

**Cardiac Monitor —
a resource for you**

Cardiac Monitor highlights the latest news in cardiac care and features helpful information about diet and exercise, medication and prescription updates, upcoming educational opportunities, and ongoing profiles of different Mercy services.

Distribution of *Cardiac Monitor* is intended for patients who are active participants in any of the Mercy Heart Institute Cardiovascular Disease Management programs, or who have had a recent hospitalization for a cardiovascular-related condition. The information included in this newsletter is provided as an educational service. If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, please call (916) 733-6966.

Sleep apnea and the connection to heart disease

By Richard Stack, MD

Along with obesity, the incidence of sleep apnea has risen at an alarming rate in the United States. Sleep apnea is the general term for a group of medical problems that impact breathing during sleep. The most common form, known as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), is caused by extra tissue in the upper airway that collapses and literally blocks the airflow to the lungs.

The symptoms of OSA are often common but not recognized as caused by the breathing disorder. People often attribute their complaints to sleep deprivation, overwork, depression or other medical illnesses.

Symptoms of OSA include:

- Fatigue
- Snoring
- Witnessed episodes of irregular breathing while sleeping
- Falling asleep during the daytime
- Memory difficulties
- Irritability
- Feelings of depression
- Early morning headaches

The connection to heart disease

Researchers have found a connection between sleep apnea and heart disease. As a person with sleep apnea experiences breathing interruptions throughout sleep, his or her body releases very high levels of the stress hormone epinephrine. This “fight or flight” hormone not only disrupts sleep, but it puts a tremendous strain on the heart, blood vessels and other organs.

The strongest associations connect sleep apnea with high blood pressure. Studies demonstrate that treating sleep apnea decreases blood pressure without the aid of additional medications. The national guidelines used by doctors to treat high blood pressure list OSA as a major cause of hard-to-control high blood pressure. Recently, OSA has been linked

to an increased risk of stroke, heart attack, heart failure, atrial fibrillation and sudden cardiac death.

Treatment usually includes wearing a special mask (NCPAP mask) at night. This mask is connected to a machine that provides pressure to the inside of the upper airway, keeping it open and allowing air to freely pass into the lungs. OSA may also be treated with special devices worn in the mouth, surgery to the upper airway or through weight loss.

Testing for this type of disorder is most often performed in a sleep center that is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. The Mercy Sleep Center has held this distinction for 15 years and has helped thousands of patients. For more information about how sleep apnea may affect your heart health, talk to your doctor, or call the Mercy Sleep Center at (916) 979-0347.

Risk factors for sleep apnea

- Gender — men and post-menopausal women are at a greater risk
- A neck size greater than 17 inches
- Obesity — individuals with a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 30 kg/m² (ratio between body weight in kilograms and height in meters squared)
- Diagnosis of hypertension requiring the use of antihypertensive medications

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Arjun D. Sharma, MD
Stephen I. Stark, MD
Larry J. Wolff, MD

Cardiac Surgeons

John R. Dein, MD
Richard J. Kaplon, MD
Allen S. Morris, MD
Stephen J. Rossiter, MD
Frank N. Slachman, MD

Cardiologists

Arvin Arthur, MD
Richard Axelrod, MD
Najam A. Awan, MD
Phillip M. Bach, MD
Scott B. Baron, MD
Rohit Bhaskar, MD
David A. Bayne, MD
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From ABCs to Zzzzs

By Marilyn Gee, Registered Dietitian

Are you dreaming of a good night's sleep? If you are suffering from sleep deprivation as a result of sleep apnea or insomnia, the following ABCs may help your dreams come true and help you manage the health of your heart.

Alcohol — Indulging in a “night cap” before bedtime may help you fall asleep faster, but once its relaxing effects wear off, your sleep will be disrupted during the later part of the night. By relaxing your breathing reflexes, alcohol can also aggravate sleep apnea. Skipping the “night cap” may lead to a better night's sleep.

Body Weight — Sleep apnea is often associated with excess body weight. Extra fatty deposits in the neck will make the airway narrower, causing more resistance when breathing. Losing 10% of your body weight may improve sleep apnea. Stick to a heart healthy diet to maintain a healthier weight.



Taking steps to a better night's sleep

Elita Randall, MS, Exercise Physiologist

Are you tired of being tired? A good night's sleep is important to your overall well being and a healthy heart. When you sleep well, you awake feeling more rested and alert. If you have not developed a regular exercise routine, add a good night's rest to the long list of reasons why you should start.

