

- 1) Health
- 2) Self Care
- 3) Family
- 4) Self Improvement

# BHS A.S.S.I.S.T.

## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER



## FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Heart disease is a major killer in the U.S., but it doesn't have to be. Many forms of heart disease can be prevented or treated with diet, exercise and other healthy lifestyle choices that target risk factors.

"Some of the risk factors for heart disease can be treated or controlled and some can't," says Robert Bonow, M.D., Chief Cardiologist at Northwestern Medical School in Illinois. "That's why it's important to know what yours are and change your lifestyle to reduce them."

### MAJOR RISK FACTORS WE CAN'T CONTROL:

- ♥ **Increasing age**
- ♥ **Being male** (men have a greater chance for heart attack than women, and have them earlier in life)
- ♥ **Heredity** (children of parents with heart disease and African Americans are more likely to develop heart disease)

### TO REDUCE THE RISK FACTORS WE CAN CHANGE:

- ♥ **Don't smoke and reduce your exposure to secondhand smoke.** Smokers are two to four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease as nonsmokers. Exposure increases the possibility of heart disease — even for nonsmokers. "The good news is when you stop smoking — no matter how long or how much — your risk for heart disease drops," says Dr. Bonow.
- ♥ **Lower high cholesterol.** As cholesterol rises, so does the threat of heart disease. When other risk factors are present, it increases even more. Optimal total cholesterol is less than 200 mg/dL. Higher cholesterol levels can usually be controlled by diet, exercise and, sometimes, medication.
- ♥ **Control high blood pressure.** High blood pressure increases the heart's workload, causing

the heart muscle to increase in size. When high blood pressure exists with obesity, diabetes, high cholesterol or smoking, the threat of a heart attack increases several times.

- ♥ **Get plenty of exercise.** An inactive lifestyle is a factor for heart disease. But regular, moderate-to-vigorous physical activity helps prevent heart and blood vessel disease. The American Heart Association recommends a minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity at least five days a week.
- ♥ **Maintain a healthy weight.** People who have excess body fat — especially at the waist — are more likely to develop heart disease even if they have no other risk factors. Excess weight makes the heart work harder and raises blood pressure and cholesterol too. Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and lean protein can help you lose weight. Avoiding trans fats and limiting saturated fat can directly reduce the likelihood of developing heart disease.
- ♥ **Control blood sugar.** Diabetes significantly increases the occurrence of heart disease. Maintaining a normal blood sugar most of the time can help reduce that risk.
- ♥ **Watch how much you drink.** The threat of heart disease in people who drink moderate amounts of alcohol is lower than in nondrinkers; however, drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure. Moderate drinking means no more than one drink a day for women and men age 65 and older, and no more than two drinks a day for those younger than 65.

*Source: Krames Staywell*

# BEING ALONE CAN BREAK YOUR HEART (LITERALLY)



People who lack a strong network of friends and family are at greater risk of developing and dying from heart disease. According to recent studies, the risk of solitude is equal to the risk posed by high cholesterol, high blood pressure and smoking.

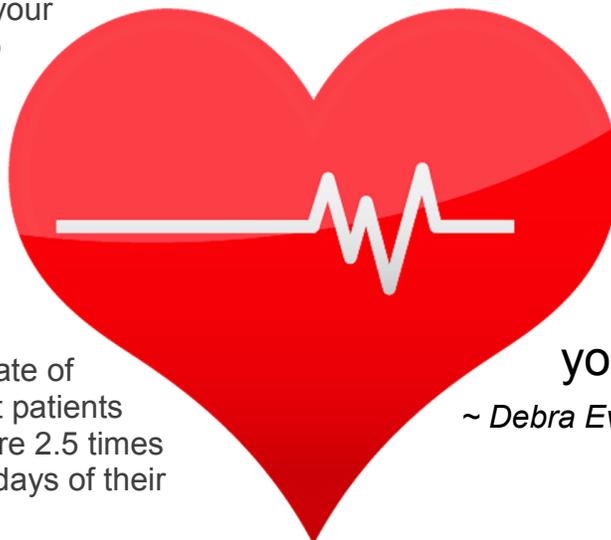
In recent years, researchers have begun to unravel the cardiovascular effects of social isolation. Their research discovered that *feeling* alone may hurt the heart even more than actually being alone.

