL (good) cholesterol, more abdominal fat and elevated triglycerides. Authors of the study, published in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*, emphasize that diet soft drinks don't cause an increased heart disease risk but that the link between the two needs to be explored.



A HOSTILE SPOUSE MAY BE A HEARTBREAKER

Always spoiling for a fight? If so, you may find more than you bargained for—namely an increased heart disease risk. In a study of 300 middle-aged and older married couples, researchers found that spouses who rated high on an “antagonism” scale by their mates were more likely to have significant calcium buildup in their arteries. The link between antagonism—a person's tendency to be suspicious, argumentative, competitive or emotionally cold—and heart disease was only apparent in older couples. The study, appearing in *Psychosomatic Medicine*, suggests that over time, the increase in stress hormones and blood pressure caused by negative emotions may take their toll on the heart.

Blood pressure boosters



Hidden factors that can influence your levels

CERTAIN RISK FACTORS FOR HIGH BLOOD

pressure are well known: obesity, aging, heredity, smoking, a diet high in sodium. But did you know that other factors influence how high your numbers go—sometimes temporarily?

High blood pressure, also called hypertension, affects as many as one in three adults and has been called the “silent killer” because it often goes undetected. A blood pressure reading of 120/80 mm Hg or above is now considered too high. Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to heart attack, stroke or kidney failure.

You can combat high blood pressure through lifestyle changes and with medication. But first, learn what other factors may be making your numbers spike:

- **Exercise.** Long-term high blood pressure can cause enlargement and stiffening of the heart, but the short-term blood pressure elevation caused by exercise doesn't hurt this all-important organ. In fact, exercise helps the heart pump more efficiently.
- **Stress.** Blood pressure can rise as a response to distressing events, but once the stress disappears, blood pressure returns to normal. However, frequent temporary spikes in blood pressure can affect blood vessels, the heart and kidneys much like persistent high blood pressure can. When you're stressed, you're also more likely to engage in blood-pressure-elevating behavior, such as smoking and drinking excessively and eating unhealthy foods.
- **Diet pills.** Diet-suppression aids often contain stimulants, which can raise blood pressure.
- **Pain relievers.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen (Advil), aspirin and naproxen sodium (Aleve) can raise blood pressure by causing the body to hold on to salt and water, making the kidneys work less efficiently.
- **Decongestants.** Certain decongestants and cold medications may elevate blood pressure.
- **Prescription medications.** These include Celebrex, Ritalin and Epogen, as well as antidepressants Wellbutrin, Zyban, Effexor, Nardil and some immunosuppressants.
- **Herbal supplements.** Bitter orange, ephedra, ginseng, licorice and St. John's wort can raise blood pressure levels and also affect blood pressure medications.
- **Too much alcohol.** Excessive amounts can raise your blood pressure as well as interfere with blood pressure medications. ♥

Does your doctor's office make you nervous?

For some people, a simple visit to the doctor may cause their blood pressure to soar. This is commonly referred to as “white-coat hypertension.” If your physician thinks this may be the reason for your high blood pressure reading, he or she may ask that you monitor your blood pressure at home or wear an ambulatory blood pressure monitor for a day or so. This device will record your blood pressure every 30 minutes.



Stop a second heart attack or stroke in its tracks

IF YOU'VE SUFFERED A STROKE or heart attack, thoughts of having a second one can be frightening. Perhaps you've been avoiding favorite physical activities, like running around with your kids, hiking with friends or even taking the dog for long walks.

But you don't have to live in fear. While you can't entirely prevent a heart attack or stroke from recurring, you can take measures to reduce your risk. In 2006, the American Heart Association (AHA) and the American College of Cardiology (ACC) teamed up to create new prevention guidelines. The reason for the revamp? Studies prove that by managing risk factors, you can increase your chances of survival, reduce the risk of a second attack, decrease the need for invasive procedures (such as angioplasty and bypass surgery) and improve your quality of life.