Research has determined that regular exercise in the afternoon, and not too close to bedtime, can help you sleep more soundly by spending more time in the deeper stages of sleep. Research shows that people tend to awake more often during the lighter stages of sleep. In addition to improved quality of sleep, people who exercise also report that it takes less time to fall asleep.

It is recommended that people avoid strenuous exercise two to three hours before bedtime. Exercise has an altering effect that raises your body temperature which, in turn, leads to a corresponding drop five to six hours later, making sleep easier at this time. If you have been exercising close to bedtime and are having trouble falling and staying asleep, try rescheduling your exercise time to earlier in the day.

Caffeine — Due to its “awakening” effect, caffeine can affect your sleep. You may experience trouble falling asleep and wake up more often during the night. Most people can tolerate moderate amounts of caffeine, 200 to 300 mg daily, but excessive amounts of 500 mg or more may cause insomnia.

Examples of caffeine content in some common items are:

- 8 oz. plain brewed coffee – 135 mg
- 8 oz. black tea – 40 to 70 mg
- 8 oz. green tea – 24 to 40 mg
- 12 oz. Mountain Dew – 55 mg
- 12 oz. cola – 34 to 37 mg
- 1.5 oz. Hershey milk chocolate bar – 10 mg

To decrease its stimulating affects, avoid caffeine about eight hours before bedtime.

Practicing your ABCs can lead to better Zzzzs.

Instead of counting sheep, try these tips:

- Ease yourself into an exercise program; move at a pace that is right for you
- Replace your coffee break in the afternoon with a brisk walk or bike ride
- Go for a walk before or after dinner instead of watching TV
- Partner with a family member or friend, or take your dog for a walk

Mended Hearts: volunteers needed

If you've been a heart patient at Mercy General Hospital, you may have been visited by someone from the Mended Hearts support group — a group of former cardiac patients who volunteer their time to share their experiences and support with current heart patients. As Mercy's heart program continues to grow, we need more volunteers. If you have a few hours to share and are interested in volunteering, please call the Mercy Heart Institute at (916) 733-5263.

Your heart and sleep medications

By Lidia Leong, Pharmacy Student, University of the Pacific

Do you have difficulty falling or staying asleep? If so, you may have insomnia. Addressing insomnia is important because adequate sleep is vital and helps maintain your heart's health. Treating insomnia involves implementing sleep hygiene and adding over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication, when appropriate.

The principles of sleep hygiene involve adhering to a regular sleep schedule and creating a comfortable sleep environment. You can read about sleep hygiene in *Your Guide to Healthy Sleep* (www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/healthy_sleep.htm). An important aspect of sleep hygiene is avoiding medicines that disrupt sleep, if possible. Diuretics ("water pills"), for example, can disrupt sleep by increasing nightly trips to the bathroom. Taking diuretics in the morning and limiting liquids in the evening usually alleviates these disruptions. Consult your pharmacist to learn about other medications that can cause insomnia.

If sleep hygiene alone does not help, your doctor may consider OTC medications containing diphenhydramine or doxylamine. They are effective sedatives but must be avoided if you have glaucoma, respiratory problems or difficulty urinating. They also cause confusion and constipation in the elderly and should

be avoided. In these cases, prescription sedatives with fewer side effects may be more appropriate. If OTC sedatives are used, take them no longer than two weeks without seeking further medical advice.

New prescription sedatives such as zolpidem, eszopiclone and zaleplone are becoming more common. When taken appropriately, these agents allow patients to fall asleep and awake refreshed with minimal hangover effect. Differences exist among them, however, and your doctor will determine the most appropriate one for you. Older sedatives such as trazadone and temazepam continue to be used and are still appropriate for cases with co-existing conditions such as anxiety or depression.

Whatever sedative is used, take the exact dose at the instructed time and dedicate seven to eight hours for sleep. Common side effects include drowsiness, headache and dizziness. Until you know the effects of the medication, perform tasks cautiously the next day. Never drink alcohol while using a sedative. Always let your pharmacist know about new medications before starting them. Used in conjunction with sleep hygiene, sedatives can get you and your heart back on track with adequate sleep.

The beat goes on ... ICD Support Group

Beginning with the current issue of *Cardiac Monitor*, this column will be dedicated to news and information for members of Mercy's ICD (Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator) Support Group. The column takes the place of the previously published newsletter *The Beat Goes On*. Here you will find meeting information, resources and special notices.

