

Living with Heart Failure

NEW TOOLS, SUPPORTIVE CARE OFFER HOPE

Heart failure can be a very frightening diagnosis, but it's important for patients to remember that the disease can be managed, and often managed very effectively. In fact, some 5 million Americans are currently living with this condition.

"When a patient is diagnosed with heart failure, our first steps are to treat their condition, but also to reassure them and help them adapt to any lifestyle changes they need to make," says Highland Hospital Chief of Cardiology J. Chad Teeters, M.D.

"Fortunately, today we have more resources than ever before to help patients: from advanced technology to diagnose the disease, to medications that help prevent or treat symptoms, to new care processes that help patients transition from the hospital to their homes safely and comfortably."

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Attentive medical care and lifestyle changes can help many heart failure patients manage their condition.

Could a Gluten-Free Diet Be Good for You?



Anil Sharma, M.D.

Just a few years ago, the term "gluten" was unfamiliar to most Americans. But today this protein found naturally in wheat, rye and barley has achieved some notoriety in mainstream culture.

Gluten has long been known for its role in celiac disease – an autoimmune disorder in which the body attacks the lining of the small intestines when gluten is present, leading to troubles absorbing nutrients. It has more recently been blamed for a range of gastrointestinal symptoms in adults and children considered sensitive to gluten. Although there is no official data, some estimates indicate that as many as 17 million Americans – about one in 18 – may be gluten-sensitive.

"If you have celiac disease, you need to completely avoid gluten, which can cause intestinal damage. It's a lifelong change. But even some of my patients who don't have celiac disease find they feel better on a gluten-free diet – probably because when they cut out bread, pastries and cakes, they are eliminating other non-healthy substances. They feel better and may even lose a bit of weight," says Anil Sharma, M.D., a local gastroenterologist and Medical Director of the Highland Endoscopy Center.

If you don't have celiac disease but want to try a gluten-free diet, consider these tips:

Be mindful of balance. Any type of restrictive eating plan can hinder your ability to achieve a balanced diet. For example, many breads, cereals and pastas are fortified with B vitamins and iron, while some gluten-free varieties are not. Take care in choosing a variety of foods at mealtimes, including lots of naturally gluten-free fruits and vegetables.

Read labels. Gluten-free does not necessarily mean good for you, so it's important to check labels to ensure foods are low in fat, sugar and sodium.

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What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure occurs when the heart muscle weakens and is unable to circulate enough blood to meet the body's needs, often causing shortness of breath, fatigue and leg swelling. When fluid builds up, the condition is called congestive heart failure. The disease usually develops slowly, often as a result of an underlying heart condition, such as coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, damaged heart valves, a congenital heart defect or arrhythmia. Heart failure may also arise as a complication of a heart attack.

Although heart damage is often irreversible, many heart failure treatments can strengthen the heart and improve symptoms. Medications like ACE inhibitors and diuretics to treat high blood pressure and congestive heart failure can help patients live longer and more comfortably. Those with more severe cases of heart failure may benefit from surgery to repair damaged heart valves or unclog arteries.

Cardiology at Highland

To meet the rising demand for cardiology care, Highland has expanded its program with:

The Heart Failure Center at Highland Hospital: This new inpatient unit at Highland Hospital has a specialized team of providers including cardiologists, hospitalists, dedicated nursing staff, cardiac nurse practitioners, physicians assistants, physical therapists, social workers and care managers. Patients receive evidence-based care in a skilled, closely monitored setting.

An expanded team of cardiologists: Highland's program now has five full-time cardiologists to provide open access to care. "If patients need to be seen the same day or next day, we can and will *always* accommodate their needs," notes Dr. Teeters.

Advanced technology for faster diagnosis and treatment:

Highland has invested in Vscans, handheld echocardiogram devices, so cardiologists can test patients at the bedside in the ED – or even while they are still in an ambulance – for a faster diagnosis and expedited care.

Highland cardiologists also use AliveCor Heart Monitor devices that attach to an iPhone and enable cardiologists to record a patient's electrocardiogram at a moment's notice.

Safer transitions from hospital to home: For heart failure inpatients, the first 72 hours after discharge is an important predictor of their long-term outcomes. Highland's Heart Failure Follow-Up Clinic gives patients helpful education about their condition and a guaranteed follow-up outpatient visit with Highland Cardiology or their private physician within days of discharge.