If you've had a heart attack or a stroke or have chronic coronary artery disease, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can best reach the following recommended AHA-ACC goals and reduce your risk:

- **Stop smoking.** Using smoking-cessation aids and getting a significant other to quit can help.

- **Lower your blood pressure.** Keep it below 140/90 mm Hg or, if you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease, below 130/80 mm Hg. Dietary changes, such as limiting sodium, can bring numbers down, but you may need medication.



- **Lower bad cholesterol.** LDL, the bad cholesterol, levels should be kept between 100 to 70 mg/dL. Cutting back on saturated fats and exercising can help. Your doctor may also prescribe medication, such as statins, to lower numbers.

- **Exercise daily.** Try to exercise for at least 30 to 60 minutes a day, for a minimum of five days a week. Breaking

up exercise into more manageable 10-minute routines can help you find time for fitness. Make sure your healthcare provider gives your routine the OK.

- **Normalize body mass index (BMI).** Aim for a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9. Men should have a waist circumference of less than 40 inches, women less than 35 inches.

- **Control blood sugar.** The guidelines recommend keeping HbA1c levels at less than 7 percent. The HbA1c test measures average amounts of sugar in your blood over the past two to three months. ♥

More ways to reduce risk

The AHA-ACC guidelines also recommend:

- Taking less aspirin for heart health, 75 mg and 162 mg a day, down from 75 mg to 325 mg a day in previous recommendations. (If you're currently on a higher dose, talk with your healthcare provider to see whether it should be adjusted.)
- Receiving more aggressive drug therapy to lower cholesterol and high blood pressure. Talk with your healthcare provider to see whether you can benefit from medications, such as ACE inhibitors.
- Making sure you get your flu vaccine to reduce the risk of flu complications.

Anatomy of an angioplasty

SOMETIMES EATING healthfully, quitting smoking, exercising and taking medicine just aren't enough to keep your heart working properly when you have coronary artery disease (CAD). If you're experiencing a worsening of chest pain and shortness of breath, your doctor may perform an angioplasty. This minimally invasive procedure opens clogged heart arteries and allows blood to flow freely again.



▲ Cardiologists thread the catheter through the blockage (top image). They then inflate the balloon, which compresses the plaque and restores blood flow.

HOW IT WORKS

CAD is caused by plaque buildup in the coronary arteries, which narrows or blocks the vessels and reduces blood flow to your heart. During angioplasty, doctors thread into the artery a thin tube with a balloon attached. The balloon is inflated, which compresses the plaque against the vessel walls, opening the artery up to normal blood flow. The balloon is then deflated and removed with the catheter.

Following angioplasty, there's a risk of the artery renarrowing within months. Devices called stents can prevent this, but they carry their own risks (see "Free Flow"). Talk to your doctor about the benefits and risks of the procedure. ♥

Free flow

Many patients who undergo angioplasty also have a stent placed in the newly cleared artery. A stent is a small mesh tube that props open the artery. Whether a patient receives a stent depends on the artery's size and the blockage's location.

Cardiologists implant stents with a balloon catheter, similar to angioplasty. Though the devices are meant to keep arteries from renarrowing, the area treated could close up again. A newer type of stent slowly releases drugs to stop this from happening, but recent reports have linked them to greater risk of blood clots forming on the stent, causing heart attacks. Work on improving stents is under way.

Building a healthy community

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ment of public health. Recently, community stakeholders formed a steering committee to assess the current public health situation and to create partnerships promoting physical and mental health and preventing disease, injury and disability. This group's work is ongoing.

Community leaders must recognize the physical environment's impact on health. Businesses and community leaders can promote healthier lifestyles by providing opportunities for physical activity, healthy food choices and incentives for lifestyle changes. We all have many opportunities to improve the communities' health that we serve.