The ICD Support Group meeting schedule for the remainder of 2006 is:

June 3 — Picnic at Oki Park. To RSVP or for directions to Oki Park, please call Candice at (916) 733-6966.

Aug. 28 — Guest speaker: Marilyn Gee, Registered Dietitian

Oct. 23 — Break-out sessions: Nancy Amado, LCSW

Dec. 18 — Guest speaker and holiday reception

Except for the June 3 picnic, all meetings are held at the Mercy General Hospital Main Auditorium from 6 to 8 p.m. and refreshments are served.

ICD Support Group meetings allow participants to meet other individuals who have an ICD as well as their family and friends. The sessions are a combination of education, group sharing and emotional support.

ICD Support Group members may continue to offer questions/suggestions that will be published in this space or discussed in upcoming meetings. You can send a note to the Mercy Heart Institute, 3939 J Street, Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95819, or call (916) 733-6966.

Newsworthy

Mercy heart programs earn gold seal from JCAHO

Mercy Heart Institute's CHAMP® and Heart Smart programs have received Gold Seal of Approval™ certification for disease-specific care from JCAHO. This is a significant designation as there are *fewer than 20* healthcare organizations nationally with these disease-specific distinctions.

CHAMP® (Congestive Heart Active Management Program) and Heart Smart (lipid reduction program) have been a key part of Mercy's outpatient cardiac services since the late 1990s. Currently there are more than 1,500 patients enrolled in the two cardiac disease management programs.



Follow your heart

The Mercy Mall Walk program celebrates its 20th anniversary and a farewell to the Florin Mall location at the awards ceremonies held at Florin Mall in February.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Mercy Heart Institute

Cardiovascular Disease
Management Programs

Heart Smart and CHAMP®:
(916) 564-2880

Cardiac Conditioning:
Mercy General Hospital
(916) 453-4521

Mercy San Juan
Medical Center
(916) 537-5296

Smoking Cessation:
(916) 453-4927

Mercy Mall Walk Program:
(916) 564-2880

Mercy Heart Institute 1-877-9HEART9

www.CHWhealth.org/
MercyHeart

Healthy Heart Series — free

Mercy General Hospital

All classes are held on Thursdays from 1:30–3 p.m.
Call 453-4521 for dates and location.

Topics include: Diabetes Nutrition and Low-Fat Cardiac
Diet

Mercy San Juan Medical Center

All classes are held on Tuesdays from 11:15 a.m.–12:15
p.m. Call (916) 537-5296 for dates and location.

Topics include: Emotions and Heart Disease, Diabetes
Management, Diabetes Nutrition, Low-Fat Cardiac Diet,
Managing Your Response to Stress, Your Heart and
Cardiac Procedures, Your Medicine Cabinet, Exercise
Guidelines, Cardiovascular Risk Factors

Congestive Heart Active Management Program (CHAMP®)

All classes are held from 8:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
For schedule and locations, call (916) 564-2880.
Pre-registration is required.

Topics include: Congestive Heart Failure, Medications,
Low-Sodium Diet, Social Issues, Exercise and Activities.

Heart Smart

All classes are held on alternating Tuesdays
from 9:30–11:30 a.m. and alternating Thursdays
from 1:30–3:30 p.m. For times and locations call
(916) 564-2880. Pre-registration is required.

Diabetes Management and Nutrition for Today! — free

All classes are held from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. For schedule
and location, call (916) 564-2880.

Topics include: Monitoring Blood Sugar, Medications,
Exercise, Preventing Complications and Healthy
Food Choices

Cholesterol Screenings

First Thursday of every month. Fees are \$25 for Lipid Panel;
\$30 for Lipid plus Glucose. Twelve-hour fasting is required.

For an appointment or information, call:

Mercy General Hospital (916) 453-4521
Mercy San Juan Medical Center (916) 537-5296

Mended Hearts Support Group

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of every
month from 7–8:30 p.m. For more information call
(916) 773-5263.

ICD Support Group (Defibrillator patients)

Meetings held every other month.
For information, call (916) 733-6966.

Mercy Mall Walk Program — free

Celebrating our 20th year!

Country Club Plaza, Sunrise Mall
Monday-Saturday, 8–10 a.m.

For more information, call (916) 564-2880.

American Heart Association Heart Walk

Sept. 23
William Land Park



Mercy Heart Institute
3939 J Street
Suite 220
Sacramento, CA
95819-3633

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