Loneliness, the feeling that you have no one to turn to and no one who understands you, is a form of stress. If loneliness becomes chronic, it can wreak havoc on your blood vessels and heart. Even though depression and anxiety can have a negative impact on your heart, loneliness appears to be especially deadly.

In the 1990s, a team of Swedish researchers interviewed 1,300 patients about to undergo heart bypass surgery. When the researchers compared the responses to the mortality rate of the patients, they found that patients who said they felt lonely were 2.5 times more likely to die within 30 days of their surgery.

Loneliness hurts the heart because lonely people have higher levels of cortisol, a hormone released in response to their stress. A persistent stressful state produces “wear and tear” that can harm the cardiovascular system. The stress of loneliness also produces an increase in vascular resistance, making it difficult for blood to move through the arteries. Over time this resistance can contribute to hardening of the arteries and heart disease.

If you’re at risk for heart disease, especially if you’ve suffered a heart attack, limiting loneliness is critical to your recovery. If you or a loved one has a heart condition, consider speaking with a mental health professional who can assess your stress level. Your BHS Care Coordinator is only a phone call away.



“Life is like an EKG. Without the ups and downs, you’re not living.”

~ Debra Evans, author



## When to Start Helping your Parents

**T**aking care of our parents when their health starts to decline is a big responsibility. And deciding when to offer help isn't always easy. As we age, many of us don't want to admit that we can't take care of ourselves adequately. Here are some signs to watch for when deciding whether an elderly relative or friend is having problems that need to be addressed:

**Weight loss.** Unless the relative is actively trying to lose weight, unexplained weight loss could indicate difficulty cooking (holding utensils, reading recipes, etc.), loss of smell or taste or underlying problems, like malnutrition or dementia.

**Overall appearance.** Take a good look at your aged relative's daily hygiene. Are her clothes clean? Does she bathe, brush her teeth and groom herself regularly? If not, she could be suffering from depression, dementia or other health problems.

**Mobility.** Muscle weakness and joint problems that grow more pronounced with age can limit an elderly person's mobility and endanger his safety. Does he have trouble walking long distances, or seem unsteady on his feet? A fall can be serious, but a cane or walker can minimize the danger.

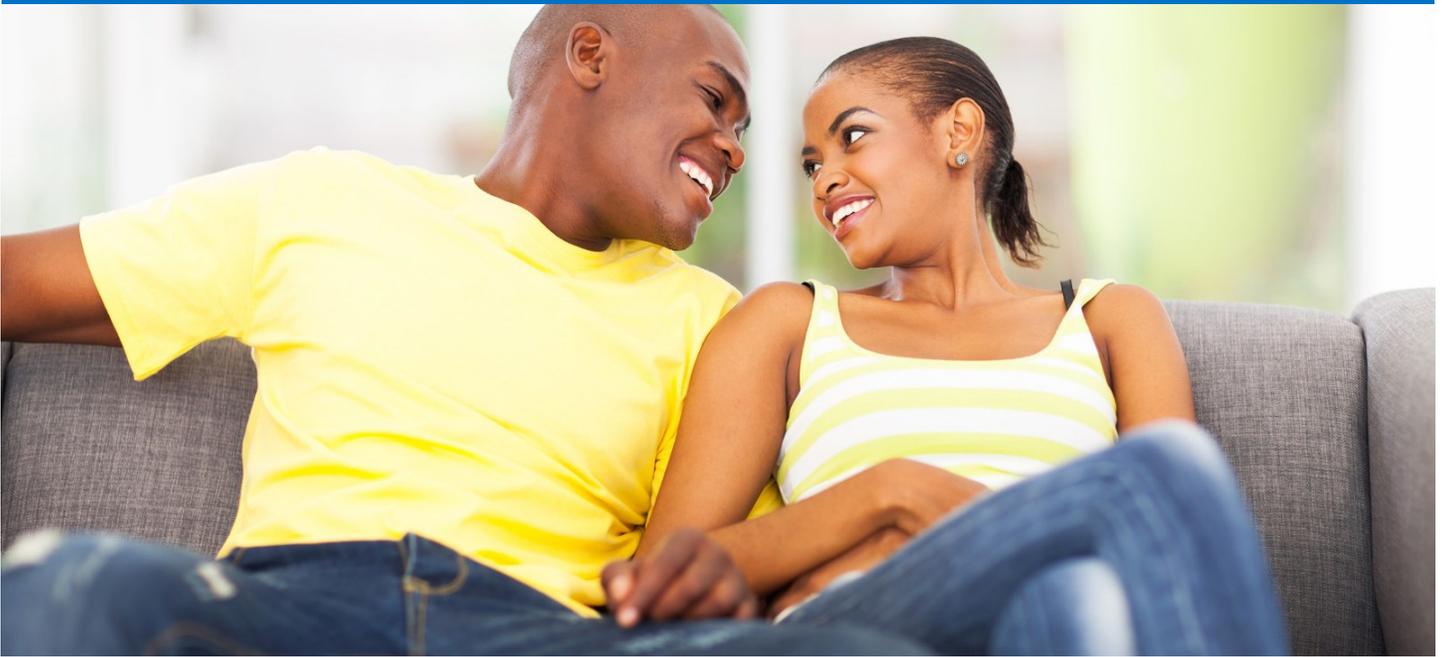
**Lifestyle.** Pay attention to any loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. Do they still participate in hobbies, listen to music, exercise and socialize with friends? Physical and mental limitations can be compounded if they become isolated at home.

