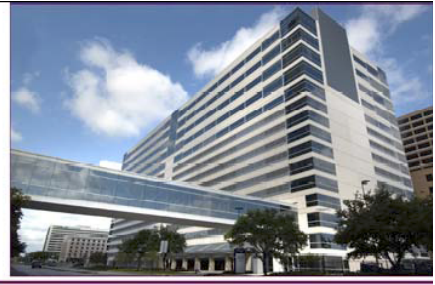


Baylor Clinic Healthletter



Focus on General Cardiology

February 2008

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In January, the American Heart Association (AHA) announced they had achieved a major strategic goal of reducing the death rate from coronary heart disease by 25%. Better yet, they had achieved this goal two years ahead of their 2010 target date.

The announcement is based on new data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which shows that since 1999, coronary heart disease age-adjusted death rates are down by 25.8%.

But the victory may be short lived, reports the AHA, unless our nation rises to the challenge of reducing the major risk factors that lead to heart disease – two of which are actually on the rise. In an alarming trend, the prevalence rates for obesity and type II diabetes are actually increasing, and appearing at earlier ages than ever before.

Two Keys to Stopping Heart Disease: Precise Diagnosis and Proper Prevention

While progress is being made, cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death in both men and women in the United States, killing more than 2 million Americans each year. However, the disease is highly treatable for those patients who receive precise diagnosis and proper preventive therapy.

Thanks to continued advancements in technology, cardiologists today can make accurate diagnoses and initiate therapy prior to the advent of an acute event such as a heart attack or stroke.

Diagnostic and prevention tools available today include:

- **Cardiac ultrasound or echocardiography.** This technique sends ultrasound or high-frequency sound waves to create graphic images of the heart's structure and pumping action. The recorded waves show the shape, texture and movement of the valves on an echocardiogram. The test is performed the same way ultrasound pictures of a fetus are taken in pregnant women.
- **Stress tests.** A routine exercise stress electrocardiography or treadmill stress test may be used to diagnose coronary artery disease, or blockage of the heart arteries which can lead to a heart attack.
- **Nuclear imaging techniques.** A stress test may be combined with nuclear imaging techniques, which use high-quality nuclear cameras to provide accurate analysis of the coronary arteries. These tests can help your doctor both diagnose heart disease and recommend treatment.
- **Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and ultra-fast CT scans.** MRIs and CT scans may also be used to provide additional information about the extent of coronary artery disease.
- **Coronary angiography.** Also known as heart catheterization, this test is available when non-invasive tests are unable to achieve a complete diagnosis regarding occlusion, or obstruction, of the arteries of the heart. It is an invasive procedure that involves placing catheters in the heart and injecting dye (a contrast agent) into the heart arteries.

- **Holter or event monitors.** Cardiac rhythm disturbances are a common problem in a variety of vascular conditions. Rhythm disturbances may be diagnosed using a 24-hour Holter monitor or “event” monitors, small painless devices worn to monitor the heart rhythm. They can provide continuous analysis of heart rhythm for up to 30 days.
- **Electrophysiologists.** These heart rhythm specialists are trained in sophisticated invasive techniques for diagnosis or treatment of rhythm problems, when required.
- **Routine interrogation of pacemaker and defibrillator devices.** These evaluations analyze and test the devices to ensure they are working properly.

Comprehensive Care for a Complex Disease

Facilities like Baylor Heart Clinic offer not only the latest diagnostic and therapeutic technologies to prevent and manage heart disease, but the physicians and staff required to address the full range of patient needs, from basic risk factor modification to specialized treatment of complex cardiovascular conditions. The ability to access multiple services and providers in one location is not only infinitely more convenient for the patient, it can prevent unnecessary and dangerous delays in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. The comprehensive approach also enhances collaboration across caregivers, improving quality of care and patient outcomes.