"With our new multidisciplinary and technologically advanced approach to heart failure care, patients can receive the care they need in a smaller, more comfortable setting such as Highland," Dr. Teeters notes. "We're very encouraged by the results and patient satisfaction we've achieved with the new inpatient unit and the Heart Failure Follow-Up Clinic."

Coping with Heart Disease: A Patient Checklist

A range of lifestyle changes can help individuals with heart failure or those at risk for the disease live long and productive lives.

- ✓ **Reduce sodium intake.** Aim to consume less than 1,500 to 2,300 mg of sodium a day.
- ✓ **Restrict fat and cholesterol,** which can raise your risk of developing coronary artery disease, a leading contributor to heart failure.
- ✓ **Cut down on alcohol and fluids.** Alcohol use can weaken the heart and may interact with some heart failure medications. Excessive fluid intake can worsen severe heart failure.
- ✓ **Exercise regularly** to help strengthen heart muscle.
- ✓ **Quit smoking.**
- ✓ **Ease stress.** The rapid heart rate and heavy breathing associated with stress cause your heart to work even harder.

For more information about Highland Cardiology, visit HighlandHospital.org. To make an appointment, call (585) 341-6780.

Change Your Sleep Position for Better Health

Did you know you can actually improve your health while you sleep? It's true. Your sleep position – whether you're a side, back or stomach sleeper – not only affects the quality of your sleep, it also can help alleviate or aggravate certain conditions like sleep apnea, acid reflux and more.

Wake Up on the Right Side of the Bed

While there's no "right" way to sleep, sleeping on your stomach generally isn't recommended because of the position's effects on your neck and back. If you find it hard to sleep in another position, though, place a pillow under your pelvis to help reduce strain. Avoid putting your neck at an awkward angle by using a very soft pillow under your head or sleeping without a pillow.

Restore, Don't Snore

If you snore or have obstructive sleep apnea, back sleeping may worsen the problem, so opt for your side instead. In fact, experts from the Mayo Clinic's Center for Sleep Medicine say about 10 percent of sleep apnea sufferers may be cured simply by changing sleep positions. If you're not able to change position, using a wedge pillow to elevate your head may help. Need more motivation to side-sleep? Doing so can also help relieve acid reflux (heartburn), insomnia and chronic sleep deprivation.



Avoiding Back, Shoulder and Neck Pain

Pillows can help lessen back pain in most positions. If you sleep on your back, a pillow under the knees or a rolled towel under the small of your back helps maintain the body's natural curve. If you're a side sleeper, a pillow between your knees can provide extra support while helping hip and knee issues, too. If you have spinal stenosis (pinched nerves in the lower back), bending your knees may also help ease discomfort.

For side sleepers with shoulder pain, avoid sleeping on the affected side. Instead, sleep on the opposite side and hug a pillow. Or, sleep on your back with a small pillow beneath the injured shoulder. For neck pain, use a pillow that fills the space between your neck and shoulders, positioned above the shoulders.

Sleep Snapshot

The position: Back

Good for: Back pain

Bad for: Snoring, sleep apnea, digestive problems

What you can do: Elevate your head, raise the head of the bed two to four inches

The position: Side

Good for: Heartburn, insomnia, chronic sleep deprivation

Bad for: Shoulder pain

What you can do: Hug a pillow

The position: Stomach

Good for: Snoring, sleep apnea

Bad for: Neck and back pain, sleep quality

What you can do: Place a pillow under your pelvis and lower abdominals, don't use a pillow under your head (or use a very soft one)

Breast Cancer Screenings

Save Lives



Jennie Nash

One in eight women in the United States is diagnosed with breast cancer. But statistics tell only part of the story. Here is one woman's inspiring journey.

Jennie Nash was just 35 years old, raising two young daughters, when she found out she had breast cancer.

"From the moment I was diagnosed, I felt lucky," says Nash, 49, author of *The Victoria's Secret Catalog Never Stops Coming and Other Lessons I Learned from Breast Cancer*.

Her reaction was different than most but so was her path toward diagnosis.

Nash had just learned one of her best friends from high school had cancer. Her friend, a successful career woman and mother of two, had never smoked, yet she was facing advanced-stage lung cancer.

"It really hit me hard, and I was convinced that I was dying, too," Nash says. "I would lie in bed and think, am I not breathing well? Then, I had this bruised feeling on my collar bone, so I went to my doctor."

