

With Attached Photo: Gain five years with a healthy heart.

Contact: Laura Young, director, Marketing & Public Relations; laura.young@sghs.org, 912-466-2148

Celebrate Heart Health Month: Wear Red, Reduce Your Risk Factors and Learn Hands-Only CPR

BRUNSWICK, Georgia: February 3, 2021 – It may be difficult to focus beyond a global pandemic and the anxiety of waiting to receive a coronavirus vaccine, but serious health concerns, such as cardiovascular disease, don't take a break, not even for COVID-19. February is Heart Health Month,



and the Southeast Georgia Health System Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation team encourages everyone to join the battle against heart disease by wearing red on Friday Feb. 5, 2021, National Wear Red Day.

Heart disease remains the single largest health threat to Americans – accounting for more deaths than all forms of cancer combined for both men and women. According to the American Heart Association, someone in the U.S. dies of cardiovascular disease about every 40 seconds – that represents 2,200 people per day.

Heart disease risk factors

Some risk factors can make you more likely than the average person to develop heart disease, which sets the stage for heart attacks and cardiac arrest. Some of these risk factors, like age, can't be prevented, but others, like diet and exercise, are well within your control:

Age 55 and older or postmenopausal women. One factor contributing to this risk is the decline in the hormone estrogen (which offers women some heart protection) that occurs after menopause.

High blood pressure. This damages the heart's arteries. In addition, women are more prone to heart disease if they had high blood pressure during pregnancy, a condition known as pre-eclampsia.

High cholesterol. Too much LDL cholesterol (the bad kind of cholesterol) in the blood can clog arteries in the heart, triggering a heart attack.

Diabetes. Or if you have its precursor, prediabetes.

Family history. If your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55 or your mother or sister had one before age 65, your risk rises too.

Overweight or obese. Extra weight is hard on the heart.

Unhealthy lifestyle choices. These include eating unhealthy foods, smoking or not exercising.

Four ways to protect your heart

A good first step is to visit your health care provider. Ask about your personal risk for heart disease and what you can do to lower it. Studies show that a cardiac rehabilitation program can increase life expectancy for individuals with heart issues by up to five years. The Health System's Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Program has been helping patients improve their heart and lung

function, physical stamina and overall health for more than 25 years and is certified by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation. Oftentimes when patients suffer from heart disease, their physical fitness becomes quite limited. Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation is a bridge to getting back to exercising and living a healthier lifestyle.

In the meantime, maintaining a healthy lifestyle is the best way to reduce your risk of heart disease:

1. Carve out time for some exercise. Walking is easy, and every step helps.
2. Eat more heart-healthy foods. Focus more on fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Choose foods low in salt and sodium, added sugars, and saturated or trans fats.
3. Maintain a healthy weight. Eating sensible food portions and exercising can help.
4. If you smoke, try your best to quit. Your heart will thank you!

Hands-Only CPR

In addition to protecting your heart health, you also have the power to protect others by learning Hands-Only CPR. Every second counts in cardiac arrest, a condition which can strike at any time. Visit sghs.org/cardiopulmonary to watch a powerful video from the American Heart Association and Anthem Foundation that shows how a bystander can perform Hands-Only CPR. Being cognizant of your heart health as well as becoming familiar with Hands-Only CPR can save a life.

ABOUT SOUTHEAST GEORGIA HEALTH SYSTEM

Southeast Georgia Health System is a not-for-profit health system comprised of two acute care hospitals, two long term care facilities, two comprehensive Cancer Care Centers and multiple specialty care centers, including orthopaedic and spine care, joint replacement, breast care, maternity, outpatient rehabilitation, sleep management and wound care. The Brunswick Campus Cancer Care Center is accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer and offers the only CyberKnife® M6 with MLC technology in Georgia. Additionally, the Southeast Georgia Physician Associates medical group includes more than 140 providers working in 20 different medical specialties at more than 50 locations. The Health System is part of Coastal Community Health, a regional affiliation between Baptist Health and Southeast Georgia Health System forming a highly integrated hospital network focused on significant initiatives designed to enhance the quality and value of care provided to our contiguous communities. In 2020, the Brunswick Campus was rated High Performing in COPD and Heart Failure by the U.S. News & World Report. For more information, visit sghs.org.

###