The subspecialty care available through Baylor Heart Clinic demonstrates the variety of patient needs and the level of expertise available today to treat cardiovascular disease, including:

- **The Texas Adult Congenital Heart (TACH) Center.** The TACH Center provides specialized care for the growing population of adults with congenital heart disease (problems present since birth), offering these patients a safe, smooth, uninterrupted transition from pediatric to adult healthcare.
- **The Women’s Center for Comprehensive Care (WCCC).** The Women’s Center addresses the special health needs of women with a focus on cardiovascular care. The Center’s director, Dr. Ildiko Agoston, is a recognized authority in the diagnosis and therapy of cardiovascular disease in women, improving our knowledge of the gender-based disparities in cardiovascular care and outcomes.
- **Congestive heart failure services.** Baylor College of Medicine is at the forefront of the management of congestive heart failure, which has increased considerably over the past several decades. Services range from prevention to mechanical support devices to heart transplantation at St. Luke’s Episcopal Hospital, which is affiliated with the Texas Heart Institute, ranked among the nation’s top 10 cardiovascular centers.
- **Preventive services.** Dietary programs, cardiac rehabilitation, risk factor management and other preventive services are offered on a personalized basis at Baylor Heart Clinic.

We’re All in this Together

To maintain the momentum we’ve achieved in the fight against heart disease, more must be done, says the AHA, and it must be a concerted effort by all of us. We must continue our pursuit of new research discoveries, new medical advances, and new life-saving technologies. Perhaps most importantly, patients and physicians must work together to control and reduce risk factors, and quickly and precisely diagnose and treat heart disease when it does occur.

Are You at Risk? Know Your Numbers.

Compare your cholesterol and blood pressure levels to the recommended guidelines, below. Don't know your numbers? Schedule a risk profile assessment today by calling Baylor Heart Clinic at 713.798.2545.

Cholesterol Levels

Total Cholesterol

Less than 200 mg/dl	Desireable
200-239 mg/dl	Borderline high
240 mg/dl	High

LDL Cholesterol (“Bad cholesterol”)

Less than 100 mg/dl	Optimal (ideal)
100 - 129 mg/dl	Near optimal/above optimal
130 - 159 mg/dl	Borderline high
160 - 189 mg/dl	High
190 mg/dl and above	Very High

HDL Cholesterol (“Good cholesterol”)

Male - Less than 40 mg/dl Female – Less than 50 mg/dl	Major heart disease risk factor
Male - 40 mg/dl and above Female - 50 mg/dl and above	Gives some protection against heart disease

Reduce your risk of heart disease by reducing high cholesterol levels through lifestyle changes like diet, weight reduction, and increased physical activity, and when needed, cholesterol-lowering medications.

Blood Pressure Levels

	Systolic	Diastolic
Normal	<120	<80
Pre-hypertension	120 – 139	80 – 89
Stage I hypertension	140 – 159	90 – 99
Stage II hypertension	≥ 160	≥ 100

High blood pressure, often called the silent killer, is a major treatable risk factor for heart disease. To lower your blood pressure:

- Increase your physical activity. Do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days of the week (for example, brisk walking 15 to 20 minutes per mile). Check with your doctor first if you don't exercise now, are middle-aged, or have health problems.
- Manage your weight.
 - Maintain a body mass index (BMI) of 18.5 to 24.9.
 - Maintain a waist circumference less than 40 in. if male, less than 35 in. if female.
 - If you are overweight, reduce your body weight by 10% in the first year of your weight-loss routine.

For more information or to schedule an appointment with a Baylor Heart Clinic physician, call 713.798.2545.

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Baylor Heart Clinic is dedicated to stopping the devastating toll of heart disease through the combined efforts of some of the best minds in cardiovascular medicine. Part of the section of Cardiology at Baylor College of Medicine, Baylor Heart Clinic offers a premier team of specialists, state-of-the-art treatment based on the latest scientific discoveries, and personalized, comprehensive care for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of the full range of heart-related diseases and illnesses. Services include preventive cardiology, general cardiology, electrophysiology (arrhythmias), interventional cardiology, heart failure and cardiac transplantation, and congenital heart services, all through one convenient location.

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www.baylorclinic.com (select Cardiology/Baylor Heart Clinic) or www.bcm.edu/baylorheart