

Grants for health checks now available

Michigan has started funding grants for company wellness programs to help promote employee health and stem rising health-care costs for businesses.

Created by the Michigan Health Initiative legislation of 1987, the fund has grants available for up to \$5,000 for public and private employers.

On-site wellness programs include stress tests, cholesterol checks, blood pressure and weight control screenings, stop-smoking help and information on safety and alcohol use.

Grant priority is given to businesses with fewer than 500 employees that involve employees in planning the program, offer programs to at least more than one health risk and commit to continuing such programs after the grant ends.

The MHI says grant applications are brief, easy to complete and add funds are readily available and usually awarded within 30 days of receiving a grant request. Its staff also helps plan wellness activities, complete applications and select approved vendors for wellness services.

MHI is administered by the Michigan Department of Public Health and the Michigan Department of Commerce. It serves Oakland and Wayne counties.

Grant applications and additional information are available by calling Joan Sheridan, 858-1284.

STREET WISE
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Exercise: It's vital for heart patients

But then, be careful, don't overdo it

Although cardiac rehabilitation programs generally provide heart patients with risk factor education and counseling, mid-to-moderate exercise therapy remains a key component.

Unfortunately, due to the claims of a few overzealous enthusiasts, heart patients who embark on physical conditioning programs often do so with unrealistic expectations. Consequently, there is a need to clarify the benefits and limitations of exercise therapy for patients who have had heart attacks, bypass surgery, or balloon angioplasty.

Doctors now realize that regular aerobic exercise offers numerous benefits to the cardiac patient. It decreases the heart rate at rest and at any given level of exercise. As a result, anginal symptoms (chest pain) may be reduced.

Research has also shown that exercise training increases the cardiac patients' capacity to take in and utilize oxygen — often by as much as 20 to 30 percent. This improved oxygen transport capacity gives the pa-



fitness
Barry Franklin
tient more energy, thereby reducing fatigue.

EXERCISE ALSO has favorable effects on selected "risk factors" associated with heart disease. For example, elevated blood fats such as cholesterol and triglycerides can be reduced by a moderate exercise program, particularly when there is a concomitant weight loss. Moreover, the "good" form of cholesterol, called HDL, can be increased with as little as 8 to 10 miles of walking per week.

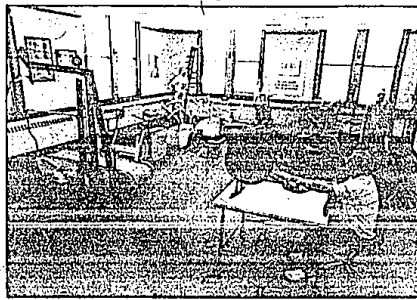
A recent analysis also revealed that exercise by itself — independent of weight loss and other factors — can significantly reduce resting blood pressure in moderately hyper-

tensive persons. Average reductions were about 10 millimeters of mercury for both systolic and diastolic blood pressure.

Additional benefits of regular endurance exercise include decreases in body weight, fat stores, and stress levels. Cardiac exercisers also report increases in self-confidence, particularly in relation to physical tasks, an improved sense of well-being, decreased depression and anxiety, and more pep and zest for life.

ON THE OTHER hand, there are limitations to the benefits of exercise therapy. Unfortunately, we have no good scientific evidence that regular exercise increases either the size or number of arteries (called collaterals) feeding the heart muscle. Exercise also does little to improve the pumping capacity (termed the ejection fraction) of a damaged heart. Furthermore, a physical conditioning program will not necessarily prevent heart disease from worsening.

In summary, regular exercise should be part of a comprehensive



Exercise is an important part of the cardiac rehabilitation program at the Beaumont Rehabilitation and Health Center in Birmingham.

cardiac rehabilitation program for heart patients, which also includes vigorous efforts at smoking cessation, blood pressure control, and dietary modification. It's important, however, to put the benefits of exercise into proper perspective.

Barry A. Franklin, Ph.D., is director of Cardiac Rehabilitation and Exercise Laboratories, William Beaumont Hospital, Royal Oak, and associate professor of physiology, Wayne State University School of Medicine.

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