Nash says she is grateful that her doctor did not disregard her fears. Perhaps to give her "something to do," the doctor recommended Nash get a baseline mammogram.

That mammogram led to the detection of early-stage breast cancer scattered throughout one of her breasts.

"It was my friend dying that saved me," Nash says, adding that the bruised feeling in her collar bone was unrelated to the breast cancer diagnosis. "I felt she gave me this enormous gift. Odds were good that if I had not gone to the doctor, I would have not known for five years or so."

Sharing Her Story, Encouraging Others

Nash will be the keynote speaker at Highland Hospital's 20th Annual Breast Cancer Event, "Pampered in Pink," Thursday, Oct. 17 at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. She hopes her story will inspire more women to pay attention to their intuition and their bodies.

"It's easy to ignore the feeling of 'I think something's wrong,'" Nash says. "But by the time they can't ignore it anymore, it's too late."

Avice O'Connell, M.D., Director of Highland Breast Imaging, advocates for women to start getting annual mammograms at age 40. But she also encourages women to be aware of their breasts long before the first breast cancer screening.

"Doing breast self-exams is important, and they're not difficult," Dr. O'Connell says. "Just check your breasts once a month, and if you feel any changes, call your doctor."

"Most of the time, a lump will not be cancer, but always have it checked. If we do find cancer early, it will be easier to treat, and the woman will be more likely to live and share her story of survival."

"Most of the time, a lump will not be cancer, but always have it checked. If we do find cancer early, it will be easier to treat."

*– Dr. Avice O'Connell,
Director of Highland Breast Imaging*



Women Helping Women

The annual Breast Cancer Education Event benefits Highland Breast Imaging's efforts to provide free breast screenings to uninsured women. Last year's event also helped fund mammography equipment at the Anthony L. Jordan Health Center on the northeast side of Rochester. In July, Highland Breast Imaging staff began providing breast cancer screenings to patients at Anthony Jordan.

"We're trying to remove barriers, such as lack of insurance or even transportation, to make these potentially life-saving screenings more accessible to women in our community," Dr. O'Connell says.

Nash, who speaks at a number of events during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, says she hopes the evening will have a lasting impact.

"Every single time I go to an event, I'm awestruck by the energy and power that comes from the simple act of women coming together," Nash says.

"We don't have a cure yet or know why breast cancer is so prevalent. In the face of that, to have women come together to share stories and be there for each other is inspiring, and it never fails to move me."

Nash, the author of four novels and three memoirs, has taught classes on illness and storytelling at both UCLA and WebMD.com. A graduate of Wellesley College, Nash lives with her husband and their 17-year-old and 20-year-old daughters in Los Angeles.



Ginny Ryan

PAMPERED *IN ~ Pink.*

Highland Hospital's annual breast cancer fundraiser is celebrating its 20th birthday in style. In keeping with this year's theme, "Pampered In Pink," guests will receive spa services such as chair massages and Reiki and enjoy hors d'oeuvres, wine tastings and pink cocktails.

When: Thursday, October 17

Where: The Hyatt Regency Rochester

Who: Keynote speaker Jennie Nash will be joined by host Ginny Ryan, 13WHAM-TV Anchor

Why: The event gives women an opportunity to learn more about breast cancer and screening resources available in the Rochester area and is a celebration of lost loved ones, survivors and life.

Event tickets cost \$60 per person. **For more information, call (585) 341-0530.**

To register online, go to BreastCancerEducationEvent.urmc.edu



Too Much Time Online?

Here's the Remedy



Computers were designed to make our lives easier – and if you use one on a regular basis, it may be hard to imagine life without the Internet. But there are ways spending too much time online or hunched over a keyboard can be detrimental to your health. It's important to recognize the signs of the following "computer bugs" and know when it's time to power down for a while.

Computer Vision Syndrome

Looking at a computer monitor for extended periods can result in computer vision syndrome (CVS). According to the American Optometric Association, the eye and vision-related problems of CVS can be caused by glare on the computer screen, poor lighting, poor posture, improper viewing distance, uncorrected vision problems or a combination of these factors.

Symptoms: Blurred vision, dry eyes, eyestrain, headaches, neck and shoulder pain.

