

FALL
2002

UConnHouseCall

REMARKABLE CARE THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

More than 61 million Americans have some form of cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke and congestive heart failure. What's worse, more than 2,600 Americans die each day of cardiovascular disease—that's an average of one death every 33 seconds. What can you do to protect yourself? Understand your risk, and you may change your destiny.

WHAT'S YOUR RISK?

Certain risk factors increase the likelihood that you will develop cardiovascular disease. "The three biggest risk factors are high cholesterol, high blood pressure and smoking," says Bruce Liang, M.D., cardiologist and chief of the division of cardiology at the UConn Health Center (for more on Dr. Liang, see page 4). Oftentimes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure have virtually no symptoms. For this reason, it's important to learn about your cholesterol levels and blood pressure readings. You can get this information through regular checkups with your doctor. With this information, you can be proactive when it comes to lowering your risk. "You can do something about these risk factors and reduce your chances of a future cardiovascular event, like heart attack or stroke," says Dr. Liang. Here's what you need to know:

High cholesterol. "Reducing saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet, shedding excess weight and exercising can help you lower your cholesterol," says Dr. Liang. "If no improvement in cholesterol is seen after these modifications are made, your physician may recommend cholesterol-lowering medications. These days, there really is no excuse for not getting your cholesterol under control, because we have so many options. For example, a class of anticholesterol drugs known as statins has been available since 1985 and has very few side effects."

High blood pressure. "You need to get your blood pressure under control," says Dr. Liang. "Your blood pressure should normally be less than 140/90 mm Hg." Blood pressure that stays above this level is considered high. Diet, exercise and medication can help to improve blood pressure.

Smoking. "Quitting smoking is important," says Dr. Liang. "And today, there's a lot of support available to you, from counseling to medications, which can help you overcome your addiction to nicotine."

There are other risk factors for heart disease. These include:

Obesity. Obesity and being overweight can be treated through proper diet and exercise. Your doctor can develop a plan that works for you.

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Remarkable Care Through
Research and Education

Diet. “According to U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines, you want to include two to three servings of fruits and three to five servings of vegetables in your diet each day,” says Dr. Liang. “Also, watch your intake of dietary cholesterol. You can monitor your intake by reading food labels.”

The new cholesterol management guidelines from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) include daily intakes of less than 7 percent of calories from saturated fat and less than 200 mg of dietary cholesterol.

Red meat has much more cholesterol than fish or skinless chicken. “There is increasing evidence that fish may be your healthiest option,” says Dr. Liang.

Inactivity. “Physical inactivity and a sedentary lifestyle are risk factors for heart disease,” says Dr. Liang. “The Surgeon General recommends every adult participate

in moderate-intensity activity on most to all days of the week. Check with your doctor before starting any type of physical program.”

Family history. “Anyone with a family history of heart disease needs to have a thorough cardiology exam so a personalized heart disease prevention program can be implemented,” says Dr. Liang.

Diabetes. “Studies show that long-term control of blood sugar can reduce the risk of cardiovascular problems down the road,” says Dr. Liang.

Hormones. “Women need to discuss the benefits and risks of estrogen replacement therapy with their physician,” says Dr. Liang.

DETECTION AND TREATMENT

Diagnosing a heart problem can be difficult, because many patients do not exhibit signs of cardiovascular disease until there’s a crisis.

The UConn Health Center’s Heart Station uses sophisticated technology to detect heart disease and determine appropriate treatment. This technology includes exercise stress tests, testing with nuclear imaging, echocardiography, transesophageal echocardiography and electrocardiology.

And, within the UConn Health Center’s new 3,500-square-foot cardiac catheterization laboratory, the latest diagnostic interventional procedures, such as angiography and angioplasty, are available. Innovative stent procedures, which are used to open blocked arteries, also are

performed in the catheterization lab.

“If someone does suffer a heart attack, we have lifesaving technology,” says Dr. Liang. “Specialized catheters are used to remove plaque and blood clots from arteries. New imaging technology can detect the area of the heart in which the heart attack occurred, which is important in determining the best course of treatment.”

And, unlike other area health facilities, UConn Health Center is involved in cutting-edge research and clinical trials, which are used to determine whether new drugs or treatments are both safe and effective. “We are currently investigating new methods and potential drugs to prevent or treat heart attack, called cardio-protective agents,” says Dr. Liang. UConn researchers also are investigating the role of genetic screening in the diagnosis of heart disease.