The "Report of the National Steering Committee on Hospitals and the Public's Health," released in 2006, encourages hospitals to increase their role in changing the current health-care system and improving America's health. Recommendations include:

- **Eliminate health disparities.** CMMF is responding by initiating sensitivity training for all employees and offering an international clinic.
- **Coordinate care.** CMMF has electronic medical records to assist with care collaboration and coordination.
- **Promote primary prevention.** CMHVI has a wellness van that routinely offers blood pressure, cholesterol and osteoporosis screenings as well as health-risk appraisals.
- **Optimize access of care for all.** Care close to home is offered to all. Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) has a Family Practice Residency Program for those who don't have a physician.
- **Advocate payment for prevention.** CMMF has a history of advocating for patient care. Currently, a CMMC radiologist is working to advocate reimbursement for cardiac scoring, a screening evaluation for coronary heart disease.
- **Build the community's capacity to stay healthy.** CMHC supports the efforts of Healthy Androscoggin, a Healthy Maine Partnership and has active involvement on the Board of Directors.
- **Support recreating the public health infrastructure and expanding capacity.** CMHC

is involved in planning the Lewiston/Auburn public health structure and has two representatives on this committee.

At CMHC we're committed to efforts that promote a healthy community. We're dedicated to our mission and vision to collaborate and cooperate to achieve our community pillar goals. We'll strive to meet the healthcare needs of the people we serve. ♥

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Cardiac Rehabilitation,
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at

369-1136

• **CMHVI:**

Cardiac Rehabilitation staff at
795-8225

Snack attack

9 guilt-free nibbles

THOUGH IT'S APT TO MAKE YOU FEEL GUILTY, snacking is not necessarily a bad thing—unless, of course, your idea of a snack is a big bowl of chocolate ice cream, a bag of potato chips or a generous slice of carrot cake.



Healthy snacking can actually provide you with several benefits. It can keep you from second helpings at your next meal or prevent you from a hunger-fueled cookie binge. A snack also gives you a much-needed energy boost to get through the day and can be just the right amount of food to replace a meal if you're older or less active.

When you snack, make sure you do so in moderation—eat a much smaller portion than you'd consume for a meal. And opt for food that gives you a nutrient boost, such as:

- 1 **Air-popped, unbuttered popcorn.** It's crunchy, it's tasty and it boosts fiber intake.
- 2 **Hummus.** The chickpea paste is loaded with fiber and makes a great topping for vegetables and pitas.
- 3 **Low-fat yogurt.** Get your share of calcium and protein, which can help keep your bones strong and healthy.
- 4 **Peanut butter.** Peanut butter serves up protein and vitamin E, an antioxidant that may prevent the oxidation of LDL, or bad, cholesterol and boost the immune system.
- 5 **Carrots or red peppers.** You'll get vitamin A from carrots and beta-carotene from red peppers. Pair them with fat-free or low-fat dressing.
- 6 **Oatmeal.** Packed with fiber, this cholesterol-lowering staple isn't just for breakfast.
- 7 **Low-fat string cheese.** The easy-to-carry snack offers calcium and protein.
- 8 **Nuts.** A handful provides protein, which helps keep you feeling fuller longer. And nuts contains heart-healthy monounsaturated fat. Just make sure you don't overdo them since they're high in calories.
- 9 **Fruits.** Fruits take little or no preparation, so they're convenient while providing dietary fiber and a host of vitamins and minerals.

are you heart smart?



If you want to be heart healthy, you have to be heart-smart. Test your knowledge by answering true or false to the following statements. Then check the answers below to see how well you did.

QUESTIONS

1. A nuclear heart scan can detect heart muscle damage and reveal how your blood is flowing.
T F
2. After two or three years of not smoking, your risk of coronary heart disease will be as low as the risk of a person who never smoked.
T F
3. If you've been diagnosed with heart failure, you can't do anything to improve your quality of life.
T F
4. Daily use of aspirin benefits everyone.
T F