Treatment: To help reduce or prevent vision problems associated with CVS, the AOA recommends positioning your computer to avoid glare from windows or overhead lighting, or using a screen glare filter. Blink frequently to minimize risk of developing dry eye. After two hours of computer use, rest your eyes for 15 minutes. Be sure to see your eye doctor if you continue to experience vision problems. Eyeglasses or vision therapy may help.

Cyberchondria

When you don't feel well, it's not unusual to wonder what's wrong and type your symptoms into an Internet search engine. According to Pew Internet & American Life Project, 80 percent of Internet users look for health information online. Having access to medical information at your fingertips can be helpful, but trouble occurs when you have information overload and assume the worst.

Symptoms: Looking up health symptoms online and coming to the conclusion you may have a rare or terminal illness or disease, which can cause health anxiety.

Treatment: If you have symptoms that are worrying you, make an appointment with your doctor. If you want to learn more about an illness or condition, use websites that your doctor recommends. The U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health website, MedlinePlus® at nlm.nih.gov, provides information from reputable health organizations. If you still feel anxious about your health, a mental health professional may be able to help.

Facebook Depression

The idea of "Facebook Depression" – when preteens and teens who spend a lot of time on social media sites begin to exhibit symptoms of depression – was included in a March 2011 report from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Symptoms: Spending a lot of time online and thinking "everyone else has it better than me," feeling sad and lonely, becoming socially isolated, avoiding friends or activities that brought happiness before.

Treatment: Keep in mind that most people put themselves in the best light on social sites such as Facebook (posting the most flattering pictures and exciting updates), but that they likely have their down days too and don't post then. If you or your child is feeling depressed in general, it may be best to avoid checking Facebook and/or temporarily hiding updates of someone who may be a little too exuberant for your mood. Making an effort to reach out to others offline – in the real world – may help too. If symptoms of depression continue, it's a good idea to talk to someone or see your doctor.





Sitting too Long

This technology problem doesn't have a fancy name (yet), but sitting too long is likely the most common ailment of computer users. Researchers have linked sitting for many hours with a number of health problems, including heart disease.* From the kid playing video games to the cubicle-dwelling office worker to the retiree watching television, people of all ages are sitting more and moving less – and putting their health at risk.

Symptoms: Poor posture; poor circulation; neck, wrist and back pain; weight gain.

Treatment: Take regular breaks from sitting. Each hour, take a few minutes to move around – stand up, stretch, march in place, take a walk. Consider using a stability ball as an office chair or ask if you can have a standing workstation. Stand up when taking a phone call. Park farther away. In addition, try to make regular exercise a part of your life – aim for 30 minutes a day at least five days a week.

Thanks to Technology

Although technology may contribute to some health ailments, new inventions and discoveries have revolutionized the way health professionals diagnose, treat and cure diseases and health conditions. If you're dealing with aches and pains, mental health symptoms or just want to maintain good health for years to come, see your doctor.

* Source: Mayo Clinic, mayoclinic.com.



Could a Gluten-Free Diet Be Good for You?

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Shop wisely. Sticking to the perimeter of the grocery store may be the best way to avoid gluten. It's here where you'll find many naturally gluten-free – and nutrient-rich – foods, including fresh produce; fresh meat, poultry and seafood; and egg and dairy products.

"If you are at high risk of celiac disease – if a close family member has it, or you are experiencing symptoms – you should see your physician and get a definitive diagnosis. He or she can order a blood test that's relatively simple and highly accurate," Dr. Sharma advises.

Gluten-Free Naturally

These common foods naturally contain no gluten.

- Corn
- Buckwheat
- Flax
- Potato starch and flour
- Quinoa
- Plain rice
- Soy (but not soy sauce)
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Fresh meat, poultry and seafood
- Eggs
- Unflavored milk
- Cream
- Most yogurts
- Butter
- Aged cheese, cream cheese and cottage cheese
- Honey
- Peanut butter



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HIGHLAND HOSPITAL



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SAVE THE DATE!

"Pampered In Pink" Is October 17

Join us for an entertaining and inspiring evening that combines breast cancer awareness with some well-deserved pampering, too. Highland's 20th annual Breast Cancer Education Event will take place at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. Guests will enjoy a signature pink cocktail, wine tastings, comfort food hors d'oeuvres, and special spa treatments, including Reiki and chair massages. Tickets are \$60. For more on this event and our special keynote speaker, see the article on page 4 of this newsletter.

To register online, go to BreastCancerEducationEvent.urmc.edu or scan the QR code on this page.

