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NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE WHO BRING BJC HEALTHCARE TO LIFE

BJC TODAY

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Building a better world

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Ramona Tumblin-Rucker, BJC design and construction project manager, and Henry Woods, Campus Renewal Project engineer, are working to build a better community by inspiring young people to succeed. | Photo by Bob Schmitz

In honor of Black History Month, read about other employees across BJC who are writing a new chapter in history, as they make a difference now and for those yet to come.

How to keep your heart healthy

by Michael Klein, MD

BJC MEDICAL GROUP ■ February, Heart Month, is a good time to review what you're doing to keep your heart healthy. Here are some steps you should take now:

- **Establish a relationship with a physician you trust.** The first step is to find a physician who will partner with you to prevent and/or treat heart disease in a way that makes sense to you. It's important to find someone you trust so recommendations and advice don't go in one ear and out the other. A long-term relationship with a physician is one of the best ways to stay informed and optimize your health.
- **Learn about your risk factors and what can be done to treat them.** There are a number of different causes of heart disease. The good news is that most of them can be treated to prevent your risk of developing heart problems. High blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes are all examples of conditions that increase your risk for heart disease. But they're also conditions that you can treat medically and can follow with testing. Being proactive about controlling your risk factors is critical.
- **No smoking!** This goes without saying, but I'll say it anyway. If you are an ongoing smoker, there's probably no single more important thing you can do for yourself than to quit smoking. Even if you've tried before, I recommend asking for help. There are nicotine replacement therapies, non-nicotine containing medical



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- therapies and group support that can increase your chance of achieving long-term abstinence from smoking.
- **Maintain a simple exercise regimen.** A sedentary lifestyle will definitely increase your risk for heart disease. You don't have to be an elite athlete. Brisk walking for just 20-30 minutes a day will decrease your risk. If walking isn't your thing, then there are many other activities you can do to keep your heart healthy. Any aerobic exercise that gets your heart rate up will help protect your heart when done routinely.
 - **Follow a heart-healthy diet.** Unfortunately, the common American diet is no friend to your heart. Foods high in salt (sodium), saturated fats and cholesterol are all too readily available here. Try to cut down on fast food and other processed foods. Look to incorporate lean meats and fish, as well as fresh fruits and vegetables, into your diet. Your heart will thank you.
 - **Learn the symptoms of heart disease.** If you are having a heart attack, seeking medical attention early is the most important thing you can do to ensure a good outcome. Symptoms of a heart attack include a sensation of pressure or tightness in your chest and shortness of breath. Some people also experience nausea, sweats, anxiety and a general feeling of fatigue. If you develop these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

Dr. Michael Klein, a member of BJC Medical Group, is on staff at Missouri Baptist Medical Center. He practices with BJC Medical Group Cardiology, 3009 N. Ballas Road, Building B, Suite 214, St. Louis. For an appointment, call 314-996-7190. ■

Should statins really be in the water?

by Benjamin Voss, MD

BJC MEDICAL GROUP ■ Physicians joke that the cholesterol-lowering medications statins "should be in the water" because of their effectiveness at treating cardiovascular disease (CVD).

While this is clearly an exaggeration, skeptics say "there is evidence that statins provide little benefit for healthy patients" and "can trigger dangerous side effects."

As a prescriber of statins, I have reviewed the medical literature on the use of statins in healthy patients.

CVD is the leading cause of death in America. Many lifestyle factors (smoking, diet, exercise) impact the risk of developing CVD, and should be addressed prior to starting medication. The evidence shows that patients with CVD who take statins have fewer heart attacks. Is there evidence that treating healthy people, who don't have CVD (or a risk like diabetes) with a statin is beneficial?

- The West of Scotland Coronary Prevention Study evaluated the effect of Pravastatin on the rate of heart attacks and cardiac death in 6,595 men with high cholesterol and no CVD. Total cholesterol fell 20 percent, and there was a 32 percent reduction in cardiovascular deaths and a 22 percent reduction in all deaths. The study did not include women.
- Primary Prevention of Acute Coronary Events With Lovastatin in Men and Women With Average Cholesterol Level was a trial of lovastatin in 6,605 patients without CVD. Women were included in this study that showed only 2 percent reduction in death, but a significant



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reduction in heart attacks.

- Rosuvastatin to Prevent Vascular Events in Men and Women With Elevated C-Reactive Protein (CRP) studied 17,802 healthy men and women with normal cholesterol and a high CRP level. The trial was stopped early because cardiovascular events were lower in patients treated with rosuvastatin.
- A review of 11 statin trials with 65,229 patients without CVD showed a small reduction in total death.

In February of 2012, the FDA added warnings on statins that they may raise levels of blood sugar and could cause memory loss. Many patients have asked if they should stop their statin because of this warning.

The FDA says there is no proof that statins cause memory loss, but people need to be aware of the possibility. The FDA also announced patients taking statins no longer need periodic monitoring of liver enzymes.

More than 20 million Americans are taking statins. The absolute benefits of statins are smaller in healthy people than in those with known CVD. And while there is a significant reduction in heart attacks, the overall reduction in death with statins in healthy people is quite small.

The answer to the question, "Should statins be in the water?" is clearly "no." However, patients should discuss the risks and benefits of statins with their doctor.

Dr. Benjamin Voss is board certified in internal medicine and a member of BJC Medical Group. He practices at Associated Internists and is on staff at Missouri Baptist Medical Center. The practice is located at 3009 N. Ballas Road, Building A, Suite 227, St. Louis. For an appointment, call 314-996-7800. ■

CELEBRATING
25
YEARS



BJC SCHOOL OUTREACH
and YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

BJC HealthCare

Love your heart

BJC ■ BJC School Outreach and Youth Development team members use creative approaches to convey health information to students in grades K-12. Below are limericks about the importance of heart health.

Heart Health

by Camille Smith, RD, school-community health educator

Periodically, it's wise to reflect
on your lifestyle choices' effects
on this essential part
of your body, the heart.
Be healthy and show it respect.

Call it exercise, work out, or play,
but be physically active your way.
Low intensity or full hustle
improves cardiac muscle.
Commit to moving your body each day.

Choose a heart healthy diet which contains
many fruits, vegetables and whole grains,
rich in fiber from plants
plus phytonutrients.
From frequent red meat eating, refrain.

Fat's heart health benefits are great,
but be aware of your fat choice's state.
Less butter, more olives.
Choose liquid fats over solids.
Be wary of types that hydrogenate.

Values of high- and low-density lipoproteins
come from MD-ordered blood work which gleans
truth about risk
and the extent to which
your blood vessels have plaque or are clean.

To a healthy lifestyle please commit.
Avoid smoking as a habit.
Choosing to smoke,
you risk heart attack and stroke.
If you do smoke, please decide to quit.

Work deadlines, full schedule and debt,
illness, toxic acquaintances and regret.
All are possible stressors
which raise your blood pressure.
Be mindful. Simplify. Change mindset.

For more information about BJC School Outreach and Youth Development or to schedule a program, call 314-286-0460 or visit www.bjcschooloutreach.org. ■