



better you

What's really
breaking our
hearts?

10 heart symptoms
you can't ignore

Outsmart a
silent killer

Winter 2024
CHIhealth.com

The heart of healing.

Living and practicing medicine in the Midwest is special, because you really get to know your patients. To me, that's the best part of being a cardiologist in my hometown.

Over the years, I've seen our communities grow. CHI Health Clinic has grown right along with them, offering the largest number of physicians in the region. We're proud to be your partners in head-to-toe care.

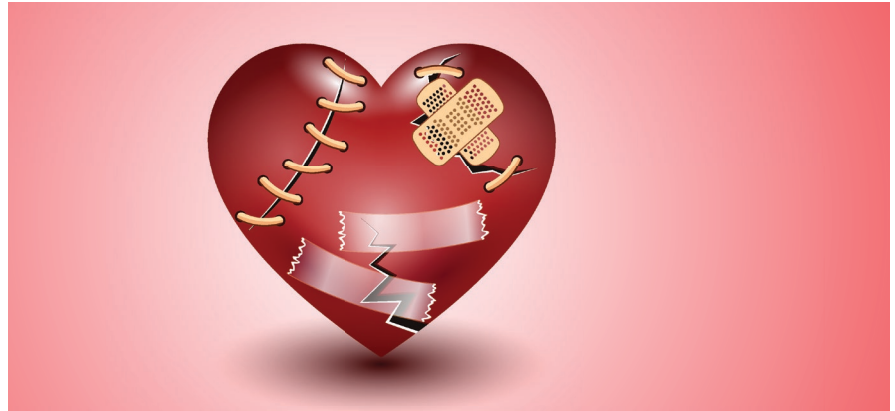
My specialty – the heart – is the focus of this BetterYou. I can tell you from firsthand experience that cardiologists have more life-saving advances than ever before, and we talk about some of them here.

I can also tell you that heart health doesn't begin with your cardiologist. It starts with the overall wellness you achieve with your primary care provider. It's also made better by the orthopedist who keeps you moving, and every specialist in between.

With the most doctors and specialists in the Midwest, CHI Health Clinic has you covered. You can count on us to be at the heart of healing.



Randy Pritza, MD
President
CHI Health Clinic
System SVP, Midwest Division



What's really breaking your heart?

Small steps toward a healthy lifestyle can make a big difference when it comes to your heart health. But no matter how many times you hit the gym or eat a balanced meal, it doesn't change the fact that hearts break differently for men and women.

Heart disease in women

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for adults in the United States. There are many factors that put women at risk.

“Pregnancy is a window into a woman's future heart health,” said Anuradha Tunuguntla, MBBS, CHI Health Interventional & Structural Cardiologist. “Preeclampsia and gestational diabetes are some of the complications that can put women at greater risk of developing heart disease or suffering stroke later in life.”

Menopause also increases a woman's risk of heart disease. This hormone drop can cause the arteries to become thicker and stiffer.

Prevention among men

Men often put their health in the rearview mirror, neglecting early indicators of a possible major heart issue.

“Men shouldn't wait until they're in pain to see a doctor,” said Jeffrey King, MD, CHI Health Cardiologist. “In fact, early prevention is key when monitoring blood pressure, known as the silent killer, which typically has no obvious symptoms.”

Annual visits allow cardiologists to monitor your heart, which can prevent heart disease and other conditions before it's too late.



Take the Test

Knowing what puts you at risk can help you prevent heart disease. **Scan this QR code to take our heart disease risk assessment.**

Outsmart a silent killer with easy ABCs

Your heart won't always tell you it's hurting. "One in five heart attacks is silent, meaning you feel no symptoms," said Daniel McGowan, MD, CHI Health Interventional Cardiologist. "Your blood pressure and cholesterol can be high with no signs to warn you."

Heart disease remains the number one killer of women and men in the United States, so it's essential to take

action to protect your heart — even if you feel fine.

Million Hearts, a national initiative that aims to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes within five years, was developed by the CDC and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. It focuses on a short list of priorities — simple ABCs — to help reduce heart disease, stroke and related conditions.

