

Rx Briefs

Heart attacks

For the first time, researchers have shown that magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can predict the risk of heart attacks or cardiac deaths in coronary heart disease patients, according to an American Heart Association report.

"This study is the first to determine that MRI is a strong prognostic forecast," says lead author Dr. W. Gregory Hundley, a cardiologist and associate professor of internal medicine and radiology at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C. "Such information is important because it helps us identify which patients should receive more aggressive treatment."

Hundley's study yielded several important findings: **■** Regardless of other risk factors, MRI can predict fatal and nonfatal heart attacks in patients whose left ventricle pumps out less than two-thirds of the blood a normal heart ejects.

■ Someone whose damaged heart wall moves better at rest than when stressed also has an elevated risk; and

■ The location in the heart of reduced blood flow or muscle damage apparently influences risk. Reduced blood flow in the apex of the left ventricle indicates a higher risk.

"These findings have interesting implications," says Hundley. "Patients with isolated disease near the base and the middle of the ventricle often are referred for procedures to restore blood flow. This study suggests that in doing so, you might alleviate chest pain but not prevent a cardiac death."

Bipolar disease

Don't cope with the highs and lows of bipolar disease alone. Let others help you learn to live a full, productive life.

The Manic Depressive Association (MDA) Bipolar Support Group meets 3-5 p.m. the second and fourth Thursday of the month at Beaumont Hospital Administration Building, 3601 W. 13 Mile Road, Royal Oak. For information, call Kathie at (248) 544-1097.

Blood pressure

Beaumont Hospital needs people 18 and older with high blood pressure to volunteer for research studies of new medications. All study-related health care is provided at no charge to participants. Call the Division of Preventive and Nutritional Medicine in Royal Oak toll-free at (888) 807-8839 for more information.

Holiday massage

If your employees seem bored with the usual office holiday party, consider giving a stress-relieving massage to those hard-working folks instead. It's easier than you think!

To schedule, just call Bolstford Center for Health Improvement in Novi at (248) 477-6100, Ext. 247. A certified massage therapist will come to your workplace. She'll bring a specially-designed massage chair and give each employee a 10 to 15-minute massage. The charge for 10 employees in a two-hour period is only \$125. Think how happy your employees will be with improved circulation, relief from muscle tension and stiffness, and enhanced health and well-being.



Sandra Dalka-Przyby, right, checks out the fruit display at Vic's Market with Sharon Claye of Weight Watchers.

A holiday without weight gain? Yes, it can be done!

BY SANDRA DALKA-PRZYBY
CORRESPONDENT

During the holidays if my true love sent me a partridge in a pear tree, I'd eat the bird - fried, of course - and all the pears on the tree. This is how out of control I can be, and have been, during this festive and food-filled time of year.

This year, however, I'm determined to do better and eat less-fattening foods at all the parties and family feasts. But to do this, I've solicited help from a couple of experts. You, too, will do better if you follow their tips for making it through the holidays without gaining weight.

BE PREPARED

Sharon Claye has been a Weight Watchers leader for 11 years and is my motivator on this "fitness forever" quest. She, herself, lost 75 pounds and has kept them off for more than 12 years, including during the holiday season.

"I've discovered that if I eat right, I feel right. How good it is to go through the holidays feeling this way," she says.

Being prepared, setting priorities and having a positive attitude are the best ways to handle the holidays, she says. Her suggestions include:

■ Have present and convenience foods, such as vegetables and fruits, available to munch on at home and to bring to parties to share with others.

"When I make up a fruit tray for parties, I like to use exotic fruits, such as mangoes, pomegranates, kiwis and persimmons. These fruits are now more readily available and less expensive, and they look pretty and colorful on the serving plate."

A fruit dip can be added for the finishing touch. Claye likes to mix vanilla low-fat yogurt with sugar-free hot cocoa to taste.

■ Bring a healthy dish to holiday dinners. "Don't ask if you can bring something, because most hostesses will say 'no.' Just bring a dish. Nobody is ever offended if you show up with a food offering."

"I've discovered that if I eat right, I feel right. How good it is to go through the holidays feeling this way."

Sharon Claye
Weight Watchers

A popular dish that Claye takes to gatherings is spaghetti squash topped with tomato salsa. ("Bake holes in the squash and microwave it for 8 to 10 minutes, until it's soft. Scoop out the strands of squash and place them in a casserole dish. Cover with salsa and sprinkle on Parmesan cheese, if desired.")

■ Get enough sleep. "If you're tired, there's more of a chance that your willpower will be lower. Also, you tend to eat more sugars and fats to help increase your energy. This means that you can take in a lot of calories when you don't get enough sleep."

■ Bring along some healthy foods when you do your holiday shopping. "If I'm going to be away from home for four hours or more, I always take a small cooler with some lean protein, such as chicken breast or fish, and some cut vegetables. You can get carbohydrates just about anywhere, but you need the protein, which keeps you full longer."