Thanks to UConn Health Center’s state-of-the-art technology, comprehensive services, research capabilities and superb staff, Connecticut’s citizens can continue to expect—and receive—remarkable cardiac care.

How’s Your Heart?

To make an appointment with a UConn physician, call UConnLink at 800-535-6232 or 860-679-7692. For health information and more, visit www.uchc.edu.

HEALTHY EATING

Three-Bean Salad

This salad is great for those warm, early fall days or any time you feel like having a tasty, nutritious salad. It’s easy to make, delicious and nutritious. The beans are a great source of fiber, which is important for a healthy diet.

Dressing:

- ½ cup cider vinegar
- ¼ cup fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp white grape juice
- 2 Tbsp sugar
- 1 tsp celery seeds
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Salad:

- 1 (8 oz) can of red kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (10 oz) pkg. frozen cut green beans, cooked according to pkg. directions
- 1 (10 oz) pkg. frozen cut wax beans, cooked according to pkg. directions
- ½ cup finely chopped onions
- ½ cup chopped green or red peppers

Combine dressing ingredients in a small bowl; stir.

In a large bowl, combine the three types of beans and the onions and peppers. Add dressing; stir gently until combined. Cover and chill in the refrigerator for 4 to 24 hours to blend the flavors, stirring often.

Makes six side dish servings; approximately 77 calories per serving, with less than one gram of fat and no cholesterol.

Recipe supplied by Pat Froberg, B.S., R.D., C.D.N., a registered dietitian/consulting nutritionist and a certified diabetes educator at the UConn Health Center.

MANAGING DIABETES

How lifestyle changes can make a difference

With type 2 diabetes rising in epidemic-like proportions, UConn Health Center professionals urge men and women to take healthy steps to reduce their chances of developing this serious disease.

Today, nearly 17 million Americans have diabetes. Among U.S. adults, cases of diabetes increased 49 percent from 1990 to 2000.

Medical researchers link this increase to our aging population and a greater prevalence of obesity and sedentary lifestyles in our society. Yet, research also shows that early detection and treatment can decrease the chances of developing diabetes-related complications—proving once again that “information is power.”

WHAT IS DIABETES?

“Diabetes is a disease in which your body does not properly use sugar, causing your blood sugar levels to become too high,” says



Carolé Mensing, R.N., M.A., C.D.E., diabetes education coordinator at the UConn Health Center and president-elect, Health Care and Education, American Diabetes Association. Your body uses sugar (glucose) from food for energy. Insulin, a hormone made by your pancreas, helps maintain your blood sugar levels in the normal range.

Symptoms may include frequent urination, excessive thirst, extreme hunger, unusual weight loss, increased fatigue, irritability and blurry



FEAR OF FALLING

At one time or another, everyone loses his or her balance and takes a spill. Usually, only minor bumps and bruises—and a little embarrassment—result. But, for the elderly, falls can have serious consequences. For seniors, falls are:

- the leading cause of injury-related visits to emergency departments in the United States
- the most common cause for nursing home admissions
- the main cause of injuries and accidental deaths in people ages 65 and older.

In Connecticut, the most common and costly injuries are related to falls. In fact, falls are the leading cause of injury for Connecticut residents ages 70 and older.

For more information on fall prevention, *UConn House Call* turned to Robert Fuller, M.D., director of emergency medicine at the UConn Health Center.

WHAT CAUSES AN ELDERLY PERSON TO FALL?

“In some cases, a fall is due to side effects caused by medications, such as sedatives, antidepressants, muscle relaxants and blood pressure drugs,” says Dr. Fuller. “These drugs can cause dizziness, lightheadedness or loss of balance.

And, when two or more of these drugs are used in combination, the side effects can worsen. Taking four or more medications has been associated with a greater risk for falling.”

Falls also result from diminished vision, hearing, muscle strength and coordination as well as from health conditions, such as arthritis, stroke and osteoporosis. What’s more, there are hazards within the home that may increase the risk for falls.

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT FALLS?

Get moving. “Exercise is one of the most important ways to reduce your chances of falling, because it makes you stronger,” says Dr. Fuller. Ask your doctor about the best type of exercise program for you.