A



Aspirin use. Your doctor may recommend daily aspirin to decrease the risk of heart attack and stroke. Whether you should take aspirin depends on risk factors such as family history or diabetes.

B



Blood pressure control. Get your blood pressure checked regularly — even if you feel fine. If it's high, work to keep it under control with exercise, diet and medications, if needed.

C



Cholesterol management. Know your "good" and "bad" cholesterol numbers and work with your doctor to get to your target ranges. Exercise, diet and medications can also improve these numbers.

S



Stop smoking. Both smoking and vaping can raise your blood pressure and damage your blood vessels — thereby increasing your risk for heart disease, vascular disease and stroke. Talk to your provider about how to quit.



Please ask!

"Knowledge is good medicine when it comes to your heart. Don't hesitate to ask your doctor these questions about your heart health," said Ann Narmi, MD, CHI Health Interventional Cardiologist.

Am I at risk for heart disease?

The main risk factors include family history, hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol and smoking.

What should I do about it?

Steps you can take include eating healthy, exercising, keeping regular doctor's appointments and discussing any additional studies that may be needed.

What heart-healthy diet do you recommend? Don't fall for fad diets. The Mediterranean diet is best proven to lower cardiac risk.

What kind of exercise should I do? Moving is medicine for the heart. Even if your steps add up at work, you still need regular exercise to boost your heart health.

What heart attack symptoms should I watch for? Crushing chest pain, shortness of breath and sweating are classic signs, but it varies. Women especially may have less usual symptoms, such as different chest pain, jaw or shoulder pain.



Find out more:
CHIhealth.com/Heart



Take control of your heart's ABCs today. Our heart experts can help. Scan this QR code or go to CHIhealth.com/HeartProviders to find a provider.

Hearts that skip or flutter?

Arrhythmias explained

Your heart beats steadily every second of the day. It's so consistent you probably don't think about it until it feels different.

"We've all experienced a racing heart," said Nayanjyoti Kaushik, MBBS, CHI Health Cardiac Electrophysiologist. "While the flutters you feel when you're on a rollercoaster can be thrilling, it's important to know the signs and what to do when your heart irregularly skips a beat."

Know your number

There's a wide range for a normal resting heart rate — between 60 and 100 beats per minute. Some people naturally run on the higher or lower end.

Feel the rhythm

If you occasionally feel your heart racing, pounding, fluttering or missing a beat in your chest, throat or neck, you're most likely experiencing palpitations. These are noticeably

rapid, strong or irregular heartbeats which can occur for many reasons, including:

- Emotions (anxiety, stress, fear, panic)
- Strenuous activity or extreme fatigue
- Caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, illicit drug use
- Heart disease
- Abnormal heart valve
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Abnormal thyroid gland
- Prescription medications
- Low blood oxygen level

Fatigue is a common symptom people often don't notice because it happens gradually, or they think it's just part of getting older. With treatment they often get their energy back.



Call your doctor right away if you have new, different or frequent palpitations, heart disease or known risk factors.

Call 911 immediately if you or someone you love experiences a loss of consciousness, chest pain, shortness of breath, unusual sweating or dizziness.

Whenever you have a question about your heart, don't hesitate to contact your doctor. We have many treatment options that can address your symptoms. Together, we can keep your heart beating strong.

Scan the QR code or go to CHIhealth.com/HeartProviders to find a cardiac specialist.



Goodbye
blood thinners

If you have atrial fibrillation (Afib), the most common arrhythmia, you've probably been prescribed blood thinners. Unfortunately, blood thinners may increase your risk of bleeding.

A surgical solution might help you give blood thinners up for good. Implanting a device called a left atrial appendage occluder (LAAO) can provide a permanent solution to reducing stroke risk in people with Afib.

"The quarter-sized LAAO implant works by closing off the heart's left atrial appendage – the pouch-like area in the heart where clots can form," said Hussam Abuissa, MD, CHI Health Cardiac Electrophysiologist. "This pouch area isn't needed and patients experience no difference in heart function after it's closed."

