

## Get Heart Smart!



### 3 simple screening tests every heart should have

**H**ead disease is the most common cause of death in America.

While it's important to know the symptoms of heart disease so you can seek treatment quickly, it's equally important to understand your risk factors and take advantage of simple screening tests that can help identify a problem before symptoms ever show up.

"Heart disease is an incredibly common problem in our society," shares **Benjamin Kleiber, MD, FACC, cardiologist at Dean Health System**. "The upside is that in large part it can be prevented."

#### Knowledge = Power

A historic piece of research known as the Framingham Study details the risk factors for heart disease. By charting every person who lived in Framingham, Massachusetts, for several decades, researchers were able to conclusively prove which risk factors contribute to heart disease, how much each risk factor contributes, and how altering and improving these risk factors directly affects your heart health. Those risk factors include:

- ♥ Blood pressure
- ♥ Cholesterol
- ♥ Diabetes
- ♥ Smoking
- ♥ Obesity
- ♥ Nutrition
- ♥ Exercise
- ♥ Family History



Dr. Kleiber recommends every adult get **3 Simple Cardiac Screening Tests** to evaluate your heart health. These recommended screening tests are aimed at identifying and assessing known risk factors so they can be reduced or eliminated before problems get out of hand. All can and should be performed as part of a routine thorough physical examination.

**1. Blood Pressure Screening.** Your blood pressure should be monitored and tracked throughout your life, beginning in childhood. The updated blood pressure guidelines recommend individual goal numbers be set based on your whole health picture. Generally speaking, however, the goal is to stay below 140/90 for a relatively healthy person. Your doctor may establish higher or lower limits based on your personal risk factors.

**2. Lipid Screening.** A lipid screening is another name for getting your cholesterol checked. High cholesterol – in and of itself – produces no known symptoms. **The only**

**way to know you have high cholesterol is to be tested, so regular screening tests are incredibly important.** Dr.

Kleiber recommends a lipid screening starting at age 35, possibly younger if you are in a high risk group. Like blood pressure, cholesterol goals are now highly personal and vary greatly based on a collection of health factors.

**3. Blood Sugar Screening.** Fasting blood sugar can be tested easily during your routine physical. Since diabetes automatically puts you in a high risk category, it's important to diagnose and treat this disease early.

"These simple tests are quick and inexpensive and can absolutely lead to the prevention of cardiac events," confirms Dr. Kleiber. He points out that all three of these conditions can be controlled with lifestyle changes and/or medication.

#### More In-Depth Testing

In addition to the required screening tests above, your doctor may suggest some more sophisticated testing. The following tests are usually ordered to help sort out symptoms or determine the degree of blockage you may have. Dr. Kleiber gives a quick explanation of each below.

♥ **Cardiac Stress Test.** This test uses exercise to stimulate increased blood flow. During the test, your doctor may use EKG, ultrasound, or nuclear testing to assess heart function and blood flow as well. If you are unable to perform the required exercise, medication can be used to create the same effect.

♥ **Cardiac Catheterization.** Your doctor may order this test if you have an abnormal stress test to better define your coronary anatomy and determine if stents or bypass surgery will be necessary.

♥ **Echocardiogram.** An echocardiogram is another name for an ultrasound of your heart. This test may be used alone or in conjunction with another test.

♥ **Ankle-Brachial Index (ABI).** An ABI test screens for Peripheral Arterial Disease, or PAD. During this test, your doctor will measure your blood pressure in your arm and ankle at rest and after walking 5 minutes.

♥ **Carotid Ultrasound.** This test uses ultrasound to determine if there is any blockage or other abnormality in the major arteries that run up your neck to your brain.

♥ **Ejection Fraction.** Ejection Fraction measures the percentage of blood pumped out of the heart with each beat. This can be done in a variety of ways, including

echocardiogram (ultrasound), cardiac catheterization, MRI, cardiac CT, or a nuclear medicine scan.

Based on the results of these tests, your doctor can likely give a better diagnosis, get a better idea of how aggressively to treat your condition, or possibly even rule out a heart problem altogether.

#### Take Control of Your Heart Health

"One of the things I like most about cardiology is that there's so much we can do to get meaningful results," says Dr. Kleiber. "These routine screening tests are easy to do and can improve your life dramatically. There's really no excuse to avoid them."

The bottom line is early detection means less damage to the heart, better long-term outcomes, and the luxury of living relatively unhindered for many, many years.

To learn more about improving your heart health or to get information about Dean's cardiologists, visit **deancare.com**



#### Heart Fair Off The Square

Talk one-on-one with the 24 doctors who save the most lives in Madison.

**Tuesday, February 24, 2009, 5:00-7:30 pm**  
**St. Mary's Hospital and Dean & St. Mary's Outpatient Center**

Plan to attend this free event, featuring heart health activities and information for everyone:

- ♥ Ask a doctor booths
- ♥ Free screenings for cholesterol, blood pressure, . . . vascular health, stroke risk, and more
- ♥ Cooking demonstration
- ♥ Exercise & yoga demonstrations
- ♥ Educational booths
- ♥ Food and prize drawings

No registration necessary. Free parking for this event is available in the St. Mary's Park Street ramp.