See your doctor. “Get regular checkups with your doctor,” says Dr. Fuller. “Ask him or her to look at all the medicines you are taking, including any over-the-counter remedies or herbal supplements. Discuss with your doctor any side effects you are experiencing. Also, if your doctor believes you are at risk for falling, ask him or her for a gait evaluation with a physical therapist,” says Dr. Fuller. “Your doctor can set that up for you.”

Also, says Dr. Fuller, have your vision checked. Poor vision can increase your risk for falling.

Reach and maintain a healthy weight.

“Losing even a few pounds can help reduce your risk for developing type 2 diabetes, because your body will use insulin more effectively,” says Mensing. If you are overweight or obese, talk to your doctor about starting a healthy weight-loss plan. “In order to lose weight, your food intake needs to be less than your energy expenditure—in other words, you need to eat less and exercise more.” Make a plan to increase activity levels toward the goal of being active for at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week.

See your doctor. “It’s important to keep regular checkups with your primary care physician so you receive the appropriate screenings,” says Mensing. Individuals ages 40 and older should consider getting tested for diabetes, especially if they are overweight. Ask your doctor if you should be tested for diabetes.



Safety first. “About half of all falls happen at home,” says Dr. Fuller. Here’s how to make your home safer:

- Floors. “Remove all loose wires, cords and throw rugs,” says Dr. Fuller. Make sure rugs are anchored and smooth.
- Bathrooms. Install grab bars and nonskid tape in the tub.
- Lighting. Make sure hallways, stairways and entrances are well lit. Install a nightlight in the bathroom.
- Kitchen. Install nonskid rubber mats near the sink and stove.
- Stairs. Make sure treads, rails and rugs are secure. “Don’t climb on stools or stepladders,” says Dr. Fuller. “Get someone to help you with jobs that call for climbing.”
- Other precautions. “Wear supportive, low-heeled and well-fitting shoes,” says Dr. Fuller. “Also, use a walking aid if one has been prescribed to you.”

WHAT CAN MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS DO TO HELP?

“They can check your home for dangers that might cause you to fall,” says Dr. Fuller. Friends and family also can watch for changes in your strength and balance over time.

To make an appointment with a UConn physician, including geriatricians with UConn’s Center on Aging, call UConnLink at 800-535-6232 or 860-679-7692.

The Emergency Department at the UConn Health Center is here to serve you, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

vision. If you have one or more of these symptoms, see your doctor.

Many of the complications of diabetes are related to high blood sugar levels. When left untreated, these high levels can damage the nervous system, kidneys, and cardiovascular and circulatory systems. Complications include blindness, kidney disease, heart disease and stroke, nerve disease and amputations.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common form of diabetes, accounting for 90 to 95 percent of all diagnosed cases of diabetes. While recent increases are linked to obesity in adulthood, Mensing notes that “people can develop type 2 diabetes at any age, even during childhood.” (Type 1 diabetes accounts for 5 to 10 percent of diabetes cases. In type 1 diabetes the body produces little or poor quality insulin.)

PREVENTION, PREVENTION, PREVENTION

In many cases, certain lifestyle changes may help you avoid developing type 2 diabetes.*

*A small percentage of individuals, despite making lifestyle changes, will develop type 2 diabetes.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

DISCOVERY SERIES

Always Informative, Always Free

All programs begin at 7 p.m.

- Laughter Is the Best Medicine
Tuesday, September 10
- Menopause and Hormone Replacement Therapy
Tuesday, September 17
- What Parents Need to Know About the Teen Years
Thursday, October 3
- Coping With Cancer in the Family
Thursday, October 17
- Diabetes and Heart Disease
Thursday, November 21

FOCUSING ON DIABETES

Basic Level Sessions

Adults New to Diabetes

- Farmington: Second and fourth Mondays of each month, 1:15 to 3 p.m.
- West Hartford: Second Tuesdays in October and December, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- East Hartford: Second Tuesdays in September and November, 10 to 11:30 a.m.
- Simsbury: Fourth Wednesdays of each month, 1:30 to 3 p.m.

Intermediate Level Sessions

Living With Diabetes Series

Please register for all three parts.

Part 1: Wednesday, September 11, October 9 or December 4, 1:30 to 5 p.m.