Implanting an LAAO is a one-time outpatient procedure that takes less than an hour and most patients go home the same day within a few hours.

When danger knocks

Inside heart valve disease



The chance of surviving heart valve disease may depend on how you respond to symptoms. Many people will ignore heart murmurs or frequent shortness of breath and fatigue, all while their health deteriorates and a more serious problem comes knocking.

“Delaying treatment for heart valve disease can lead to more serious conditions like aortic valve stenosis or mitral valve regurgitation,” said Himanshu Agarwal, MD, CHI Health Interventional Cardiologist. “Similarly to putting off treatment for cancer symptoms, heart valve disease can endanger your life the longer you go without treatment.”

Heart valves are like tiny doors in the heart that help direct blood flow with every heartbeat.

Conditions such as aortic valve stenosis occur when the aortic valve becomes stiff and obstructs blood flow. Mitral valve regurgitation happens when a valve doesn't close properly and allows blood to leak back into that chamber of the heart.

“In fact, heart valve disease could be more serious than cancer. Fifty percent of patients with severe aortic valve stenosis who develop symptoms of heart failure will not

survive beyond two years, and 30 to 40 percent with severe mitral valve regurgitation with symptoms won't survive beyond five years,” said Dr. Agarwal.

Don't wait. Seeing your heart doctor if you have signs of trouble can save your life — especially if you have symptoms that include swelling in your legs and feet, irregular heartbeat or dizziness.



Scan the QR code to take our heart risk assessment.



10 symptoms you can't ignore

Symptoms of heart valve disease may seem minor. According to Terrence Slattery, MD, a CHI Health Cardiologist, it's important not to ignore them.

“Early diagnosis and treatment can make all the difference in your long-term health and well-being,” said Dr. Slattery.

Warning signs of valve disease:

- Shortness of breath or heavy breathing.** Especially with exertion or when lying down.
- Fatigue or lack of energy.** Feeling unusually tired even after adequate rest.
- Swelling in legs/feet.** Especially if it's new or worsening.
- Irregular heartbeat.** A fluttering or racing heartbeat, or an irregular pulse.
- Chest pain/discomfort/heaviness.** Especially if it's new or worsening.
- Dizziness/lightheadedness.** Fainting or near fainting can also be an extreme symptom.
- Hoarseness/persistent cough.** Particularly when lying down.
- Stroke/mini-stroke/worsening memory.**
- Bluish skin.** Especially around the lips or fingertips.
- Unexplained rapid weight gain.** Especially if accompanied by swelling and abdominal fullness.

Exercise for the win!

Going for a walk and exercising just might be the extra dose of medicine you need to improve your heart health.

“Exercising on a regular basis has several health benefits,” said Toufik Haddad, MD, CHI Health Interventional Cardiologist.

“Physical activity helps improve control of high blood pressure and diabetes, both of which are major risk factors for developing heart disease.”

The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise 5 days a week or at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

Dr. Haddad said it’s important to move as much as possible throughout the day. He also recommends tracking the number of steps you take on a daily basis using a wearable fitness device.

Get moving with our health care team today to determine what exercises are best for your fitness level.



Find out more at
CHIhealth.com/Heart



Wake up to a healthier heart

Your heart never stops working — and that’s why it needs daily rest, just as you do.

Studies have shown that a good night’s sleep — that’s 7 to 9 hours for most adults — can lower blood pressure. Lack of sleep and poor sleeping habits contribute to heart disease risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, stress, inflammation and depression.

Sleep apnea also can contribute to high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, stroke and heart failure.

About half of Americans experience short-term insomnia, and 6 to 10 percent experience chronic insomnia.