ANSWERS

1. **True.** Not only can the scan detect heart muscle damage, but it's able to show if one part of the heart isn't receiving blood—a sign of possible narrowing or blockage in the coronary arteries. It can also tell your doctor how well your heart pumps blood out to your body.
2. **True.** Nicotine causes your body to release adrenaline, causing blood vessels to constrict, your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to rise. If you currently smoke, talk to your doctor about which smoking-cessation aids may help you kick the habit.
3. **False.** Early diagnosis and treatment with medicine can help. You can also limit your salt intake, exercise daily (as recommended by your healthcare provider) and incorporate techniques to deal with depression and stress into your everyday life.
4. **False.** While a daily aspirin regimen has been shown to lower the risk of heart attacks, clot-related strokes and other blood-flow problems, if you don't have signs of or risk factors for heart or blood vessel disease, you may be doing more harm than good. The risks of long-term aspirin use include stomach and brain bleeding, kidney failure and specific kinds of strokes.

Silence isn't golden

You could have silent ischemia and not know it

IF YOU WERE HAVING A HEART ATTACK, YOU'D feel warning signs, right? Isn't chest pain a surefire way to tell whether something is not right with your heart?

Not necessarily. If you suffer from a condition called silent ischemia (is-keé-mee-a), you could be close to a heart attack and not even know it. In fact, the American Heart Association estimates that as many as 3 million to 4 million people suffer from the condition.

NO WARNING

When an artery becomes blocked or narrowed by plaque, it can temporarily cut off oxygen-rich blood to the heart. This is a condition known as cardiac ischemia.

In most of these cases, chest pain or discomfort—also known as angina—occurs, alerting you that your heart needs help. But if you suffer from silent ischemia, you'll feel no pain. Without a warning sign, you'll likely not seek medical help and receive treatment. Without proper care, subsequent episodes of silent ischemia can further damage your heart and eventually lead to a heart attack. Heart muscle damage caused by silent ischemia is one of the most common causes of heart failure in the United States.

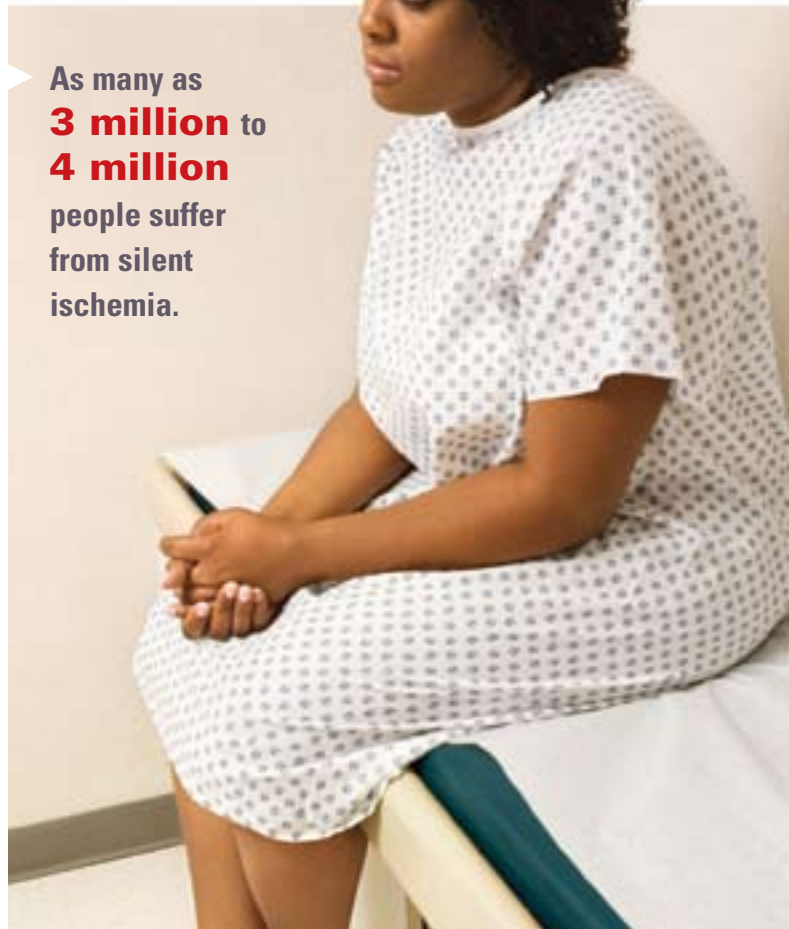
It's unclear why some people don't feel the traditional chest pain, although people who have diabetes may not feel anything because their condition causes a decreased sensitivity to pain.

