

# healthy heart

HEALTH NEWS AND INFORMATION

## Second opinions

If you need more information to make medical decisions or to understand your condition, getting a second opinion can help.

To find a doctor for a second opinion:

- Ask your doctor to recommend someone from a different office.
- Call Community Health Plan at **1-800-990-9247** for a list of approved doctors.
- Call the Physician Referral Line at **1-800-447-1098** or **(816) 271-7991**.
- Ask a friend or relative who was treated for the same condition.
- Look in the *Directory of Physicians in the United States* at your local library.



SHOULD I SEE A  
cardiologist?

## Questions to ask

Here are some questions to ask your doctor:

- What are my heart health risks, and how can I control them?
- What can I eat to improve the health of my heart?
- What types of physical activity are best for me, and how much exercise should I get?
- What heart symptoms should I watch for, and what should I do if I have them?
- If I need a cardiac procedure or medicine, what are its risks?
- What is your experience with treating my condition or performing this procedure?

Source: American Heart Association



**YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN** can help you with most health problems. And when you need extra care, he or she can refer you to the right specialist.

If you are having symptoms involving your heart or blood vessels, that specialist will be a cardiologist. Such symptoms might include shortness of breath, chest pain or dizzy spells.

You may also need to visit a cardiologist for symptoms that don't seem to be related to your heart. Instead of chest pain, for example, abdominal pain, nausea, weakness and a cold sweat can sometimes signal a heart attack, especially in women.

Cardiologists are specially trained to assess these symptoms and diagnose and treat various heart problems.

Pediatric cardiologists treat infants and children with heart problems.

Your cardiologist will guide your testing and treatment and will counsel you about how to minimize your health risks.

For health info, call our  
24-hour Nurse Line at  
**1-800-455-2476.**

And if you need surgery, such as coronary artery bypass or valve replacement, a cardiac surgeon will help you.



# HEALTHY facts

## YOUR HEART NEEDS SLEEP

Getting enough sleep is vital to your circulatory system. Without the blood pressure drop that comes with sleep, you're more likely to have an irregular heartbeat, angina, heart attack, heart failure and stroke. Lack of sleep also raises levels of certain proteins and stress hormones that can contribute to heart disease.

—National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

## LONELINESS APPEARS TO RAISE A PERSON'S BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure often goes up with age, but if you don't have friends, it might rise even more than expected. One study of older adults suggests that the loneliest people's blood pressure readings may be as much as 30 points higher than the readings of the least lonely people. If you're feeling lonely, taking a class or volunteering may be good ways to stay connected to others.

—AARP; Psychology and Aging

# healthyheart

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# TAKING MEDICINE the right way

SIMPLY TAKING YOUR MEDICINE isn't enough when it comes to protecting your heart. You have to take medicine correctly.

That's why, when your doctor prescribes a medicine, it's important to have a good understanding of the drug. You should know:

- The drug's name and purpose.
- When, how and how long you should take it.
- Whether you should avoid certain foods, drinks, other medicines or activities while taking it.
- What side effects it might cause, and what you should do if they occur.

Your doctor will likely go over these details, but you can also ask if there are written materials about the medication that you can have.

Once you have the relevant information, you can form a plan for taking the medication correctly.

Some people find it helpful to create a chart listing their medicines and dosing times. As they take each dose, they mark it off.

To speak with your disease management nurse, call  
**1-800-447-3617.**

Others use pill boxes, some of which beep when it's time to take medication. Still others mark their medicines with colored labels according to when they should be taken. Or they take their pills with routine activities, such as brushing their teeth, so it will be easier to remember.

Your doctor or pharmacist can help you develop a good system.

Source: American Heart Association

## Check your medications online

With Community Health Plan's online health information tools, you can find out more about prescription and nonprescription drugs under "Drug Information" and check their interactions with other drugs, food, alcohol and tobacco under "Drug Interaction Checker." The Web site also has a handy "Drug Identifier" link where you can search for medicines by shape and color.

You can do all this in three easy steps!

1. Go to [www.mychp.com](http://www.mychp.com).
2. Click on "Health Improvement" on the left side of the screen.
3. Click on "Online Health Information" in the list provided.