“The numbers are sobering. People with insomnia may have a 45 percent higher risk of cardiovascular disease and a 54 percent higher risk of stroke within

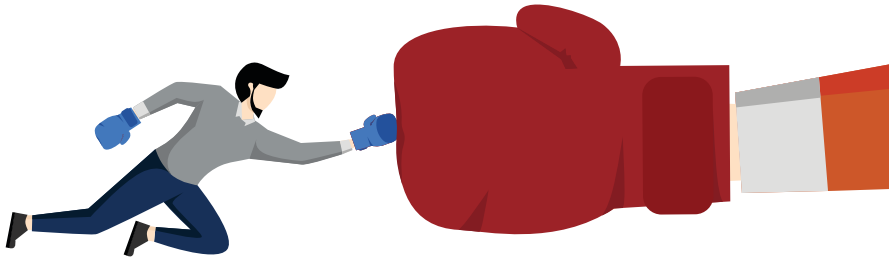
four years,” said Erich Fruehling, MD, CHI Health Interventional Cardiologist. “That’s why it’s critical for people to ensure that they get a good night’s sleep.”

Dr. Fruehling said there are numerous wearable devices on the market that track sleep, identify sleep trends and monitor activity and heart rate. But he warns that these devices don’t diagnose a sleep disorder and said that if patients believe they have a sleep disorder, they should see a doctor right away.

“In today’s high-stress, high-energy society, people often believe they can get by without proper sleep,” Dr. Fruehling said. “But that takes a toll on your heart. When it comes to heart health, a good night’s sleep is as important as exercise and a healthy diet.”



To learn about our cardiovascular programs, visit CHIhealth.com/Heart



Twice the fight

Cancer and cardiac health

Beating cancer is a cause for celebration. But many cancer survivors face one more fight: heart disease.

More than 10 percent of cancer patients do not die from their cancer but from heart and blood vessel problems instead. The risk increases to 50 percent for survivors of breast, prostate, endometrial and thyroid cancers.*

“As the number of cancer survivors increases, the rate of cardiovascular deaths will continue to rise,” said Ahmed Aboeata, MBChB, CHI Health Cardiologist.

Heart disease risk factors such as smoking, exercise and nutrition can overlap with cancer risk factors; patients who develop cancer are often more prone to heart disease, and vice versa.

Cancer survivors might be more at risk of succumbing to heart disease because they already suffered from lung dysfunction, kidney failure or other ailments at the time of their cancer

diagnosis. Even childhood cancer survivors may experience heart problems later in life.

Newer, targeted treatments like immunotherapy are cardiotoxic and can cause arrhythmias and heart failure, which are most often short-term. Aggressive treatments associated with a cancer diagnosis — including some chemotherapies and chest radiation — also may contribute to cardiovascular disease or aggravate existing heart conditions.

As awareness has grown, the specialty of cardio-oncology was developed to identify and minimize potential heart complications related to cancer treatment as early as possible.

“Cardiologists can be an important part of a cancer patient’s care team,” Dr. Aboeata said. “Coordinated care may be needed to ensure that cancer treatment can continue while addressing short- and long-term complications for the heart.”

* “A population-based study of cardiovascular disease mortality in US cancer patients,” by Kathleen M. Sturgeon et al. *European Heart Journal*. doi:10.1093/eurheartj/ehz766

Scan the QR code or go to CHIhealth.com/Heart for more.



Lights, sirens, lifesavers

You’re having heart attack symptoms. How do you get to the hospital?

- A) Call 911
- B) Find a ride
- C) Drive yourself

The answer is always A.

“Half of all sudden cardiac deaths occur outside the hospital,” said Ronald Pritza, MD, CHI Health Cardiologist. “Dialing 911 when you feel symptoms could save your life. Yet many heart attack sufferers opt to find a ride or get behind the wheel themselves.”

A paramedic can:

- Get you to a hospital faster
- Administer oxygen, aspirin and nitroglycerin
- Start an EKG and transmit vital data to waiting ER doctors
- Perform CPR and defibrillation, if needed

Dr. Pritza added, “Calling 911 and getting to the hospital faster decreases the time it takes to unblock a clogged artery, and reduces heart damage when you get there.”



The McAuley Fogelstrom Center
 12809 W. Dodge Road
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