Part 2: Wednesday, September 18, October 16 or December 11, 1:30 to 5 p.m.

Part 3: Friday, November 1, 9 to 11:30 a.m.

Advanced Level Sessions

Intensified Insulin Management

Second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, 9 to 10:30 a.m.

Note: Individual appointments are available for meal planning, diabetes management, pre-pregnancy planning and gestational counseling. Registration is required.

GET READY FOR BABY

Breast-feeding Class

Thursday, October 3, November 7 or December 5, 7 to 9 p.m. Fee, \$10.

Six-week Childbirth Preparation Class

Wednesdays, October 9 to November 13, 7 to 9 p.m. Fee, \$100.

One-day Childbirth Preparation Class

Saturday, September 21 or November 16, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fee, \$100.

Childbirth Preparation Refresher Class

Wednesdays, October 23 and October 30, 7 to 9 p.m. Fee, \$40.

Hospital Maternity Tours

Children and grandparents are welcome to attend.

Every Saturday, 3:30 p.m. Free.

Infant Care Class

Monday, October 21 or November 18, 7 to 9 p.m. Fee, \$10.

INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE LIFE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

Mind/Body/Spirit Medicine for Symptom Relief and Health Maintenance

Two hours weekly, 10 weeks beginning Wednesday, September 18. Group limited to 10 participants. One-hour pre-registration interview required. Cost: \$600, includes materials and interview. For more information, call 860-679-7696.

For more information or to register for any of these classes, call UConnLink at 800-535-6232 (except where noted).

DIABETES, continued from page 3

TAKING CARE OF YOUR DIABETES

If you have diabetes, lifestyle changes can also help you lower your risk for serious complications. "We know that making lifestyle changes isn't easy, and most people need support," says Mensing. If you are diagnosed with or are at risk for diabetes, the Diabetes Education Ambulatory Self-Management Program at UConn Health Center can help. The program, which aids patients in meal planning, exercise, weight loss and medications when necessary, uses a team approach to providing care. Team members include primary care physicians, endocrinologists, ophthalmologists, nurses, behavioral health specialists, dietitians, dentists, podiatrists and others. "We look at each person's health history and lifestyle before recommending changes in meal planning and exercise," says Mensing. "We offer education and we're here to offer support. Our staff is kind but we're also tough—we'll help you make progress toward achieving your goals."

See the "Upcoming Events" section (at left) for additional diabetes educational opportunities.

For more information or to make an appointment, call UConnLink at 800-535-6232 or 860-679-7692. For health information and more, visit www.uchc.edu.

INTRODUCING...

The UConn Health Center welcomes cardiologist **Bruce T. Liang, M.D.**, as its new chief of the division of cardiology. Dr. Liang joins the UConn Health Center after 13 years at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, where he served as an associate professor both of medicine and pharmacology and was actively involved with research, patient care and teaching. He is a board-certified cardiologist.



Bruce T. Liang, M.D.

THE UCONN HEALTH CENTER MATERNAL FETAL MEDICINE ASSOCIATES WELCOMES:

Henry Roqué, M.D., received his medical degree from SUNY Health Sciences Center, Syracuse, N.Y. After completing his obstetrics/gynecology residency at Hartford Hospital and his maternal fetal medicine fellowship at New York University Medical Center, he worked at North Shore University Hospital, Great Neck, N.Y. Dr. Roqué is board-eligible in obstetrics/gynecology and in maternal fetal medicine.



Henry Roqué, M.D.

Amy Whitsel, M.D., received her degree from Vanderbilt University Medical School, Nashville, Tenn. After completing her obstetrics/gynecology residency at the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center, she served as a physician in the U.S. Air Force. She subsequently completed her maternal fetal medicine fellowship at the University of Vermont and, most recently, she was on faculty at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Dr. Whitsel is board-certified in obstetrics/gynecology and is board-eligible in maternal fetal medicine.



Amy Whitsel, M.D.

Carolyn Zelop, M.D., received her medical degree from Tufts University. After completing her obstetrics/gynecology residency and maternal fetal medicine fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Massachusetts General Hospital, she worked at Harvard University, the University of Chicago and, most recently, at Lenox Hill Hospital, New York, N.Y. Dr. Zelop is board-certified in obstetrics/gynecology and in maternal fetal medicine.



Carolyn Zelop, M.D.