**Emotional balance.** Pay attention to moods. Increased anxiety, sudden mood swings or lack of interest in activities can be signs of depression or other health concerns.

If you think that your parent(s) may need assistance or you have questions about eldercare issues, call BHS at 800-245-1150 and speak with your Care Coordinator to discuss your available EAP benefits.

**EAP**  
EMPLOYEE  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM

**Why Should I Use My Employee Assistance Program?**  
Sometimes life throws us a curveball we can't handle. At those times, it may help to talk to an objective person who will work with you in a confidential manner. This person can help you with positive problem solving. Call your BHS Care Coordinator at 800-245-1150 to obtain more information or schedule an appointment.



## SIX TIPS TO BECOME A BETTER LISTENER

Let's face it: Being a good listener is not as easy as it sounds. We've all drifted off into our own thoughts when we're supposed to be paying attention to what someone else was saying. Maybe it was because the subject matter was boring or the person was speaking in a monotone; maybe we were distracted by some personal matter that worried us. Whatever it was, the following tips can help improve your listening skills in the future.

1. Listen more than you talk.
2. Stay focused on what the other person is saying - not on what you're going to say next. Don't plan a story you want to tell while the person is still talking.
3. Never finish another person's sentences.
4. Resist the urge to dominate the conversation (review tip #1).
5. Give appropriate feedback, but don't interrupt.
6. Occasionally mirror back short summations of what the other person is saying to keep your mind from moving onto other subjects and to assure the other person that you've understood what he or she has been saying.

## Low-Cal/Low-Carb Chicken & Broccoli Teriyaki

4-6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts  
 1 pack frozen broccoli florets  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon pepper  
 ½ teaspoon garlic powder  
 ½ teaspoon dehydrated onions  
 4 tablespoons teriyaki sauce  
 1 tablespoon olive oil

**Instructions:** Cut chicken breasts into bite sized chunks and place in medium hot pan with olive oil. Add salt, pepper, onions and garlic powder. Sauté until chicken is well done. While chicken is cooking, boil or steam broccoli in separate pan until tender. When both are cooked fully, add teriyaki sauce to chicken and mix well. Add broccoli and turn in sauce to coat. Serve alone or over rice.

*Prep time: less than 15 min*

*Cook time: less than 15 min*

*Servings: 6*

*Calories: 192*

*Fat: 7.8 g*

*Carbs: 74 g*

[www.mealsmatter.org](http://www.mealsmatter.org)