# runaway HEARTBEATS

IF THE BEAT, BEAT, BEAT OF YOUR heart is irregular and rapid, you may have a condition known as atrial fibrillation (AF).

Atrial fibrillation is caused by a change in normal electrical signals that stimulate your heart's upper chambers, called atria. Erratic signals can stimulate the atria to contract five to seven times faster than normal and cause the heart to beat 300 to 400 times per minute.

Some people with AF don't have symptoms. Others may feel frequent palpitations, shortness of breath during exertion, chest pain, and episodes of dizziness or fainting. The irregular heartbeat may come and go, or it can be constant.

AF isn't life-threatening, but it should be treated. It can eventually weaken the heart muscle and cause lasting damage. It might lead to other rhythm problems, chronic fatigue, heart failure and, most dangerous of all, a stroke.

Your doctor may first prescribe medicines, such as aspirin or war-

farin, to prevent blood clots that could initiate a stroke. You may also benefit from electrical stimulation (cardioversion), a pacemaker or catheter ablation. Ablation uses focused energy to destroy areas of the heart that trigger abnormal electrical signals or to block incorrect signals from traveling through the heart.

Some people develop a condition similar to AF called atrial flutter (AFL). AFL is caused by a single

Erratic signals can cause the heart to beat 300 to 400 times per minute.

electrical wave that typically circulates very rapidly in one atrium. It causes a very fast, steady heartbeat. It's most likely to occur following a heart attack or cardiac surgery.

Cardioversion and medications generally are used to treat AFL.

Sources: American Heart Association;  
Heart Rhythm Society

## Radio waves tune up the heart

A treatment called catheter ablation is commonly used for atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter.

Ablation helps in one of two ways:

- It destroys areas in the heart that trigger abnormal electrical signals.
- It creates a roadblock to stop abnormal signals from traveling through the heart.

During the procedure, a physician guides a long, thin tube called a catheter through your veins and into your heart. An electrode on the end of the catheter delivers energy to destroy the cells that are causing the heart to beat erratically.

Radiofrequency energy is often used for ablation. This type of ablation has a success rate higher than 90 percent and a low risk of complications. The process is painless.

Ablation is also done using micro-waves, sonar or cryo (freezing).

Sources: American Heart Association;  
Heart Rhythm Society



# OMEGA-3: A fish story

IF YOU CRAVE FISH, INDULGE. You're doing your heart a favor.

Eating at least two servings a week of fish can protect your heart, says the American Heart Association.

Fatty fish—such as salmon, albacore tuna, mackerel and lake trout—are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. These are heart-friendly fats. They can reduce your risk of a heart attack, stroke or a dangerously irregular heart rhythm. They can also:

- Lower blood pressure.
- Lower triglycerides, a type of fat in the blood.
- Slow the formation of artery-clogging plaque.

Also look for ways to include walnuts, canola oil, flaxseed oil, and tofu and other forms of soybeans in your diet. These are all good sources of a substance that is

converted into omega-3 fatty acids in your body.

If you already have heart disease or high triglycerides, ask your doctor about taking daily supplements of omega-3 fatty acids.

Finally, a word of caution is in order. Pregnant women, women who might become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should avoid eating large fish, such

These heart-friendly fats can reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. These fish can contain enough mercury to harm a developing baby or a young child whose nervous system is still maturing.

## HEALTHY. recipe

### Baked trout olé

#### Ingredients

- 2 pounds trout fillet, cut into six pieces
- 3 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- 3 tablespoons cilantro, chopped
- ½ teaspoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper

#### Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Rinse fish and pat dry.
3. Place fish in baking dish.
4. In a separate dish, mix remaining ingredients, and pour over fish.
5. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes or until fork-tender.

Makes six servings.

Nutrition facts (per serving)	
Calories 221	Calories from fat 81
Percent Daily Value*	
Total fat 9g	14%
Cholesterol 58mg	19%
Sodium 162mg	7%
Carbohydrate 3g	1%
Protein 32g	
Percent of calories from fat 37	

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.  
Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute