

Keeping your heart healthy

- Seven simple steps can make a difference

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February is Heart Health Month, a time to assess how we take care of our hearts. According to the American Heart Association, there are seven simple things people can do to keep their hearts healthy:

1. Get Active. At least 30 minutes of exercise every day reduces your risk of heart disease. On the flip side, without regular exercise, the body gradually loses its strength and ability to function well.

2. Control Cholesterol. Too much LDL, or “bad” cholesterol, can clog your arteries, which increases your chances of heart attack and stroke. Do you know what your cholesterol levels are?

Sheridan Memorial Hospital’s Medical Arts Lab offers a blood-chemistry screening panel on Wellness Fridays. This panel includes not only cholesterol testing, but a number of other helpful blood screenings. Call 672-1035 for information and to make an appointment.

3. Eat Better. Eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products every day. Nutritional counseling by a Registered Dietitian is available through Sheridan Memorial Hospital.

The dietitian will assess your personal nutritional needs, help you set goals and improve your health through eating. Call 672-1078 to schedule an appointment.

4. Manage Blood Pressure. High blood pressure, or hypertension, usually has no symptoms and is the most significant risk factor for heart disease. High blood pressure leads to tears in the arteries, and when the body repairs the tears, blockages and clots can occur leading to stroke, heart attack, kidney failure, or heart failure.

Ways to manage blood pressure: healthy diet, reduce salt, regular exercise, maintain a healthy weight, manage stress, limit alcohol, and stop smoking.

5. Lose Weight. Obesity is considered a major risk factor for heart disease. The AHA says “among Americans age 20 and older, 145 million are overweight or obese.” Obesity would be considered as hav-



The Sheridan Press/Blaine McCartney

Donna Hunt of Sheridan works out on a treadmill Tuesday morning at the YMCA. February is Heart Health Month, and Sheridan Memorial Hospital has a list of seven steps to help ensure a healthy heart.

ing a Body Mass Index of 25 and higher.

To determine your BMI, multiply your weight (pounds) by 703, then divide by your height in inches, and divide by your height in inches once more. If you need to lose weight, talk to your doctor about developing a plan to lose weight safely. Being overweight not only increases your risk of heart disease, but also of high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

6. Reduce Blood Sugar. High blood sugars lead to type 2 diabetes, generally caused by insulin resistance in the body. Diabetes greatly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke. Eating habits, weight control and exercise all factor in when trying to control blood sugar.

Visit with your doctor if you are concerned about diabetes. The blood screenings at Sheridan Memorial Hospital’s Medical Arts Lab on Wellness Fridays also include a blood-glucose test.

7. Stop Smoking. This is the single most important preventable cause of premature death in America. Smoking increases the chance of acquiring all kinds of conditions including coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke.

Sheridan Psychiatry through Sheridan Memorial Hospital offers smoking-cessation therapy programs. Call 675-4630 for an appointment. For additional resources and quitting assistance, call 674-7702 or Tobacco Free Wyoming Communities at 800-784-8669.

If you are concerned about your heart health, the hospital now offers full-time cardiology services.

Dr. Michael Brennan is now here every day to provide cardiac care to patients in Sheridan through the Big Horn Heart Center at Sheridan Memorial Hospital. He has 20 years of experience in Billings and has been a visiting cardiologist in Sheridan.

Heart

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Dr. Brennan provides the following services:

- Cardiac consultation and exam (new and established patients)
- Exercise and chemical stress tests
- Cardiac CT angiography
- Echocardiograms and stress echo
- Pacemaker and defibrillator insertion and follow-up checks (in clinic and remotely)
- Cardioversions for atrial fibrillation

For all previous patients — call the office (675-4610) to transition your medical records and cardiology care. For new patients questioning the need for cardiac care — ask your primary care provider for an appropriate referral and transition of records.

Other low-cost screenings are offered through Sheridan Memorial Hospital as preventive tools for heart disease. One example, according to



Dr. Michael Brennan

Cardiologist

Medical Imaging Manager Chris Bilyeu, is a calcium score.

Bilyeu says this test “quantifies calcium build-up, which is an indicator of vascular or coronary artery disease.” He recommends talking with your doctor to see if this would be an appropriate screening for you.

Many resources regarding heart disease prevention are available at your hospital and through your primary care physician. Take advantage of these resources and focus on keeping your heart healthy.

** Most of the information regarding the Simple 7 Heart Health Factors comes from the American Heart Association (www.heart.org).*