

Parish Nurse corner

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Winter Sees Spike in Heart Attacks

Wisconsin winters can be rough with the freezing temperatures, blinding snowstorms and midafternoon darkness. But that's not all, winter also brings with it a spike in heart attacks. Thankfully there are several steps you can take to help protect yourself.

This probably seems obvious but it's important to dress warmly. Cold temperatures can cause arteries to tighten which restricts blood flow and reduces the supply of oxygen to the heart.

This is compounded by the fact that during the winter the heart is working overtime to maintain body heat, and thus requires more oxygen. The cold is also known to raise blood pressure as well as the levels of certain proteins that have shown to increase the risk for blood clots.

Physical activity tends to be more labored in the winter. Yes, there is the constant shoveling and trudging through lots of snow, but it's not just that. Winter also tends to be a time when people hit the gym for the first time-whether as a result of a New Year's resolution or just trying to get back in shape in time for summer. But when people jump into a new workout routine, they often go too hard, too fast. Starting slowly, is not only safer and more beneficial long-term, but it'll also increase the likelihood that you'll stick with it.

Regardless of the season, you should always maintain a healthy diet, and refrain from smoking and drinking alcohol in excess. It's also important to get your flu shot as the flu can stress your cardiovascular system. Studies have shown that getting a flu shot can reduce your risk of a heart attack by as much as 50 percent.

Heart disease is not something to be taken lightly. It's the number one cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. If at any time you experience chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath or heart palpitations (irregular heartbeats), see a doctor at once.

*May you and your loved ones enjoy all of the peace, joy,
and wholeness that is Christmas!*

God's Blessings,

Peggy Taylor, RN
Parish Nurse

