

Disease

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age 50, the decision whether or not to use hormone replacement therapy is a difficult one. These guidelines should help physicians guide patients to the most effective therapies to lower an individual's risk of cardiovascular disease.

According to Mosca, the established benefits of HRT for the treatment of menopausal symptoms, such as hot flashes, and the prevention of osteoporosis, must be weighed against the risks for blood clots, gallbladder disease and a possible increased risk of breast cancer.

"The new guidelines recommend essentially taking HRT out of the risk-benefit equation for women who have already had a heart attack or stroke," said Mosca. "For postmenopausal women without heart disease, we do not suggest that HRT be taken completely out of the equation. We state that heart disease prevention should not be used as the sole purpose of therapy. It can weigh into the decision, it just shouldn't drive the decision for women without heart disease."

"The prevailing wisdom for

decades has been that hormones protect the heart," Mosca says. "This is based on quite reasonable assumptions. Compared to men, women have a delayed onset of heart disease by about 10 years. It has been assumed that this protection has been afforded to women because they have estrogen and men don't."

In addition, epidemiological studies have indicated that HRT reduces heart attacks in healthy women. However, because women who are prescribed HRT are often healthier than those who are not, these studies cannot be considered definitive because women are not randomly assigned to treatment.

Two large, randomized studies of healthy women designed to avoid those biases — the Women's Health Initiative, sponsored by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, and the WISDOM trial in Europe — are expected to report results in five to eight years. "Those studies will provide more definitive answers about HRT for prevention of heart disease in healthy women," said Mosca.

SUN, JULY 29

CHEMICAL SENSITIVITY

M.C.S. Friends, a non-profit, educational support group for the chemically injured, their families and friends, will meet 2-5 p.m. at the Good Food Company, 42615 Ford Road, Canton (1/2 mile West of I-275 at Lilly).

The guest speaker will be Patrick Lyons, a licensed builder and inspector for "safe housing." Please come unscented. For more information or a newsletter, call (248) 349-4972.

WED, AUG. 1

PRENATAL FITNESS

"Prenatal Fitness", a new six week series of classes will run from Aug. 1 through Sept. 6. Classes meet weekly from 8-7 p.m. in the hospital's West Addition. Exercise ensures a positive outlook about pregnancy and delivery, increases strength and stamina needed for childbirth, and makes postpartum recovery faster and easier. There is a fee for the course. To pre-register call (734) 655-1100.

THUR, AUG. 2-8

STORE OF DREAMS

Wayne RESA's "Store of Dreams" open throughout the month of August, will focus on "Growing Healthy Children" from Aug. 2-8. Free interactive activities and presentations will include nutrition demonstrations and screenings from the Wayne County Health Department Laurel Park Place, 37700 Six Mile, Livonia. Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m.

MENOPAUSE

The Menopause Support Group will meet 7-9 p.m. at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, West Addition B. Join other women and share concerns, feelings and experiences about menopause, as well as other mid-life and health issues. Free. Call (734) 655-1100 or (800) 494-1615.

WED, AUG. 8

DIABETIC HEART CARE

The Diabetes Support Group at St. Mary Mercy Hospital will host a discussion, "Take it to Heart," 7-8:30 p.m. in the hospital's auditorium. Learn what diabetics need to know about preventing cardiovascular complications. Call (734) 655-8940.

BMW FUND-RAISER

Drive a BMW and raise money for cancer research. The Auto-Strasse dealership on Auto Mall Drive off Jackson Road in Ann Arbor will present "The Ultimate Drive" 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For every mile test-driven, BMW will donate \$1 to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, which supports local cancer research at the U-M Comprehensive Cancer Center. Call (877) 4-A-DRIVE.

THURS., AUG. 9

WALK-IN PHYSICALS

Student school and sports physicals/immunizations will be offered every Thursday through August (Aug. 9, 16, 23 and 30) from 8-11 a.m. and 1-4:30 p.m. at Oakwood Healthcare Center - Westland (corner of Dearborn and Merriman roads). First child, \$30; second child, \$15; cash or check only (no insurance accepted). Call (734) 727-1000. All students must be accompanied by a parent, and should bring their shot record with them. The tetanus vaccine is not available.

STORE OF DREAMS

Wayne RESA's "Store of

Dreams" open throughout the month of August, will focus on back to school preparation from Aug. 9-16. Free interactive activities and presentations will consist of school bus safety information, healthy lunch tips and fingerprinting for children 0-8. Laurel Park Place, 37700 Six Mile, Livonia. Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5 p.m.

TUES, AUG. 14

POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

The Mother-Baby Postpartum Support Group at St. Mary Mercy Hospital, Livonia, will meet 10-11 a.m. in West Addition B. A certified lactation specialist will discuss the postpartum period of adjustment. Call the Marian Women's Center at (734) 655-1100.

GRIEF RECOVERY

Hospice of Washtenaw will present a five-week Grief Recovery Series beginning Tues., July 17. Each session will be held 7-8:30 p.m. at the Senior Health Building on the campus of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, 6361 McAuley Drive, Ypsilanti. Registration required. Call (734) 327-3409.

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MATCHING STANDARDS WITH EXPECTATIONS

Early you are aware of the march of science and technology in medicine. The last ten years have brought understanding of changes such as monoclonal antibodies, delineation of defects in individual genes, and the use of lasers for surgical incisions. Your reasonable expectation is that physicians will make good use of these advances in diagnosis and treatment. That is, that the medical profession will take the steps necessary to understand these changes and apply them properly. The medical community agrees and has set down new standards for medical competency. In the past, doctors sat for examinations to determine that they had the knowledge needed to call themselves practitioners. Once passing that examination a doctor could consider himself "board certified" for life. Beginning in 1985 the subspecialties of medicine abandoned that concept and granted board certified status for only a limited time. The subspecialties reasoned that changes in medical care were occurring so fast that physicians would need to take an examination periodically to confirm that their knowledge was up to date. I have just completed recertification in Rheumatology, and can state that in my field the examination was thorough, fair, and focused on important developments in patient care. Of course, passing a test does not make one a good physician. However, having a knowledge base that the examination requires, is necessary to practice to the levels made possible by the advances of science.



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