Silent ischemia can also cause serious and potentially fatal abnormal heart rhythms. And you don't have to be running a marathon to have an attack; a bout of silent ischemia can occur from the simplest actions, such as doing a math problem.

TESTING

To diagnose silent ischemia, your healthcare provider tests how your heart responds to exercise. During a stress test, you'll walk on a treadmill to monitor how well your blood flows through your coronary arteries. Or you may be asked to wear a Holter monitor. This recording device tracks your heart rate and rhythm over a set period—usually for 24 to 48 hours—to determine whether you've experienced any episodes of silent ischemia.

As many as **3 million to 4 million** people suffer from silent ischemia.



Know your risk factors

You're more prone to suffer from ischemia, which may be silent, if you have a history of:

- prior heart attacks
- coronary artery disease
- diabetes
- high blood pressure
- smoking
- obesity
- heart muscle disease
- alcohol and drug abuse



TREATMENT

Lifestyle changes are usually the first line of defense against the condition.

These include:

- quitting smoking
- lowering high blood pressure and cholesterol
- controlling diabetes
- limiting alcohol
- eating healthfully
- exercising

In addition to lifestyle changes, your healthcare provider may prescribe medication to improve blood flow to the heart, such as aspirin and anticoagulants to stop clots from forming. For people who don't respond well to medicine, angioplasty or bypass surgery may be required. ♥



The Wellness Center class offerings and current schedules vary depending on the season and instructor availability. Classes are subject to cancellation at any time due to lack of participation. For class descriptions and more information, call **207-795-2473** or visit our Web Site at **www.cmmc.org** and click “**Wellness Solutions.**”

♥ *Sessions begin February 25 and April 14.*

<u>CLASS</u>	<u>DAY(S)</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>COST</u>
Ballroom Dancing	F	6:30–7:30 p.m.	\$35 for 6-week series
Belly Dancing	M	7:15–8:15 p.m.	\$60 for 6-week series
Fit-n-Fun	T,TH	9–10:30 a.m.	\$25/month
Flexible Body, Flexible Life	W	5:45–6:45 p.m.	\$48 for 6-week series
Functional Fitness	M,W,F	noon–12:30 p.m.	Call for cost
Happy Hearts	M,W,F	8–9 a.m., 9–10:30 a.m. 10:30–11:30 a.m., 1–2:30 p.m.	\$35/month
Hip Hop	TH	6–7 p.m.	\$45 for 6-week series
Intro to T'ai Chi	T	6:30–7:30 p.m.	\$55 for 6-week series
Personal Fitness	T,TH	8–9 a.m., 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m.	\$25/month
Step Aerobics	M,W,F	3:45–4:45 p.m.	Call for cost
T'ai Chi	T	5:15–6:15 p.m.	\$55 for 6-week series
Yoga	T,TH	4–5:30 p.m.	\$35 for 6-week series, 1 day/ week or \$60 for 2 days/week
Zumba	M	5–6 p.m.	\$48 for 6-week series, 1 day/ week or \$84 for 2 days/week
	W	9:30–10:30 a.m.	

The Wellness Center also offers **Weight Watchers**. Weight Watchers meets every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. For more information, call Kathy Hansen at **207-892-3004** or **207-653-1007** or e-mail her at **khansenww@aol.com**.



**For more information, call
207-753-3910 or write to
Central Maine Heart and Vascular
Institute, 300 Main Street, Lewiston,
Maine 04240 or visit us online at
www.cmhvi.org.**

The mission of the Central Maine Heart and Vascular Institute is to develop a comprehensive, integrated program providing cardiovascular services from prevention and screening to treatment and rehabilitation that are high quality, efficient and patient/family-focused.

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