"Packing a cooler takes less time than standing in line for a snack (often high-calorie or high-fat) at the mall."

Also, Claye keeps a piece of fruit or a protein bar (15-20 grams of protein and no more than 200 calories) in her purse. "There's no excuse for not planning ahead."

SET PRIORITIES

■ Choose how you're going to "spend" your calories (or points) at home and at gatherings.

"For 250 calories, you can choose four small cookies or 8 small

pieces of chocolate or six ounces of eggnog or five cups of strawberries or 12 cups of low-fat popcorn. It's up to you to decide which one - and only one is best - you want. At the same time, you have to decide if you need a treat in the first place. By knowing what you are trying to accomplish, you are better able to make good choices," says Claye.

■ Make sure you fit exercise into your busy schedule. According to Claye, you need to exercise during the holiday season to help you maintain your present weight, and, at the same time, help reduce the stress that comes with this busy time of year.

■ Don't wait until January, when the holidays are over, to return to healthy eating and exercise.

"Some people take an all or nothing approach to the holiday season. Neither is good. All usually results in weight gain; 'nothing' makes for a miserable few weeks," Claye adds that moderation, balance and making good food choices, as well as a realistic exercise routine, is the best way to handle the holidays.

KEEP A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

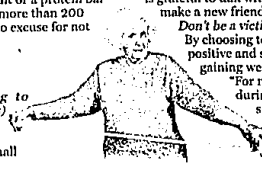
■ Remind yourself that you're a good person and worth good health and fitness.

"It's easier to make it through the holidays if you have the positive belief that you deserve to look and feel good," Claye says.

■ Focus on people and not on food. "When I have to go to gatherings that I dread, I search for someone who looks as miserable as I feel. I strike up a conversation with them. Often this person is grateful to talk with me and it's an opportunity to make a new friend."

■ Don't be a victim! By choosing to take healthy steps, you'll have a positive and successful holiday season without gaining weight.

"For many, it's too hard to lose weight during the holidays. You should consider yourself successful if you maintain the weight you



PLEASE SEE WEIGHT, C7

Change your beverages to reduce your stress

BY SANDY BAUMANN
CORRESPONDENT

As the holiday season begins, we use coffee, tea, and caffeinated soft drinks to compensate for lost sleep and to gain energy to accomplish the multitude of tasks ahead. Indeed, caffeine found in these drinks is a stimulant that temporarily improves alertness. However, excess caffeine increases stress and impairs health.

A general guideline for maximum consumption of caffeine is 1 mg daily for every 2 lbs. of body weight. Thus, an 80-pound child could ingest up to 40 mg of caffeine, while a 150-pound adult could consume up to 75 mg of caffeine. Dr. Singh Khalsa, author of *Brain Longevity*, recommends a maximum of 100 mg caffeine per day to preserve optimum brain function.

Since the usual take-out coffee or soft drink is usually 12 oz., you don't have to drink very much to reach the recom-

mended daily maximum. (The Web site www.sleepfoundation.org/caffeine.html offers a "Caffeine Calculator" that lists caffeine in beverages, chocolate, and pain relievers.)

EFFECT ON THE BRAIN

Caffeine adds stress to the body in a number of ways. It reduces blood flow to the brain. According to the *Journal of Life Sciences*, a brain scan of a person ingesting 250 mg of caffeine (about 15 oz. coffee) showed almost 10 percent decrease in blood flow in the brain. It can also contribute to insomnia.

The Institute for Natural Resources reports that the body may take three to 10 hours to metabolize one-half the caffeine ingested. Thus, the coffee or coffee you drank in the afternoon may be why you can't sleep at night, and children who have soft drinks or iced tea with caffeine may fight going to bed.

Too much caffeine may also result in

irritability. Since caffeine is a diuretic, it increases excretion of water-soluble B-vitamins and Vitamin C. These vitamins help the brain and adrenal glands cope with stress. Deficiency in these vitamins results in irritability, confusion, memory loss, restlessness, anxiety, headaches, and more.

EFFECT ON THE BODY

Caffeine promotes the release of norepinephrine in the body, which raises blood pressure, blood sugar, and potential for blood clots. In this way, excess caffeine can increase the risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Caffeine's effects on the heart can make worse heart palpitations, irregular heartbeats, and mitral valve prolapse.

According to *Health Wisdom for Women*, caffeine poses other health risks, including urinary excretion of magne-

PLEASE SEE BEVERAGES, C7

BEVERAGE	CAFFEINE mg
Brewed Coffee	133
Tea (hot or cold)	50
Mountain Dew	36
Diet Coke	46
Coca Cola	30
Green Tea	30
Santitas Orange	16
Peppi	24
Berry's Root Beer	15
David Coffee	6-8
Hot Chocolate	8
Herbal Tea	0